LEARNING AND ALTERITY:
THE PUBLIC PEDAGOGY OF POLYVALENT SELVES IN SELECTED
CINEMATIC TEXTS

by
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Under the Direction of ROBERT J. HILL

ABSTRACT

I analyzed six purposively selected cinematic texts that depicted protagonists experiencing alter personalities, and what is commonly known as Multiple Personality Disorder (“MPD”) or Dissociative Identity Disorder (“DID”) and which I have labeled “alterity” for this project. I employed a rhizoanalysis to examine messages in these films regarding alterity. I explored the disabling notions regarding the experience of alterns that were present in these films, as well as both how and why the characters learned to experience alters. The unitary, cohesive and modernist Self is central to much Western thinking and to theoretical discourse in adult education, including research on authenticity in teaching and transformative learning, and yet protagonists in these movies presented polyvalent selves functioning in an assemblage rather than any such unitary or cohesive Self. I performed a public policy analysis and made recommendations congruent with adult education’s tradition of advocacy and protecting benign human
difference. I confront the oppressive role of the Self in psychiatric and adult education discourse and outline the possibility for the emergence of a culture of alterity and needs for future research.

INDEX WORDS: Adult Education, Public Policy, Rhizoanalysis, Assemblage, Postmodernism, Foucault, Multiple Personality Disorder, Dissociative Identity Disorder
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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my major professor, Robert J. Hill whose longsuffering personal and professional patience, support, kindness, and insight made this work (and with it my dream of earning a Ph.D.) possible.
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Chapter 1:

Alterity and the Psychiatric Machine

In madness, the totality of soul and body is parcelled out: not according to the elements which constitute that totality metaphysically; but according to figures, images which envelope segments of the body and ideas of the soul in a kind of absurd unity.

(Foucault, 1961/1988, p. 93)

This project was undertaken to challenge the hegemony of the psychiatric story told and messages learned about the experiences of alter personas or personalities known as “Multiple Personality Disorder.” It is a story that usually sounds like a fairy tale. Imagine that you awake after months or years only to find yourself accountable for things you do not recall doing, in relationships with strangers, and employed in a job you can’t remember using skills that you never learned. Imagine that you must share your body with other, unfamiliar consciousnesses known as “alters.” Imagine that you and your alters can only sometimes communicate and often argue and disagree. All of this would be very, very confusing and difficult to navigate. But then imagine that, if anyone found out that you experience alters, you would face imprisonment and treatment by professionals who were already convinced, without even interviewing you, that your parents were either horribly negligent or deviant criminals. You would be hypnotized, drugged, imprisoned and “helped” to remember childhood sexual abuse. If encounters with alters are frightening, the psychiatric response is horrifying. As my readers will see,
this story is a reality that faces that minority of people who experience what is commonly referred to as “Multiple Personality Disorder,” and which I am calling alterity.

This is the story told in the cinematic texts I have analyzed for this project. While I selected each movie or series for more complex reasons, which I will discuss in great length in chapter 3, in each story the protagonist experiences disjunctures in consciousness as her or his alter personalities displace one another in consciousness. The six cinematic texts for use in this study are: Three Faces of Eve (Johnson, 1957); Sybil (Petrie & Babbin, 1976); Fight Club (Linson & Fincher, 1999), The United States of Tara, Season 1 (Cody & Kaplow, 2009); The United States of Tara, Season 2 (Cody & Kaplow, 2010); and Youth in Revolt (Arteta, Permut, Weinstein & Weinstein, 2009).

[See Table 1] In Three Faces of Eve (Johnson, 1957), Eve White is bewildered to discover that she has another self, an Eve Black, who has long been living a life parallel to but distinct from her own. In the Sybil miniseries (Petrie & Babbin, 1976) the protagonist discovers that she has more than a dozen alters, and only finds peace by remembering a recounting severe childhood abuse to her psychiatrist. And in both of the first seasons of The United States of Tara (Cody & Kaplow, 2009, 2010) the protagonist seeks memories of past childhood sexual abuse which she believes caused her to experience her alters.

The experience of alterity is a cross-cultural human phenomenon. It does not have to be, and is not always, considered symptomatic of mental illness, even in stories told by American cinema. In two of the cinematic texts I reviewed, Youth in Revolt (Arteta, Permut, Weinstein & Weinstein, 2009) and Fight Club (Linson & Fincher, 1999), the alters serve purposes that include changing the world and obtaining woman’s
affection; there is no talk of childhood or other abuse, and no therapists are consulted. However, while these films show protagonists experiencing alterity in a more favorable light, the characters are still dangerous criminals. I know of no movies where a protagonist experiences a benign form of alterity, in which alters enrich, strengthen, and enliven human experience.

This represents an imbalance and an ignorance of cross-cultural human experience that I am amply situated to address because of my background in psychology, cultural anthropology, and health communications. First, I hold an advanced degree in psychology, and spent eight years working as a psychiatric technician in mental hospitals in Georgia and Florida. I have witnessed, firsthand, how psychiatric discourse molds the experience of patients and how patients conform to what is expected of them by what I will refer to, after the fashion of Foucault, as the psychiatric machine. Second, I hold an advanced degree in anthropology and have studied extensively the anthropology of consciousness. I understand that alterity is often a sacred, rather than a clinical, phenomenon in some cultures. Third, I am a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer (LGBTQ) community, so I understand personally how historical prejudices and oppressions can play out in the lives of people who differ from the norm. Finally, I am writing my dissertation in the field of adult education, a profession that has a long commitment to anti-oppression education from Lindemann (1926), a friend and colleague of John Dewey, to contemporary adult educators too numerous to name here (See: Holst, 2010). I believe, passionately, in the right to human difference (Hill, 2009) and the important role that educators can play in facilitating progressive social change. And so I am writing against psychiatric hegemony, against the construction of alterity as
always and already a mental illness, and against what I have come to view as the most pernicious of modernist constructs—the modernist and unitary Self.

**Unitary Self as Regulation and Control**

Within humanism’s grids of regulation and control, the Self occupies a position of eminent importance (St. Pierre, 2000b). Selves are assigned, described, inscribed, and regulated, one to a human body. This process of inscription, or assignation, is critical to the project that regulates and controls human behavior, that turns each person into a careful monitor of her or his own impulses, like the prisoner in the Panopticon who self-monitors and conforms to the expectations of the guards because surveillance has been internalized (Foucault, 1975/1995). Foucault (1961/1988), interested as he was in the history of thought, referred to this humanist construct, the Self, by its theological antecedent, the “soul,” in order to reconnect contemporary thought to previous discourse:

> It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is proceeded permanently around, on, within the body by the function of a power that is exercised on those punished….This real, non-corporeal soul is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge… The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body. (Foucault, 1975/1995, pp. 29-30)

Whether referred to as subject, as Self, or as soul, there is a clear mandate within Western discourse for the use of a singular rather than a plural entity. It is through this singular construct that psychiatric and discursive disciplinary power finally reaches the level of human bodies and “gets a hold on them” (Foucault, 1973/2006, p. 40).
Indeed, what psychological discourse referred to and defined as Self—something that is actively constructed during development and that can be broken into arcane subcategories such as the “ideal self” opposed to the “real self” (Harter, 1999, p. 142) and in adult education as the “authentic self” (Cranton, 2006a; Cranton & Carusetta, 2004b), something that should be sovereign but can be violated in childhood (von Broembsen, 1999), something that goes through transitions (Cicchetti & Beeghly, 1990) but that can be modeled as a system (Connell, 1990) and that is even perceived in infancy (Butterworth, 1990)—is difficult to distinguish from a personality. A personality is something that emerges or develops or organizes in childhood. Indeed, in a book titled *The Development of Personality in Boys*, Boorman (1929) conflated “self” and “soul” as part of or a synonym for the internal psychological system called a “personality”:

> During its earliest years, beneficent parents, teachers, and friends are ever ready to help the child in [the] process of getting control of his powers of adjustment and becoming well organized (p. 21)…As a result of such [organizing] experiences, the child begins to develop a “self,” or “soul,” or, as some prefer to call it, an “ego.” That is, the life of the child begins to be formed into a system. (p. 27)

Early psychological theorists, such as Allport and Allport (1921), while lamenting the lack of a clear definition of personality, nevertheless used the concept to attribute to individuals measurable attribute including “truthfulness, neatness, conscientiousness, loyalty, perseverance, tactfulness, and the like” (p. 8). However it might be defined by individual psychologists, the “personality” is clearly and deployed in the classic Western tradition of social sciences designed to predict and control behavior that was criticized by
C. Wright Mills (1959) as reproductive of existing inequalities and oppressions. If the goal of social science is the prediction and control of behavior, such scientists become human engineers working to protect the status quo of a rationalist state, and a society emerges in which “functionally rational bureaucracies are increasingly used in human affairs and in history-making decisions” (Mills, 1959, p. 115).

So psychology created the “personality,” which, like the theologian’s God, cannot be seen but is presumed to be present everywhere. This omnipresent “personality” can be measured objectively and put to work in such diverse projects as helping a young boy “in the process of getting control of his powers of adjustment and becoming well organized” (Boorman, 1929, p. 21); as scientifically guiding clinical work to solve social problems (Cattell, 1965); of predicting behavior (Mischel, 1984); and as measuring personality in order to “explain and understand [human] individuality” (Fiske, 2009, p. 16). “Personality” can also but used, like a horoscope, to teach individuals about their enduring “personality types,” to measure their personality styles through such psychometric instruments as the Meyers-Briggs Personality Inventory, and to determine whether or not each individual is, for example, either “The Leader,” “The Investigator,” or “The Enthusiast” (Riso, 1996). In challenging the psychiatric authority to define the Self, I am also challenging its current construction of that Self, including the fundamentally accepted, unquestioned, unimpeached, axiomatic, and pervasive idea that the individual Self of humanism is something coherent and orderly. This assumption is presumed, then measured, then marketed to individuals because “The heart of any exploration of the person must be a search for the self” (McGuire, 1984, p. 73).
For this project, the humanist subject, the Foucauldian soul, and the psychologist’s personality will be treated as synonyms for the Self, which can be thought of as a cohesive, fixed, measurable, knowable, and unitary consciousness. Each individual Self is created and regulated by what Foucault referred to as discursive technologies or mechanisms or “machines,” such as the machine constituted by psychiatric power (Foucault, 1974/2003, p. 138). This “perpetual examination and registration of a field of differences, its division and subdivision of power that reaches the fine grain of individuality” functions not to repress but to normalize (Davidson, 2003, p. xxi)—that is, to regulate experience by controlling what is considered ordinary and non-pathological. Individual differences and quirks are observed and bundled into a single Self or personality which is presumed in order to be measured and not vice versa. This normalized subject Self must conform to dictates that demand a singularity in the nature of that Self:

In all cultures, people exhibit wide variability in their behavior across time and situations. Nevertheless, in our culture, almost all people hold a subjective sense of unitary identity and view their diverse behavior as the product of a single self…. Individuals typically present themselves as a unitary self, enacting different roles because they are reinforced for doing so. (Spanos, 1996, p. 4)

Violations of this perceived unitary self and this normalization process must be always already pathologized as Multiple Personality Disorder (abbreviated “MPD”) (American Psychiatric Association, 1980), now renamed and officially titled Dissociative Identity Disorder (abbreviated “DID”) (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), and individuals who experience the presence of more than one Self must be constantly
reminded that their experiences are not real and that additional consciousness and selves are always parts of some larger, broken whole Self:

To understand DID fully, it is important to understand how different parts functions. Dissociators [people who experience multiple selves] often refer to these parts as alters….Therapists are more likely to operate form a framework that defines alters as ego states, or parts of the self, so as to reinforce that they are actually various aspects of one self. (Haddock, 2001, p. 16, emphasis added)

It is easy to understand how individuals who work in the psychiatric industry might demand and impose the normalized Self with promises of a cure for those who experience more than one Self—“Whether the terminology is unification or integration, the end result [of psychiatric treatment] will be the fusing or coming together of all the separated personalities, or alters, to form a whole” (Bryant & Kessler, 1996, p. 1). The unified, singular Self is assumed, not questioned, in the psychiatric machine, and anyone who does not display such a Self is always already mentally ill and will need years of therapy before to be declared whole.

Failures of Normalization: Alterity

Of course, not everyone conforms by displaying a unitary Self. Some people dissociate into alters. “Dissociation has been around for millennia—trance dancing in Bali, possession trance states in India, whirling Dervishes in Turkey, and demonic possession in the West” (Spiegel, 2006, p. vii). Alterity is a specific type of dissociation, the experience of alters, or other consciousnesses, or personalities, that share an individual’s lifeworld. Alterity violates the modernist presumptions regarding an autonomous, linear, cohesive, authentic and knowable single Self. Given the machinery
of power that attempts to normalize individual experience and eliminate this human
difference, it is not remarkable that such difference persists, since the application of
power always creates resistance, and “points of resistance are present everywhere in the
power network” (Foucault, 1976/1990, p. 95). Harking back to my earlier reference to
the gay liberation movement, there were people visiting gay bars even when visiting such
bars could result in the loss of jobs and family and the imposition of prison time. There
is clearly a human capacity to dissociate and to experience alterity, which is structured
within our United States culture in specific and negative ways, so that people who are
known to experience alterity face today the same social sanctions that LGBTQ people
once faced, including forced hospitalization, job loss, rejection by family members, and
various treatments designed to make them conform to societal expectations. In contrast,
in other cultures where the modern psychiatric machine is less developed, alterity is often
experienced and rewarded as a matter of spirit, not of psychiatry.

For a very few of many examples, among West African ngulu spirit adepts, Willis
(1999) found what he referred to as an “expanded” self, and healers who entered trance
and declared “when the ngulu are in me I don’t know [my name]—I am several other
people and can do anything…” (p. 88). Suryani and Jensen (1993) documented a
Balinese healing tradition where practitioners used the experience of alters to heal others.
In contemporary Brazil, during complex Spiritist ceremonies involving drums and
singing, “Dr. Fritz” possesses the body of a medium and performs surgical operations
with blunt instruments and without anesthesia (Lynch, 2004). Of course, alterity is by no
means always viewed as benign: for example, Sengers (2003) found women in Islamic
Egypt susceptible to Zar, possession by demons who demanded pacification before they
would leave their hosts. While the human capacity to experience alterity appears to be present in all human populations, then, how those individuals who are especially gifted with the ability to dissociate express their alterity varies widely by cultural group.

In the West, too, there is a long history of experiencing alterity in spiritual terms (Bjorling, 1998). In fin de siècle 19th century Europe, alterity flourished, and “There was no limit to who one could be or to how many….The departed returned to repledge their loves and continue their intrigues” (Shamdasani, 1994, p. xi). One famous medium also frequently experienced herself as a Martian man who related a complete language and apparently internally-consistent cosmology (Flournoy, 1889/1994). In the United States, women who experienced alterity were often Spiritualist mediums, and the Spiritualist movement was an important part of the suffragette movement (Braude, 2001). Despite sexist social norms that prevented women from assuming such roles, “[w]ith spirit guidance, women spoke in public, wrote books, went on lecture tours” (Braude, p. 84). Women spoke, in trance, from platforms, and “Speaking mediums entranced audiences in major cities and small towns through the North” (Braude, p. 92).

In the United States, over time the medical discourse triumphed as the medical establishment attacked the Spiritualist movement and psychiatric hegemony grew. The hysteric who manifested “double personality” in 19th century Parisian society and could be two separate people in the same body (Hustvedt, 2011) found a counterpart in the American account of Hanna, a woman with two alternating personalities, and were re-labeled plural or multiple personality (Sidis & Goodhart, 1905). Despite persistent psychiatric dissent that the experience of Multiple Personality Disorder is at best an unscientific diagnosis or at worst a hoax or disorder created by therapy (Piper &
Merskey, 2005, 2004a, 2004b; Dale, 1999; Piper, 1997), alternative explanations of alterity have been displaced by an explosion of clinical texts and popular images of the person who experiences alterity as a patient with a disease (Walker, Brozek, & Maxfield, 2008; Baer, 2007; Mayer, 1991; Ross, 1989). It is the latter, popular images, that this study explores.

Those who experience alterity in the United States today are presented a binary alternative: either their experiences are devalued as false and must be rejected as untrue, or they are the victims of a terrible disease. Psychiatrists who believe alterity to be a disorder created by irrational psychiatric theories and bad therapy predict the disappearance of the disorder as those bad theories are displaced by more scientifically rigorous ones (Piper & Merskey, 2004b). Psychiatrists who are invested in diagnosing and treating alterity as a disease admonish psychiatric dissidents that their claims that DID is not a real (i.e., naturally occurring) disease will reduce the number of therapists willing to treat the disorder; that claims that Dissociative Identity Disorder is not a real disorder can only be evaluated by peer psychiatrists who acknowledge and treat the disorder; and that biological markers for dissociation will soon be discovered, rendering the discussion moot (Fraser, 2005). In what reads like a battle between priests of the mind over religious dogma, one group of speakers is notably absent: those who experience alterity.

Those who experience alterity have no voice or role in this conversation, except as “good” patients who conform with treatment even as they prepare for future relapse and further treatment (Morrison, 2005, p. 5), or as victims of their psychiatrists, who created their disorder through “a circle of reinforcement” that included “encourag[ing]
patients to manifest behaviours that are attributed to alters” (Piper & Merskey, 2004b, p. 681). Like the stigma once imposed on “homosexuals,” the stigma and prejudice imposed by the psychiatric machine appears to have effectively prevented the emergence of counter-discourse -- which might suggest that perhaps some people experience alterity without it being, or themselves having, a problem; that perhaps people experience alterity because of the richness and diversity it brings to their lives; and that perhaps the greatest threat to those who experience alterity is posed by the beliefs of therapists and psychiatrists about this peculiar cultural discursive formation, the presumed Self.

**Public Pedagogy as Discursive Machine**

But Foucault’s psychiatric machine is not the only sort of discursive machinery operating on adult learners. The messages that appear in popular media, and in particularly movies and television, represent a public pedagogy and a source of much informal learning (Carpenter & Sourdot, 2010; Sandlin, 2005). Even as schooling becomes more focused on testing and less on learning, “informal learning has become increasingly complex, demanding and sophisticated” (Hayes & Gee, 2010, p. 185). Such informal learning takes place when learners view movies and cinematic texts that can be pedagogical tools that both reinforce and challenge existing social and personal orders (Giroux, 2002). Such texts exist at a focal point of Foucauldian power, where acts of subordination and repression provoke resistance and a countering power. For the study of alterity, the connection between films as public pedagogy and the experience of alterity is especially important, since some scholars of MPD and DID have argued that the experience of the disorder has been largely shaped by popular films (Aocella, 1999; North, Ryall, Ricci, & Wetzel, 1993). For example, the *Sybil* complex of texts—
consisting of a book (Schrieber, 1973) and a miniseries (Petrie & Babbin, 1976) and related discourse about a real person – has been credited with creating the disorder as it is experienced today. Rieber (2006) argued that the *Sybil* miniseries, and its underlying best-selling book, have caused social problems by “perpetuating the myth that [MPD/DID] is a widespread disorder” (p. xi) and have created “a taxonomist’s nightmare, a ghost without a machine in which to reside” (p. 189). McHugh (1999) argued that *Sybil* created an epidemic of MPD/DID, and Acocella (1999) argued that the impact of the film and movie included the insertion alters who purport to be children into the personalities of people who experience alterity, since before *Sybil* few patients presented for treatment with alters who professed to be children.

However, to date the explorations of cinematic depictions of alterity have focused on the impact of the texts on popular culture, in order to de-naturalize MPD/DID as a disease and suggest that it is entirely created by culture and by therapists who work within that culture. Missing from these explications is any notion that the characters in the cinematic texts, as well as the viewing public, might be learning something positive about alterity, learning how to experience alterity, or confirming that they, too, experience alterity. After all, “Popular culture is a central force in the United States: it reaches into our homes, cars, and classrooms, and it influences what we buy, wear, listen to, watch, and think about” (Dolby, 2003, p. 258). Cinematic texts within popular culture can, indeed, transform the perspective of adult learners who view the text (Wright & Sandlin, 2009b), as learning from such texts “may sometimes be more powerful, lasting and lifelong than [learning] facilitated by formal educational situations and other traditionally accepted areas for educational research” (p. 549). Just as the 1960’s crime
drama, *The Avengers*, taught women to resist sexist stereotypes and to incorporate feminist perspectives (Wright, 2010, 2007; Wright & Sandlin, 2009b), viewers of cinematic texts representing alterity are learning both to reproduce and to resist both popular and psychiatric ideas about the Self and the impact of those ideas on human learning and experience. Exploring cinematic images of alterity within a public pedagogy framework expressly allows the researcher to question how viewers might learn both to resist and to conform to cultural notions of alterity in their own individual lifeworlds.

**Adult Education as Resistance**

While there are perhaps as many visions of adult education as there are adult educators, one persistent theme within our discipline is resistance to forces of coercion and conformity. Indeed, the field serves a source for individual learners to change their lives for the better. That is, adult educators working within what Rubenson (1989) referred to as a “conflict perspective” create counter-hegemonic education to address existing social imbalances. “Conflict theorist emphasis competing interests, [including] elements of domination, exploitation, and coercion” (Rubenson, 1989, p. 54). As Grace (2009) noted, adult education as an undertaking “includes the idea of adult education as an adventure designed to help adult learners negotiate new and unfamiliar life, learning, and work terrains” (p. 115). If psychiatry can be thought of as a machine designed to enforce coercive power (Foucault, 1974/2003), then adult education, too, is a machine—albeit much smaller and decidedly quirkier—designed to facilitate individual power to choose a life path and freedom to learn and grow, which can include a pushing back against psychiatric hegemony. While some adult educators work to maintain the status
quo, for many others the field represents an opportunity to transform society (Heaney, 1996; Heaney & Horton, 1990; Kennedy, 1990; Faure et al., 1972). It is within this machine that my project is situated since, rather than seeking a universal set of causes or a common set of symptoms related to the expression of alterity, I focus, instead, on how adults might learn to structure their experience of alterity, not in psychiatric settings but in the movie-house or home entertainment center. Rather than imposing the psychiatric binary—that alterity is either always an illness or always a false condition created by bad therapy—I am interested in what we can learn from a few purposively selected depictions, from the many that exist, of people who experience alterity.

The Assemblage and Alterity

An important digression is necessary at the outset, because alters are not simply miniature or broken modernist Selves. It is apparent in these films that alters do not create a group of mini-Selves which function together in place of a single Self. They represent something entirely different, a “rhizomatic realm of possibility effecting the potentialization of the possible, as opposed to arborescent possibility, which marks a closure, an impotence” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 190). A Self is circumscribed by the history of a body, the events that form that body’s past, the person’s notions of the causal circumstances of youth and experience. Alters violate all of the assumptions of a person’s past, forming an assemblage, or rhizomatic collection, of experiences and expression. In these cinematic texts, alters violate the closed boundaries of the Self by assuming impermissible identities and impossible histories. The psychiatric project seeks to close such possibilities, by rationalizing alters into vessels hiding memories of trauma and thus creating multiple selves as merely multiple little Selves that can be reunited into
a fundamental unitary Self. Alterity resists by creating something entirely different, an assemblage of selves and experiences and expression which create a fundamentally indeterminate, and perhaps indeterminable, subject. The assemblage resists the rationalizing principles of psychiatry and insists upon radical freedom to be and experience multiple lives through what is apparent to the rest of the world as a single human body. This freedom is what modernist adherents to the notion of the singular Self would suppress.

The Research Problem

In this rhizoanalysis of six cinematic texts depicting characters with “multiple personality disorder,” I utilize postmodern theories of subjectivity and Foucault’s concept of power relations to explore the implications of the public pedagogy of multiple selves for adult education. My research questions are:

1. How does alterity function in the lives of the characters?
2. What experiences of alterity are depicted in these texts?
3. How might the field of adult education change to account for understandings of alterity derived from these texts?

Definitions

As Hill and Davis (2009) noted, “Labels not only describe, they inscribe” (p. 187). Since this is a project grounded not in psychiatry or psychology but in adult learning theory, I begin by offering a new and decidedly non-clinical lexicon for the human phenomenon described in the definition of “Dissociative Identity Disorder”
(American Psychiatric Association, 1994), formerly known as “Multiple Personality Disorder” (American Psychiatric Association, 1980):

**Adult Learners:** This work is undertaken within a department of adult education, and is largely informed by the work of adult education theorists and practitioners. Accordingly, I frequently deploy the term “adult learner” when I could use “people.” While the theories discussed and used do have application for those who are not yet adults (i.e., who might be labeled “emerging adults”), I am limiting this discussion, because of disciplinary concerns and conventions, to adult learners.

**Alter:** An alter is a consciousness, or personality, that regularly inhabits a body, often with its own particular name, mannerisms, likes, dislikes, identity markers, and memories, which may or may not be congruent with the history of the person as a whole. To qualify as an alter, there must of course be more than one such consciousness—otherwise an alter is just a Self. In *The United States of Tara* (Cody & Kaplow, 2009), for example, the protagonist is alternately a teenage girl (with the nom de plume “T”), a 1950’s housewife who compulsively cleans (“Alice”), a straight man obsessed with guns, cigarettes, booze, and women (“Buck”), and a rather somber and demure wife and mother (“Tara”) who is presumably the main or primary alter, or even perhaps the “real” Tara. To qualify as an alter, there must of course be more than one such consciousness in a person’s body—otherwise an alter is just a Self.

**Alterity:** A word I have employed (Walker, 2011, 2010) for the experience of alters or more than one consciousness. I am deploying this word as an alternative to the language used in psychiatric texts to create a type of patient, the “multiple” or “dissociative,” one with a “disorder” or “problem.” Here, alterity is used to describe
people who might experience alters without being defined by that experience. In using
the concept in this fashion, I am also breaking from the historical uses of the word, as an
experience of Other people as radically different from oneself (Baudrillard & Guillaume,
2008; Hazell, 2009) and using it to signify consciousness that does not conform to the
humanist assumption that the Self is singular.

Assemblage: The assemblage is a term utilized by Deleuze and Guattari
(1980/1987) as an alternative to modernist and humanist notions of the subject and
agency. An assemblage includes both content and expression (p. 88) but “has neither
base nor superstructure, neither deep structure nor superficial structure; it flattens all of
its dimensions onto a single plane of consistency….” (p. 90). An assemblage is not a
thing, but it includes things, like bodies, with expressions, like alters or the Self. It
includes both the conscious and the unconscious. “To write is perhaps to bring this
assemblage of the unconsciousness to the light of day, to select the whispering voices, to
gather the tribes and secret idioms from which I extract something I call my Self (Moi)”
(p. 84). For the purposes of this project, a collection of alters within a body is
conceptualized as an assemblage, which can act, can be acted upon and can both “vary
[and] undergo transformation” (p. 85).

Being “out”: In the context of discussions on alterity, there is often a struggle
among consciousnesses for dominance and for the chance to inhabit the body and
experience the sensations of living directly. “Multiples [i.e., people who have been
diagnosed with MPD] say that an alter is out, or is coming out” (Hacking, 1995, p. 27). A
consciousness currently controlling the body can be said to be “out” in the world. In, for
example, Three Faces of Eve (Johnson, 1957), Eve White (the depressed housewife)
experiences headaches when Eve Black (the promiscuous vamp) struggles to emerge and take control of her body. Thus, I am using “out” to refer to being-in-the-world of an alter, rather than the management of sexual identity and of sexual orientation or some other often hidden trait.

Co-consciousness or Co-presence: When two or more alters are simultaneously “out” in the body at the same time. In Deleuzean theory, this is arguably the point at which the Multiple becomes a multiplicity (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1980/1987) and when the person experiences alterity may align “with the rhizome’s ruling principles of assignifying rupture, connection, heterogeneity and multiplicity” (Goodley & Roets, 2008, p. 244).

Dissociative Identity Disorder, or DID. A patient identified with more than one alter was diagnosed, in the Fourth Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, or DSM IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), as suffering from Dissociative Identity Disorder, which is often abbreviated as “DID.” Such patients, always defined by their “disorder,” are often referred to in clinical literature as “Dissociatives.”

DSM (III, IV, or V). “DSM” will be used as shorthand for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published every couple of decades by the American Psychiatric Association. The Roman numeral following the “DSM” indicates the edition number. The DSM III was first published in 1980, the DSM IV was first published in 1994, and the DSM V is still being drafted and is to be published in 2013 (American Psychiatric Association, 2011).

Multiple Personality Disorder, or MPD. A patient identified with more than one alter was diagnosed, in the Third Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, or
DSM III (American Psychiatric Association, 1980), as suffering from Multiple Personality Disorder, which is often abbreviated as “MPD.” Such patients, always defined by their “disorder,” are often referred to in clinical literature as “Multiples.” This label was changed, in the Fourth Edition (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), to Dissociative Identity Disorder. However, literature predating the 1994 revision will still apply the “MPD” label.

**Psychiatric Machine:** Foucault would refer to as the psychiatric machine (Foucault, 1974/2003, p. 138) as not a literal construct but rather a discursive formation, a collection of psychological, medical, and psychiatric beliefs and practices that directly impact individual lives.

**Polyvalent selves:** A person who experiences alterity can be said to experience polyvalent selves, or the presence of multiple, interconnected, alters. However, these do not represent a series of mini-humanist selves; they represent, in Deleuzean terms, an *assemblage* of selves or *multiplicity* as “they no longer form the expression of a hidden unity” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 22).

**Protagonist:** Certain problems of language emerge when discussing movies depicting alterity, chief among them the linguistic difficulty posed by protagonists with more than one alter or persona. Accordingly, when discussing these cinematic texts and speaking of the main character and all of the alters, collectively, displayed by that character, I will refer to that character (and all of the alters, collectively) as the protagonist. For example, in *The Three Faces of Eve*, the body of Eve, and her three alters (Eve White, Eve Black, and Jane) would be referred to as the *protagonist* in that
film. The term *protagonist* can also be thought of as a signifier for the *assemblage* of alters that form that character.

**Self:** When used with capital “S,” I am referring to the modernist Self, which is assumed in some discourses to exist, as a naturalized condition, in all people and which can be discovered or allowed to emerge by natural processes.

**Switching or transitioning:** When one alter supplants another in controlling a person’s body, the process is referred to as switching. Even when there is so degree of co-consciousness between alters, switching occurs when an alter takes the “executive” role and controls the body (Hacking, 1995, p. 27). The process is also referred to as transitioning in *The United States of Tara.*
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The compulsory education machine does not communicate information; it imposes… semiotic coordinates possessing all of the dual foundations of grammar (masculine-feminine, singular-plural, noun-verb, subject of the statement-subject of enunciation, etc.). (Delueze & Guattari, 1980/1988, pp. 75-76)

Since this research is predicated on the intersection of multiple disciplinary fields, performing a review of each would be beyond the scope of this work. The subject matter covered includes: Postmodern/poststructural discourses on the Self; identity development as a learning process; public pedagogy and learning; popular cinematic culture as a site of learning; cinematic textual analysis as a research method; the anthropology and psychology of consciousness; psychiatric and psychological discourse on mental illness and on human development; the ethnographic record of religions emphasizing trance and possession; and transformative education and related perspective transformations. Thus, and because I am utilizing a rhizonanalysis which branches from the object of study to include many texts and discourses, I have elected to develop substantial literature citations in each of the sections. There is, however, a necessary macro-level overview of my project that requires a dedicated look at selected bodies of literature, herein divided into three parts: A review of poststructuralist concepts important to this inquiry, including Foucault’s notions of disciplinary power and of...
power relations and of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the rhizome and of the assemblage; a review of the importance of the Self as an educational construct (and critique of the same); and a review of the place of public pedagogy research in adult education.

**Power, Discipline, Rhizome, and Assemblage**

My work has been influenced by many scholars, but most heavily by the works of the French philosopher and social theorist, Michel Foucault who, in the introduction to his *History of Sexuality, Volume 2* (1984/1990) explains the profound changes in his thought since his first volume a decade before:

> As to those for whom to work hard, to begin and begin again, to attempt and to be mistaken, to go back and rework everything from top to bottom, and still find reason to hesitate from one step to the next—as to those, in short, for whom to work in the midst of uncertainty and apprehension is tantamount to failure, all I can say is that clearly we are not from the same planet. (Foucault, 1984/1990, p. 7)

This quote, with its stated willingness to accede to uncertainty and to change one’s thinking midstream based on new ideas and insights, has guided this project, which seeks to rigorously challenge accepted notions regarding the Self in adult education and related discourses. I have suffered through the agonies of uncertainty and dissatisfaction with my work as, with Foucault (1984/1990), I have sought “to learn to what extent the effort to think one’s own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently” (p. 9). Foucault’s first major contribution to this project was his notion that, to do good work, one must necessarily be working at the edge of uncertainty,
and at the limits of one’s understanding. Because this project has entailed thinking in a fundamentally different way about the Self and subjectivity from that supported by the Western intellectual tradition and by everyday language and the English pronouns used to describe experience, this work could not have proceeded without such uncertainty.

The Carceral Society/Disciplinary Power

Underpinning this project are two other key concepts from Foucault’s work. The first notion, that of a disciplinary society, is found in his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Foucault, 1975/1995), a treatise exploring how and why Western culture seeks to create docile individuals within specific fields of power and relations. It is important to note that, for Foucault, the individual does not exist ahead of or outside of those power relations but is produced within them. In Foucault’s conceptualization, the school, the prison, the factory, the clinic and the military are machines designed to produce docile individuals: “Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?” (p. 228). Because guards could observe prisoners all the time and punish them immediately whenever they disobeyed the rules, prisoners learned to discipline themselves, reducing the inconvenience for the system of actually administering punishment.

Foucault referenced Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon—a prison designed so that the guard in a central tower could see into every cell, and the prisoners never knew when the guard was looking— as a prime example of this system.

Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a sense of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power….this apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power
relation independent of the person who exercised it. (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 201)

Foucault often referred to systems of thought and established practices as machines which, though lacking physical form, nevertheless had powerful effects on human experience and lives, and his work on the disciplinary society was often cast in such terms. The carceral society/machine functions in tandem with the psychiatric machine (Foucault, 1974/2003, p. 138), the set of medical and administrative practices that govern and regulate the abnormal—behavior deemed irregular or inappropriate for which one can be punished no crime has been committed. Disciplinary power, including the psychiatric machine, replaced the royal power of the sovereign over the bodies of subjects in the West:

[T]hese power relations involved first and foremost…the absolute right of nonmadness over madness. A right translated into terms of expertise being brought to bear on ignorance, of good sense (access to reality) correcting errors (illusions, hallucinations, fantasies), and of normality being imposed on disorder and deviation. (Foucault, 1973/2006, p. 345)

In his historical research on madness as well as on discipline and punishment, Foucault documented how offenders who can’t be punished by the law can still be punished and incarcerated by the psychiatric machine. This regulation of human experience begins in childhood: “One is a potential subject for medicalization as soon as one is naughty” (Foucault, 1974/2003, p. 150).

Mine is not a project to reform this carcereal system, since inherent within the project which creates these sorts of hospitals, clinics, prisons and factories and schools is
another project which seeks to reform them. “[T]he carceral network does not cast the unassimilable into a confused hell; there is no outside. ... It is unwilling to waste even what it has decided to disqualify” (Foucault, 1984/1990, p. 301). Importantly, the seamless integration of the systems of punishment and regulation with the movement for their reform creates a totalizing system aimed at imprisoning the individual soul, as a single Self, within the body. The impulse to reform the system is co-opted by the totalizing nature of the system itself. There is no escape: you either support the system by advocating for punishment and discipline or you buttress it by calling for its reform and humanization. The only proposed alternative to the system, revolution, is an illusory attempt to replace one system with another which, if successful, will only create another system requiring further reform or buttressing. For Foucault, effectively challenging such totalizing systems requires tinkering with the underlying conceptual systems through which it functions. Such underlying existing power relations are lived and conceptual systems which Foucault referred to as technologies of power.

Small acts of cunning endowed with a great power of diffusion, subtle arrangements, apparently innocent, but profoundly suspicious, mechanisms that obeyed economies too shameful to be acknowledged, or pursued petty forms of coercion… Describing [such technologies] will require great attention to detail: beneath every set of figures, we must seek not a meaning, but a precaution; we must situate them not only in the inextricability of a functioning, but in the coherent of a tactic…. Discipline is a political anatomy of detail. (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 139)
Unless one challenges or transfigures these conceptual technologies that constitute the details of a regulatory system and enable it to function, the system will easily subsume and subvert dissent. A Foucauldian disciplinary system, like the system of rules and practices within a military unit, reaches into an individual’s lifeworld and structures even minutiae of experience:

Historians of ideas usually attribute the dream of a perfect society to the philosophers and jurists… but there was also a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility. (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 169)

Brookfield (2005) characterized the disciplinary power described by Foucault as “in many ways more insidious [and] more sinister” (p. 131) than traditional notions of power, because this disciplinary power works inside peoples minds. By turning people into cases and subject to the inquiry of the examination, each individual “may be described, judged, measured, compared with others… [and] trained or corrected, classified, normalized, excluded, etc” (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 191). My work challenges this insidious power of the psychiatric machine described by Foucault at its most basic level: if the medical clinic was born to create “cases” out of people (Foucault, 1973/1994), the Self is the basic unit of each such case for the psychiatric machine and the unit of analysis in this study. If the Self is a sort of psychiatric Panopticon—an architectural structure by which we regulate our own experience, even without a guard
present or an impositional authority—and that Self can be made less certain, perhaps the
hegemony of Self over experience, and the regulatory authority of a presumed Self to
which one can always be true, can be lessened or undone.

**Foucauldian Notions of Power Relations**

The second major Foucauldian concept that permeates this work, in addition to
his concept of a disciplinary society, is his description of power relations, which, while
present in his other works, was most clearly articulated in *The History of Sexuality,*
*Volume I* (Foucault, 1976/1990). While Marxists and other modernists view power as
something exercised by one group of people (oppressors) over others (victims/the
oppressed), Foucault saw power as something very different, as something existing only
in relationships and as something that everyone exercises.

Power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one
holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in
the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations…. Power comes from below,
that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and the
ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix. (Foucault,
1976/1990, p. 94)

While Foucault never denied the negative effects of oppression and domination, he did
deny “that domination is the whole story there is to tell when it comes to power”
(Halpern, 1995, p. 17). Power is not a substance but rather a set of relationships; an
analysis of power relations proceeds not by defining what power is but by describing “the
set of mechanisms and procedures that have the role or function or theme, even when
they are unsuccessful, of securing power” (Foucault, 1977/2009, p. 2). Foucault’s
understanding of power is quite different from those that might be used in critical approaches within adult education. Here I draw a parallel: this work is predicated on the notion that, just as Foucauldian readings of power exercised through sexuality helped create the Queer Nation movement and transformed how today’s society thinks about its Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer members (Walker, 2009; Halpern, 2005), Foucauldian readings of power exercised on the Self can fundamentally alter those power relationships for some of those whose experience of self contradicts precepts of the singular Self drawn from what Foucault at one point referred to as “psychiatric religion” (1974/2003, p. 145)—that is, an administrative regime of truth founded on notions, like the Self, that are fundamental and even almost holy to Western thinkers.

Power is found created through relationships and constituted by discourse. Therefore, power can be resisted through oppositional relationships and discourse. Such opposition does not seek to overthrow power or liberate the subject, since the subject assumed by Foucault cannot be liberated from the matrix that creates it. Rather, the opposition changes power relationship through the direct application of a counter-force. “The aim of oppositional discourse is therefore not liberation but resistance” (Halpern, 1995, p. 18, italics in original).

The Rhizome

The purpose of this study was to challenge psychiatric authority to define the Self and determine what variations thereof represent mental illness. If Foucault provides my framework for understanding how power functions through the Self, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (1980/1987) by Giles Deleuze, a French philosopher, and Feliz Guattari, an Italian psychiatrist, provide my primary conceptual
tools for challenging psychiatric hegemony. The first is the concept of the rhizome, which they offer to disrupt Western arborescent and hierarchical notions of truth. In botany, a rhizome is a plant that grows and reproduces by send out shoots underground. It is an underground stem from which shoots arise. Each piece contains the whole so that, if one is severed, another plant can be grown. A rhizome, like those found in crabgrass, is interconnected, rather than hierarchical:

Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points and biunivocal relationships between the positions, the rhizome is made only of lines . . . These lines, or lineaments, should not be confused with lineages of the arborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions. Unlike the tree, the rhizome is not the object of reproduction . . . The rhizome is antigenealogy. (Deluze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 21)

The rhizome, further, is not limited to the plant world. Some animals—like wolves, that run in packs, and ants swarming in a colony—are likewise rhizomatic: “You can never get rid of ants because they form an animal rhizome that can rebound time and again after most of it has been destroyed” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 9). The rhizome can be extended to include systems of thought and power and to discursive machines which Deleuze and Guattari referred to as “Bodies Without Organs,” or machines that function without specialized organs or subparts. Lather (1996, p. 538), interpreting Deleuze and Guattari, noted “a rhizome [is] an open trajectory of loose resonating aggregates [that] trace how the space of knowledge has changed its contours.” Texts, too, form rhizomes, as they are “constructed through the use of various discursive
systems” (Honan, 2007, p. 536) and so can be analyzed by how they function in plateaus, across and against such systems.

When one uses the concept of the rhizome in analysis, one does not attempt to break down what is examined into component parts and then isolate first causes or other truths from those parts. One focuses, instead, on interrelations, and on middles and connections rather than discrete causes and effects:

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things…

The tree imposes the verb “to be,” but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, “and… and… and…” This conjunction carries force enough to shake and uproot the verb “to be.” (Deleze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 25)

The rhizome, then, represents an entirely different metaphor for truth and, indeed, a new way of thinking about knowledge making. As will be seen, methods of inquiry based on this model, such as the rhizoanalysis I employ, are arguably themselves forms of resistance to hegemony and domination. In utilizing rhizoanalysis to understand how kindergarten children resisted classroom rules, Leafgren (2008) noted:

Children’s living, breathing disobedience—their own “resistance to domination”—implies a rhizomatic, deterritorializing interaction within the enclosed and partitioned structures of the class room space and interactions, and therefore manifests a nomadic penchant for resisting the restrictive techniques of power as described by Foucault [in Discipline and Punish]….There is a fit here: rhizoanalysis resists. (Leafgren, 2008, p. 335)

The notion of the rhizome, and of truth as dispersed and omnipresent in discourse rather than concentrated in nodes and first causes, along with Foucault’s notions of the
psychiatric machine, of panopticism, and of power as immanent and pervasive, form the basis of this inquiry. This rhizoanalysis is my resistance.

**The Assemblage**

The second major conceptual tool I borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) is their notion of the assemblage, which offers an alternative to structuralist and modernist readings of the world. An assemblage is not a thing but rather a set of flowing connections between things, discourse, experience, and expression:

> There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject. (p. 23)

An assemblage is a way of speaking about a concept or a signifier, such as a book or a person, that preserves the fundamental indeterminancy of my experience of that book or that person. “An assemblage has neither base nor superstructure, neither deep structure nor superficial structure” (p. 90). It is, rather, a state of “intermingling of bodies, including all the attractions and repulsions, sympathies and antipathies, alteration, amalgamations, penetration and expansions that affect bodies of all kinds in their relations to one another” (p. 90). While an assemblage cannot be defined or quantified, its functioning and the interrelations between its parts can be described.

This project has presented me with many basic and linguistic problems when writing about alterity, and the notion of the assemblage provides a working response to two of the most perplexing problems. First, speaking of a protagonist in a movie with
several alters as an assemblage of alters or polyvalent selves allows me to write about
alterity without reducing its experience to several small versions of the modernist Self,
because the components of an assemblage include discourses and experience and are
indeterminate in nature. An assemblage of alters is a collection of relationships and
possibilities rather than a group of selves conceptualized as objects or things.

Second, conceptualizing a person with several alters as an assemblage allows me
to write as if that person/those alters have agency. From a poststructuralist perspective,
agency is always questionable, as actors are created by their actions and the discourses
that move them. However, one of most oppressive notions about alterity is the notion
that a person with Multiple Personality Disorder cannot control their transitions and so
transition inappropriately. This projection appears at least in part based linguistics—if a
person has two alters and transitions from one to another, how is it possible that that a
person could elect to make the transition? If the alters are in conflict, one wins and one
loses, and the Self becomes a zero sum game with only one alter “winning” by being
“out” in the body at a give time. If that person is conceptualized as an assemblage, then
transitions between alters is as much a decision of that assemblage as are any other life
decisions. The notion of the assemblage thus removes the Self without losing its
linguistic function, as the carrier of such agency as any person may possess.

Assemblages of alters have just as much (or as little) agency as individuals with
professing a singular Self. That the agency cannot be attributed to a Self or a specific
alter is immaterial—it is the assemblage that determines which alter(s) will manifest at
any given time, and there is no need to further attribute any transition to a specific
consciousness.
Self as Educational Construct

There are only a few studies in educational discourse, and particularly in adult educational discourse, which directly express the Self as a theoretical construct. Some of these simply reaffirm existing cultural notions that assume a unitary self. Tennant (2000) articulates several versions of assumptions regarding the self before settling on his own version, “the self as a narrative or story” (p. 92). “Self” appears in adult education discourse as something that can be autonomously created, that is, “self-agency” and “self-authorship” (Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000, p. 39) or through the process of self-reflection (Le Cornu, 2009), or that is otherwise constructed in an ongoing fashion (English, 2000). Humanistic adult educators assume a unique Self which “consists of the sum total of everything that distinguishes one person from another” (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 119) and which “has the potential for growth and development, for self-actualization” (Merriam & Brockett, 1997, p. 40). In his signature theory of andragogy, Knowles (Knowles & Associates, 1985) included a unique “self-identity” (p. 11) which adults derive from lifetimes of experience, and which further guides their self-directed orientation to learning.

Even while “Self-knowledge is one of the fundamental aims of adult education” (Axford, 1969, p. 6), little attention is paid to unpacking the social, culture and psychological values and assumptions embedded in the “Self.” Historical notions of “self-culture” (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994, pp. 70-71) as an alternative to formal education were critical to the lyceums and other early adult educational movements and, indeed, to widespread and growing literacy. There is presumably a Self of some sort
lurking in “self-directed learning” theory so popular with our profession (Long & Associates, 1998; Tough, 1979, 1967). But these movements and theories appear to have been constructed based on common and pervasive notions of the modernist and unitary Self, and so paid little attention to exploring what it is that is being developed and educated. While the Self might appear as something in dialogue with social context and educational content (Brockman & Dirkx, 2006), its definition and nature remain largely assumed rather than explored.

Of course, there are more nuanced and considered reviews of the Self as a theoretical construct. Tennant (2005) argued for analyzing the self through four broad categorizes, that is, knowing oneself, controlling oneself, caring for oneself, and recreating oneself. Clark (2010) argued that the self is a sort of narrative, and that understanding the self as a narrative “opens up new possibilities for learning theory” (p. 7). Kegan (1982) drew on psychoanalytic and humanistic psychological traditions to theorize the Self as something that evolves through experience and employed these theories to create a developmental model that has been used by adult educators. Newman (2008), even while raising doubts about the Self, accuses those who argue for de-centered readings of the self of moral failure, as he takes issues with the postmodern view of the decentered self because of the amorality of the self it presents. (After all, I did identify myself in the title of this piece as a rationalist.) There may be apparent similarities between the postmodern and the absurd views of existence, but they are illusory. In response to the absurdity of our existence, we do not abandon a search for
purpose. On the contrary, we strive, vigorously, to establish as strong, foundational moral center. (Newman, 2008, p. 293)

Just as, before 1973, heterosexual psychologists, in the safety and sanctity of their state-sanctioned heterosexual marriages, once decried “homosexuals” as immoral, Newman—one of adult education’s scholars who is most dedicated to fighting injustice and creating positive social change (Newman, 1994)—has created a discourse which is offended by the very existence of a plural “I.”

Adult educators writing in the postmodern vein are most likely to write explicitly and expressly about the Self, and to do so in order to challenge or counter the assumptions of a unitary, cohesive, and modernist Self, as part of attempts to “promote serious thinking and debate within the field about the implications and consequences of unquestioningly embracing the modern instrumental practice of adult education” (Britton, 1997, p. xiii). The presumed Self appears as one such orthodoxy to be interrogated critically. “The self in postmodern thought is not the unified, integrative, authentic self of modern times. Rather, the self is multiple, ever changing, and some say, fragmented” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 357). Postmodernist thinkers offer alternative discourses in which the self is constructed rather than presumed and then discovered:

[T]he dominant narrative projects the self as a natural, existent and universal category. The alternative narrative is one where the self is rather a culturally and historically variable category. Indeed, the very idea that this category of self is definitive of subjectivity is a specifically Western cultural phenomenon….Modern subjectivity… is rooted in a logic of identity rather than difference and thus bound to a predominantly individualistic or monological
conception of human beings as unique selves where subjectivity is inseparably linked to an essentialised and non-relational self. (Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, 1997, p. 102)

As Clark, writing in Clark and Dirkx (2000), noted “The idea of the unitary self suggests a powerful sense of agency that was never part of my experience. What does work for me is a nonunitary notion of the self, a concept that is usually associated with postmodern discourse” (p. 109). Non-unitary models of the self enable adult educators such as Clark (1999) to build understandings of human experience and learning that are more congruent with today’s postmodern society. They are congruent with Kang’s (2007) understanding of human experience as constituted not through rationality and autonomous action by a Self, but as created by the interaction between a person and their environments.

However, the Self is more likely to be encountered as a key assumption or substructure underlying other theoretical structures in adult education, rather than something that is expressly defined or discussed. Rather than discussing emotional learning as something which adults do, Dirkx (2008) and those he edits in an entire volume of New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education posit that emotions must be attached to an Emotional Self—as if the validity of emotional learning within adult education must somehow be tied back to this rationalist overlay on human experience, the presumed unitary and coherent Self. Indeed, the unitary and coherent Self figures prominently as a substructure, or presupposition, necessary for other adult education discourse, and in particular for discourse on transformative education and on authenticity in teaching. I will review each in turn.
The Self and Transformative Learning

“Transformative learning is aimed at helping the individual become more aware [of] critical assumptions in order to actively engage in changing those that are not adaptive or are inadequate for effective problem solving” (Kitchner & King, 1990, p. 159). First articulated by Mezirow (1978), the theory has become one adult education’s signature contributions to educational literature (Baumgartner, 2001), generating intense theoretical (Weisner & Mezirow, 2000) and more limited empirical debate and inquiry (Taylor, 2000). The theory posits that, when people encounter a disorienting dilemma, or “some experience that problematizes current understandings and frames of reference” (Taylor, 2000, p. 155), individuals sometimes experience a perspective transformation and the following “phases of meaning” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) in some, but not necessarily linear, order:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions’ dictated by one’s new perspective (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22)

This transformative experience triggers critical analysis of “meaning perspectives” which were, “for the most part, uncritically acquired in childhood through the process of socialization, often in the context of an emotionally charged relationship with parents, teachers, and other mentors” (Mezirow, 1990a, p. 3).

Transformative learning is a decidedly modernist theory, based on Habermas’ critical communicative theory (Mezirow, 2000) and an express belief in meaning structures which can be diagrammed with boxes, circles and arrows (King, 2005; Deshler, 1990). Since the theory is consistent with constructivism, “in which learners build from experience and construct knowledge and meaning” (King, 2005, p. 13), it does not necessarily require that a unitary and coherent Self be that which is constructed, and Clark (1999) has argued that a non-unitary self would reopen the theory to possibilities for learning across multiple selves and narrative. A frame of reference that transforms could be, for example, an epistemology (Kegan, 2000). Nevertheless, Mezirow has placed the assumed Self and the central and deepest structure in his theory: “The most personally significant and emotionally exacting transformations involve a critique of previously unexamined premises regarding one’s self” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22).

Others building on Mezirow’s theory have followed suit. Encounters with virtual worlds can trigger “deep critical reflection” in which “Learners must reinterpret their sense of self in light of newly acquired knowledge” (Harmon, 2011, p. 29) as each of those learners “considers what their real selves are like” (p. 30). Transformative learning is part of the “journey of the self, a journey that involves a recognition of the self in
relation to the world” (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003, p. 102). Indeed, for some transformative learning theorists, absence of Self precludes any transformation:

If we have no separate identity, no clear sense of self, we cannot pull back from the messages we absorbed form others in order to see which frames of reference belong to us as individuals and which have been absorbed without reflection.

(Cranton, 2000, p. 197)

There is too often a Self in transformative theory, and that Self is true, genuine, and brooks no counterfeit selves. It can only be expressed through transformative learning experiences which must be profound and never casual (Daloz, 2000), and it produces autonomous actors as “transformative learning enhances our crucial sense of agency over ourselves and our lives” (Mezirow, 1990b, p. 361).

Foucault (1975/1995) argued that our schools, like our prisons, were designed to produce, with factory-like efficiency, not knowledge but types of people, and that contemporaneous with the birth of such person-factories was the movement to reform them. Transformative adult education theory represents such a reform of the person-making function of the educational machine. The theory holds that if adult educators will only produce better adults—that is, autonomous individuals who are true to their discovered Selves—the world will be change. Transformative education promises to produce liberation through women’s consciousness raising (Loughlin, 1993; Hart, 1990), to counter racism through conscientization (Heaney & Horton, 1990), and to effectively counter the ideologies of racism, sexism, and classism (Kennedy, 1990) by transforming learners into new types of people. Students can be transformed by their teachers into global citizens through service-learning (Bamber & Hankin, 2011). Exemplary
individuals like Nelson Mandella can be appropriated as examples of the theory’s veracity and retrospectively labeled as people who experienced transformative learning and changed the world (Daloz, 2000). Transformative learning can explain how compliant students from poor backgrounds who depend on scholarships can suddenly become responsible scholars who are critical thinkers (Lin, 2005), and to show how white students who study abroad in Africa can learn critical thinking that challenges materialism and make them better teachers of children (Hutchinson & Rea, 2011).

Transformative education theory, thus formulated, posits an effective way to make adult learners more like their teachers want them to become—that is, more socially liberal, more socially aware and opposed to oppression based on race, class, and gender, and more open-minded. While the goals of the theorists may be laudable, the simplistic mechanism they propose to explain such transformation, insofar as it relies on a unitary and discoverable true Self, are problematic for the study of alterity.

Such a formulation is not inevitable, and there are more nuanced perspectives within the larger transformative learning tradition. Hutchinson and Rea (2011) expressly consider multiple identities and the transformation of values, rather than selves. Drikx (1997) argued that the theory should be expanded to include soul and the transformation of spirit. Working from a postmodern perspective, Steinnes (2004) argued for transformative educational theory to utilize deconstruction in order to prevent existing prejudices from being “blindly reinscribed” (p. 261) during the research process. Other scholars dissent from the tradition entirely. Brooks (2000), for example, criticized transformative education theory for its culture-specific nature and concluded that adult educators have no right to facilitate the transformation of others. I found, however, no
transformative education literature consistent with the human experience of alterity, or anthropological data suggesting that the experience of alterity can lead to personal transformation (Chapin, 2008). As will be seen, alterity is accompanied by dramatic transformations of perspective, and these transformations may be precipitated by apparently casual, and not “epochal,” interactions and events, which Daloz (2000, p. 106) argues is impossible.

Alterity is accompanied by changes in meaning perspectives which are entirely reversible, rather than enduring. Depictions of alterity suggest that no true and hidden Self is necessary for such transformations to occur. And, finally, sometimes alterity, with its profound and jarring perspective transformations, produces suffering. Even though King (2009) noted that “in reality, some learners experience negative and even severe results” (p. 8) from transformative learning experiences, I found little in the literature exploring how some transformations are negative and awful, rather than positive and affirming. As it is currently articulated in mainstream adult education thought, transformative education theory simply cannot accept the human experience of alterity as anything other than pathological, since it cannot countenance multiple selves but relies on discovery of a presumed Self as a panacea to make everything in an individual’s personal and social world better. For those who might advocate for the possibility of healthy assemblages of polyvalent selves, the theory, which purports to be emancipatory, is yet another voice of oppression and condemnation.

The Self and Authenticity in Teaching

There is considerable overlap between the literature on transformative education and that on authenticity (Tennant, 2005; Cranton & Carusetta, 2004b; Cranton, 2002;
Cranton, 1994). Authenticity implies that there is both an authentic and an inauthentic existence (Kreber, 2010), and privileges some adult educators to determine that other, less authentic educators are “counterfeit critical thinkers” (Brookfield, 2006, p. 7, italics in original) because authentic teachers, unlike their less-authentic brethren, are in touch with their genuine selves, which given them such inchoate advantages as presence (Kornelsen, 2006) and congruence (Brookfield, 2006). Even as its leading proponent, Cranton (2006b), has alleged “I am not quite sure what authenticity is” (p. 83), she has nevertheless argued that “authenticity is founded on continuing deep development of a sense of self” (p. 84). Reviewing the literature on the concept, Cranton & Carusetta (2004a) concluded that authenticity has been variably described, in glowing terms, as providing pretty much everything a Western individual might aspire to become: “Authenticity is a multi-faceted concept that includes at least four parts: being genuine, showing consistency between values and actions, relating to others in such a way as to encourage their authenticity, and living a critical life” (p. 7). It allows authentic teachers to “bring their sense of self into their teaching” (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004b, p. 277).

Not surprising, I did not find a single study suggesting that teachers could profit, grow or effectively teach while being inauthentic—inauthenticity is apparently a person of straw or argumentative foil, whose position no scholar advocates.

Indeed, Kreber, Klampfleitner, McCune, Bayne and Knottenbelt (2007) criticized authenticity as offering a sort of under-theorized remedy for all educational ills:

Recent North American literature in adult and higher education has attached value to authenticity and highlighted the significance of authenticity in teaching.

“Authenticity” is seen, for example, to make individuals more whole, more
integrated, more fully human, more aware, more content with their personal and professional lives, their actions more clearly linked to purpose, “empowered,” better able to engage in community with others, and so forth…Clearly, then, authenticity appears to have been recognized as a significant construct with respect to learning and development and teachers and students. However, as long as authenticity remains only vaguely understood and ill defined, which we suggest is the case at present, it is, in a strict sense, not feasible to articulate a persuasive rationale for why we should be concerned with the phenomenon in the first place. (Kreger et al., 2007, pp. 24-25, italics in original)

Further, while authenticity is sometimes stated in other terms, as, for example, a congruence between religious faith and actions (Parrish & Taylor, 2007), it is most often defined in relation to a presumed unitary and discoverable Self. Authenticity is coherence with this internal world (Frego, 2006), such that, despite social and occupational constraints, one never becomes “someone you do not want to be” (Hunt, 2006). When culture is seen as relevant, its role is to assist us in understanding “the changing self, others and contexts” (Lin, 2006, p. 68). “Being authentic… involves acknowledging one’s personality and the implications of that characteristic for teaching style” (Cranton, 1994, p. 193). “The holy grail of the authentic self figures prominently throughout the history of Western philosophy” (Splitter, 2008, p. 146), and adult educators follow this tradition by seeking to discover this Self in art teacher education (MacKenzie, 2010) and art museums (Kenkmann, 2011), in African-centered pedagogy (Merry & New, 2008), and through imagination and play (Dirkx, 2006). There is little dissent and scant questioning of this endeavor.
From a poststructuralist adult education perspective, this quest is as problematic, since the modernist search for essences, like the eternal impulse to reform prisons and schools (Foucault, 1975/1995), only replicates and reinforces existing power relations. “The dominant tendency in educational theory and practice has been to privilege the agency of the autonomous self and exclude any notion of determination [by social forces]” (Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, 1997, p. 99). Since an authentic Self is autonomous, it contradicts the basic postmodern assumption that power is found in relationships with others and is therefore both productive and repressive (Kilgore, 2001). English (2006) challenged the hegemony of this presumed Self when she noted that feminism and other “postfoundational areas of research” can undermine “any notion of a unitary self” (p. 20). However, most postmodern adult education scholars appear to have ignored the literature on authenticity because of the sheer foolishness, from a postmodern perspective, of imagining a unitary Self existing prior to and outside of social relationships and of extrapolating from that imagining a way of being authentic toward that imagined Self. To a poststructuralist like myself, this sort of thinking about faithfulness toward a Self that exists outside of real-world relationships and must be discovered through an inchoate faith in its existence belongs in a school of theology and not in social science research. Only English (2006) has applied poststructuralist theory to the discourse on authenticity and posited authenticity as a contradictory state. She concluded that “To be authentic, educators must continue developing capacities of reflexivity, questioning their own practice, and developing ways of communicating with learners” (English, 2006, p. 24) and so challenged adult educators to engage in authentic
teaching as an open-ended and reflexive searching and not as a closed interrogation of an imagined unitary Self.

**Public Pedagogy Research in Adult Education**

Roman (2009) defined public pedagogy as “both the commodified texts and the lived situated reception of them by viewers and audiences, who are active cultural producers of their meanings” (p. 678). Sandlin, O’Malley and Burdick (2011) undertook a comprehensive and integrative literature review (Torraco, 2005) of educational research literature involving public pedagogy as “that subgenre of inquiry [that] has emerged that is concerned with educational activity and learning in extrastitutional spaces and discourses” (Sandlin, O’Malley & Burdick, 2011, p. 338). They conducted a thematic analysis of 420 sources and found five major themes that dominated the literature:

(a) citizenship within and beyond schools,

(b) popular culture and everyday life,

(c) informal institutions and public spaces

(d) dominant cultural discourses, and

(e) public intellectualism and social activism. (Sandlin, O’Malley, & Burdick, 2011, p. 340)

About 5% of the sources defined public pedagogy as education for citizenship, or education as a public good (p. 342). Some 35% involved studies in the second category, exploring “the educational force of popular culture” (p. 343) to both repress and to challenge existing social structures. Fifteen percent fell in the third category and involved the informal yet institutionalized locations for public education such as museums and art galleries. One fifth (20%) of the reviewed studies focused on dominant
discourses as “technologies for the widespread determination of how the public is constituted as well as a specific range of dispositions toward civic life” (p. 351, italics in original). This includes both public policy and neoliberalism as forms of public pedagogy. Finally, about a quarter (25%) of the studies defined public intellectualism and performative social action as forms of public pedagogy, and emphasized “the role of educators and other cultural workers as oppositional public intellectuals acting to create democratic public spaces that transform social problems” (p. 355).

In undertaking this research, I am arguably performing the work of a public intellectual seeking to transform existing social relations, which would place my research in the final category. This work is itself expressly a work designed to address the public and social policy underlying the regulation of human experience through popular and psychiatric notions of the Self. This notion of social policy and its relations to alterity and public pedagogy are so important as to warrant discrete attention in this study (see chapter 6). However, I am utilizing “public pedagogy” in this study in the sense that it is used in the second category, that is, “to illustrate that popular culture does not automatically reproduce dominant ideologies, but exists as a site of negotiation where hegemony is struggled for yet not always necessarily won” (Sandlin, O’Malley, & Burdick, 2011, p. 345). Accordingly, this literature will briefly review and highlight that subset of studies which focuses on the educational effects of popular culture, and in particular of movies and cinematic texts. These fall into two broad categories: works in the critical media studies which seek, usually in a modernist and post-Marxist fashion, to uncover true and repressive messages lurking in cinematic and other popular culture texts and so to understand how oppressive forces work through such texts (Tisdell &
Thompson, 2007a); and works in a more postmodern tradition, the studies of public pedagogy which focus on how popular culture both reproduces and resists existing social relations (Sandlin, Schults, & Burdick, 2010a). I will review recent adult education literature in both categories in turn.

**Critical Media Studies**

Much of the adult education literature related to public pedagogy consists of media studies in the critical tradition (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007a) that seek to make patent the “covert messages that we might not think much about” (Tisdell & Thompson, 2007b, p. 2). Critical scholars seek to understand the messages embedded in media because those who control the media “have much more significant power to project [what is] natural and authentic—simply part of the ‘way things are’” (Brookfield, 1990, p. 236) than are the consumers of said media. In colloquial academic parlance, just as a “postie” is someone who deploys postmodern theory in meaning making, a “crit” is someone who utilizes critical theory to explore social phenomena. I resist the intellectual tradition associated with the label “crit “ because of its German idealist and Marxist underpinnings of critical theory, which create a discursive space for a rebranding of conservative and Euro-centric values and ideas under a rationalist and neo-Marxist label. The similarity of critical theory to other forms of Western discourse, including the Judeo-Christian tradition, is remarkable, since classical critical theorists expressly viewed “modern” man as “fallen”:

[t]he fallen nature of modern man cannot be separated from social progress… The individual is wholly devalued in relation to economic powers…. The flood of
detailed information and candy-loss entertainment simultaneously instructs and stultifies mankind. (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/1972, pp. xiv-xv)

These seminal critical theorists, Horkheimer and Adorno, working within binaries such as heaven and hell (p. 14) and material verses spirit (p. 8), articulate a grand, backward-looking theory of cultural pessimism and spiritual failure. They have transformed the sins outlined by the Judeo-Christian tradition into the greater sins of capitalism first outlined by Marx. The West has failed, but the writers of this particular version of the Enlightenment Project (Krammick, 1995), the critical theorists, suggest that they know how to save us— with pure reason, which can allow us to understand better, and perhaps to avoid, those sins of capitalism.

This critical project continues unabated in contemporary adult education discourse in the critical media studies tradition. Critical theory encourages Guy (2007; 2004), in examining the manner in which human sexuality is depicted in the popular media, to lament that “No longer is monogamy thought of as the norm for citizens” (Guy, 2007, p. 19). Guy’s pronouncement ignores that monogamy is impossible for queer people in states where we cannot marry; that many cultures and even some American subcultures are proudly poly-amorous, that is, contain members who are either in multi-partnered relationships or who elect not to limit their sexuality expression to their primary relationship; and that the divorce courts are full of expensive discussions between lawyers about the large number of Americans who are not monogamous, or only serially so.

Guy (2007) has simultaneously spoken an ideal (that monogamy is a desirable and attainable goal for society populated by members of the species Homo sapiens sapiens)
and, in a suddenly conservative move, lamented its passing. While Guy’s works depict an accomplished scholar who is an earnest advocate for the rights of minority populations, he has nevertheless employed a critical theory discourse that buttresses a status quo in which I cannot participate, because I cannot marry my same-sex partner in Georgia. While today I am looking forward and exulting in the real social and legal changes making the lives of queer folk better in America, including the disappearance of sodomy laws that made me a once criminal in several states because of my sexual orientation (Eskridge, 2008), critical theory constrains Guy to look backwards and to lament a lost ideal. I resist such idealist presumptions, and note that critical theory often provides a platform for the best-intentioned researchers to present their own normative moral statements as universal truths.

The goal of the critical media studies tradition is to educate readers of cinematic texts to become “critical media literate” (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Stuckey & Kring, 2007; Tisdell, 2007; Graham, 1989) in a certain manner acceptable to academic elites while imagining a small, rich group of oppressors or a media elite dictating culture and art (Guy, 2004; Marcuse, 1964). “Theories about critical media literacy tend to center on the unconscious effects of popular culture and media influences on ways of educating for increased consciousness” (Tisdell, 2007, p. 8). In other educational fields, this critical medial literacy is something that can be taught in middle school to transform society (Gainer, 2010), as something that must be expressly taught to young and different “digital natives” who have “boundless interest and curiosity about emerging technologies” (Considine, Horton, & Moorman, 2009, p. 473), and as essential for teacher education core curricula (Torres & Mercado, 2006). Critical media is presented as fraught with
“enormous challenges” because “the teaching of critical thinking skills is not part of the regular curriculum” (David, 2009, p. 85) and, ultimately, is critically important for democracy itself (Burroughs, Brocato, Hopper, & Sanders, 2009) and for the creation of a “radical democracy” wherein transformed and empowered learners “are actors and players in every realm--- cultural, political, economic, and social” (Dolby, 2003, p. 368).

In adult education, Brookfield (1986) first called for an “ideological detoxification” (p. 151) in which adult educators assisted learners in overcoming oppression through developing media literacy:

Ideological detoxification helps adults realize that the representations of political realities presented on television and in the press often are culture specific, influenced by vested interests, and reflect an unchallenged ideological orthodoxy. The mass media, sometimes deliberately but frequently unwittingly, tend to offer distorted, crudely simplistic, personalized analyses of political issues. A major task of adult education must be to remove this perceptual poison from individuals’ minds and to nurture in them a healthy skepticism toward ideologically biased explanations of the world. (Brookfield, 1986, p. 151)

Adult educators working within this tradition can utilize analyzes of the media to counter social ills, and in particular oppressive ideologies such as racism and sexism. While Paul (2000), as an urban high school teacher, used rap music as in their teaching practice, to inquire “into the cultural implications of using rap’s violence, misogyny and homophobia for didactic purposes” (p. 251), Guy (2004), as an adult educator, analyzed gangsta-rap lyrics and concluded that the “explicit and shocking expressions” (p. 43) therein were attributable to a continuing racist ideology fomented by the “hegemony of a
white-owned, white-run black culture industry” which “operates in a subtle and insidious way” (p. 49). Wright (2010) analyzed sexist hegemony in the television series *The Avengers*, in which “female subservience” (p. 245) played a part of the stories. Carpenter and Sourdot (2010) explored how film and television could “perpetuate and complicate racial, religious, cultural and other identity stereotypes” (p. 444) in pre-service teachers.

However, perhaps in part because “Popular culture is given relatively little attention in the field of adult education thus far” (Tisdell, 2007, p. 6), there has been relatively little of interest in “empowering” adult learners to read texts in a certain prescribed ways, such as Rodesiler’s (2010) attempt to prepare students to “deconstruct media message” (p. 164) found in movies that support enlistment in the military. Adult educators appear less ready to tell their learns how they should think. It may be that some postmodern ideas are rhizomatically infecting critical theory, as, for example, Brookfield (2005) expressly considers Foucault’s notions of immanent power in his important work, *The Power of Critical Theory: Liberating Adult Learning and Teaching*. There are adult educators who seek to utilize cinematic texts for didactic purposes, but these purposes do not always require the uncovering of oppressive power and of oppression. In contrast to Guy’s (2004) reading of “gansta” rap as a product of oppression, Hanley (2007) suggested utilizing hip-hop music as an educational tool to connect “rationality emotion, and intuition” (p. 43) in teacher education. Fink and Foote (2007) used the cartoon show, *The Simpsons*, in classroom settings in order to teach humanities and to “reinforce class lessons by illustrating key concepts in humorous, entertaining, unique and interesting ways” (p. 52). Heuer (2007) explored how adult educators can utilize popular media to improve their students’ literacy. Maudlin (2010)
used the movie *Superman Returns* to explore both “our limitations and our possibilities” (p. 157) in the new millennium. Yet, whether because of an innate resistance to the “enveloping negativity which dominates articulations of public pedagogy in certain critical pedagogy literature” (Savage, 2010, p. 104), or perhaps because adult education has traditionally focused on presumably active, rather than presumably passive, students and learners, the adult education literature is more interested in exploring how cinematic texts both resist and rearticulate existing cultural and social patterns:

> [P]op culture and entertainment media are created for the cultural mainstream, and so most entertainment media, especially television, reproduce traditional value sand norms. But entertainment media can also challenge or resist the dominant culture….Most media both reproduce and resist culture. (Thompson, 2007, p. 88)

It is literature reading the public pedagogy of popular culture in this more nuanced form, as both a site of oppression and a site of resistance to oppression, that I finally turn.

**Public Pedagogy of Reproduction and Resistance**

Tisdell and Thompson (2007c), utilizing a social constructivist paradigm and assuming that adults do not discover but rather construct knowledge, surveyed adult educators and found that “people are continually constructing knowledge both about themselves and others through the media, as they frame and reframe their own and others’ stories based on their own experience” (p. 671). Though 80% of their study participants reported using popular culture in their teaching on occasion, “few in adult education are very intentionally engaging popular culture as a tool of critical pedagogy in a major way” (p. 671). While some educators, such as Sandlin (2007; Sandlin & Milam,
2008) in her study of the practice of “culture jamming” as an act of anti-consumption activism, focus primarily on resistance to forces of oppression within popular culture, many more are interest in reading such culture to understand how learners create themselves from available discourse. The television series Boston Public can be read “as an important public pedagogy to be analyzed—or ‘read’—for the educational discourses that it constructs and circulates to a wide national audience” (Tillman & Trier, 2007, p. 123) and used as a classroom case-study (Trier, 2010a). Season 4 of The Wire can be used to teach pre-service teachers how inner-city education is culturally constructed (Trier, 2010b). While the series The Avengers may have contained sexist messages (Wright, 2010), it also facilitated the emergence of feminist and women’s consciousness by providing a female protagonist who served “as an example, a role model, and a mentor” (Wright, 2007, p. 68) to other women. Kruse (2010) used an analysis of episodes of CSI as cultural performance to explore how forensic science is understood in American culture, and Hayes and Gee (2010) studied informal learning in video games. Giroux (1993) studied the movie Dead Poets Society to make evident “the multiple and often contradictory ways in which it ruptured and supported dominant codes regarding issues of knowledge, pedagogy and resistance” (p. 41).

In their review of the literature connecting adult education and popular culture, Wright and Sandlin (2009a) reported a need for more studies of “popular culture as a site of informal, self-directed learning” (p. 133) and, while advocating for a continuing understanding of how hegemony functions through popular media, called for a deeper understanding that
Popular culture as a facilitator of, and catalyst for, self-directed learning can bring about learning that is far more powerful, lasting, and lifelong than learning in formal educational settings and other traditionally researched areas of teaching and learning. (Wright & Sandlin, 2009a, p. 135)

Just as learners might use social networking to negotiate their subjectivity (Christie & Bloustien, 2010), they may utilize cinematic cultural texts in the process of creating their identities (Alvermann & Heron, 2001). And, of course, these studies must proceed with a thorough understanding that “Pleasure is a primary reason people are active consumers of popular culture” (Tisdell, 2007, p. 9). This project follows in this adult education tradition by inquiring how individuals might construct meanings from cinematic texts under study, to both reproduce and resist popular, academic, and psychiatric notions regarding the Self and human experience. While consumers of these cinematic texts might watch them for pleasure, in doing so they also actively learn how and why they might themselves manifest alters.
Chapter 3

On Method:

Rhizoanalysis of Depictions of Alterity in Selected Cinematic Texts

What if... queer research were to be something more essentially disturbing than the stories we tell ourselves of our oppressions in order precisely to confirm, yet once more, our abjection, our victimized subjectivity, our wounded identity? What if, therefore, queer research were actively to refuse epistemological respectability, to refuse to constitute that wounded identity as an epistemological object such as would define, institute, and thus institutionalize a disciplinary field? (Haver, 1997, p. 278)

If the overarching theoretical framework of this project is provided by Foucault’s notions power and discipline, then the methodological framework of this project is largely drawn from the works of Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987), and in particular their notion of the rhizome. Indeed, this project is predicated on the supposition that, if social truth is rhizomatic, rather than arboreal, then truth is dispersed holographically throughout experience—in a hologram, unlike a photograph, light from every point in an image is stored at every point of the record. Under such a model of truth-making, superspecialization within streams of discourse like anthropology, psychology, sociology, or adult education are no longer necessary to interrogate social truth. When the metaphor of the rhizome—in which everything is at the surface, where I can begin anywhere because all the parts are connected, and for which there is no true beginning and no real end—
supplants the metaphor of the tree, new possibilities for inquiry emerge. Unlike a tree, “The rhizome has no essence and is characterized by movement between things rather than by a discernable path” (Hagood, 2009, p. 43). Utilizing this model, theorists of difference can proceed in a manner more congruent with understanding difference.

For example, Goodley and Roets (2008), scholars working in disability studies and using the metaphor of the rhizome, noted that “models and orthodoxies prevent experimentation” (p. 240). The new metaphors can offer new ontological and epistemological grounds (Goodley & Roets, p. 239) for understanding differences in ability. Those often labeled “disabled” can thus use Deleuze and Guattari’s theory “to oppose how they have been defined and treated in society” (Roets, Reinaart, Adams, & Van Hove, 2008, p. 15). Since “impairment” requires a binary with “normalcy” (Goodley & Roets, p. 244), and rhizomatic thinking is opposed to binary thinking and to the discovery of essences, the theory deconstructs impairment “within dynamic and reflexive networks of social engagement and activity” (p. 245). The rhizome can be used as a model for discovery-oriented science teaching since rhizome “comprises movements, directions, and lines which constantly generate new relations via connections the rhizome makes with all and sundry” (Lee, 2008, p. 922). So, for example, the rhizome can be used to overcome the educational “orthodoxies [that] prevent experimentation” (Goodley & Roets, p. 240) and provoke wonder and passion as learners connect educational subject matter with their own experiences. It can be used to create a “socially just pedagogies [that] call for sensitivity to politics and culture” (Goodley, 2007, p. 317). In adult education, Kang (2007) used the rhizome to theorize rhizoactivity as an experimental construct designed to “break the binary between the subject (the individual) and the
object (the world)” (p. 215) and so to escape the often-assumed project of enduring and “unchanging essences” (p. 217) within adult learners. The model has even been used to teach children “rhizomatic” responsibility, since “action and consequences are never matters of single cause and effect, but there is nevertheless educational value in mapping interrelatedness and the series of effects than can flow both from our actions and our words” (Stables, 2004, p. 220). For theorizing difference, the rhizome offers a Deleuzean “becoming” that “oscillates in the unstable and unruly spaces, between the poles of authority and uncontrolled freedom, between the forces of stability and chaos” (Lee, 2008, p. 920).

**Rhizoanalysis Described**

Utilizing the rhizome, a researcher can follow her selected “particular lines of flight through their texts” into “directions that may not be taken by others” (Honan, 2007, p. 532). This project follows the rhizome and a research method first articulated by Alvermann (2000), a method she labeled rhizoanalysis. Rhizoanalysis is an open-ended, emergent analysis of texts, focusing on their function rather than any supposed inherent meaning. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, Alvermann (2000) argued that “a text is neither signifier nor the signified” (p. 117)—that is, it neither directly represents reality or something that can itself be directly represented. A text is not examined as a thing, but rather a process. Rhizonalysis asks not what a text means but rather how it works:

[R]hizoanalysis is a method of examining texts that allows us to see things in the middle. Looking for middles, rather than beginnings and endings, makes it possible to decenter key linkages and find new ones, not by combining old ones in
new ways, but by remaining open to the proliferation of ruptures and discontinuities that in turn create other linkages. (Alvermann, 2000, p. 118)

Further, rhizonanalysis is queer research (Haver, 1997) in that defining it is less important than understanding what it does and how it functions. Just as queer theory resists essentialized construction of homosexual identity, but understands sexuality and desire as something that functions in society rather than exists outside of social relations (Sullivan, 2003; Jagose, 1996), queer research should seek to describe and trouble rather than inscribe and make certain. Rhizoanalysis, too, does not seek to create a set of enduring, discovered essential truths, but rather to describe how things are working now, and to imagine how this working might be changed. It is “a process of map-making” that transforms data into meaning (Johnson, 2004, p. 86). Leafgren (2008) described rhizoanalysis as a method designed “to openly seek lateral paths of understanding by linking and folding texts” (p. 332). “Rhizoanalysis focuses on how texts operate, not by looking internally at those texts and supposing meaning and connections, but by looking at how those texts function in relationship to other texts:

The conventional modes of interpretation and analysis espoused by linguists, literary theorists and semioticians do not hold in a rhizo-textual analysis. [In Rhizoanalysis], it is how texts function outside themselves that is of interest. This interest stems from the belief that texts, like rhizomes, connect with other things (e.g., readers, other texts, contexts). (Alvermann, 2000, p. 117)

Thus, the “middles” with which rhizonanalysis is preoccupied are the intersections between texts where one text influences, creates, or transforms another. For the study of alterity, this includes the manner in which cinematic texts relate to
psychiatric discourse, to popular culture, and to learners. The process of rhizoanalysis cannot be definitively and finally described or defined, because “Rhizomes do not have clearly identifiable beginnings and ends. It is impossible to provide a linear description of the journey taken through and across a rhizome” (Honan, 2007, p. 533). I will nevertheless attempt to succinctly describe, at least in general terms, the process undertaken in this project, first by discussing the texts which I selected; then by reviewing how I undertook to analyze those texts, by making quasi-ethnographic tracings of their contours; and finally by discussing the move from those texts to other texts, which Alverman (2000) referred to as transferring the tracing back to the map—that is, by describing how these texts function in relation to other texts and discourses in order to map the terrain which constructs and constrains and enables and disables our existence. The tracing describes what I have seen, but the map imagines where I would like to go.

Selection of Cinematic Texts

Here is the “middle” where this project began: North American models of mental illness are being exported around the world, both as a result of growing U.S. cultural hegemony and of the marketing campaigns of the pharmaceutical industry (Watters, 2010). But these notions do not spring full-grown into existence, like Athena from the thigh of Zeus. They are grounded in culture, including Western popular and cinematic culture (Hall, 2006). This has been well established in far too numerous projects to repeat here, but a few examples will illustrate. Cultural ideas about homosexuality are both expressed and promulgated in cinematic arts (Russo, 1987), as are notions surrounding race, gender, class, and other identity markers (Benshoff & Griffin, 2009). The role of the cinema in inscribing “teacher identity” has even been explored (Trier,
Thus, cinematic texts like *Three Faces of Eve* (Johnson, 1957) and *The United States of Tara* (Cody & Kaplow, 2009, 2010) express and maintain the ideas about the supposed unitary Self that are deployed to create alterity as an illness. A character in a movie can be an object lesson for adult learners in what is and is not permissible in a society, and for what they can expect if they or a loved one manifests alters.

Analysis of artifacts of popular culture can challenge the discursive formations that limit human experience by interrogating these texts as cultural performances (Kruse, 2010). Arguably, most adults learn theories about alterity from popular sources, as only the most affluent can afford the expensive services of psychologists and psychiatrists. Just as “[t]he idea of homosexuality first emerged onscreen, then, as an unseen danger, a reflection of our fears about the perils of tampering with male and female roles” (Russo, 1987, p. 6), Western cultural fears about the dangers of daring to express more than one Self are patent and rife in today’s cinematic narratives. The theory of the unified Self is, after all, a theoretical scheme that structures and limits experience, and,

Theoretical schemes and the neutral impersonal idioms we use in talking about them give us respite from the unmanageable flux of lived experience, helping us create illusory word-worlds in which we can more easily manage because they are cut off from the stream of life. (Jackson, 1989, pp. 3-4)

Cinematic texts, as tools by which adults learn and construct their experience, are cultural artifacts that form important parts of our cultural rhizomes and experiences. I selected a non-random sample of six cinematic texts which depicted the experience of alterity: *Three Faces of Eve* (Johnson, 1957); *Sybil* (Petrie & Babbin, 1976); *Fight Club*
(Linson & Fincher, 1999); The United States of Tara, Season 1 (Cody & Kaplow, 2009); The United States of Tara, Season 2 (Cody & Kaplow, 2010); and Youth in Revolt (Arteta, Permut, Weinstein & Weinstein, 2009). [See Table 1] All of these movies and shows depict those who experience alterity as mentally ill and in urgent need of medical treatment or as somehow sociopathic and criminally destructive. However, I had different reasons, and reservations, for and about the selection of each text.

Two of the texts, Eve and Sybil, were “true” stories. I had reservations about selecting such “true” stories because the psychiatric machine requires stories of abuse as a preface to the production of characters experiencing alterity, and I am both personally offended and dismayed by cinematic depictions of child abuse which appear in such films. The selection of Three Faces of Eve (Johnson, 1957), however, was easy: the protagonist’s alters are quirky but likeable, and the trauma that produced the main characters alterity was so tame, by today’s standards—which often include stories of Satanic rituals and rape to produce alterity (Nathan & Snedeker, 2001)—that the movie was easy to view repeatedly, as my research required. In Three Faces of Eve, the trauma that created the protagonist’s multiplicity was, after all, kissing her dead grandmother’s body at a wake, as then-Southern culture required—which is a far cry from the lurid tales of “breeder” women raped by relatives who then gave birth to babies which were cannibalistically sacrificed to Satan used to explain how alterity emerges in more recent decades (Nathan & Snedeker, 2001; Spanos, 1996).

However, I had initially intended to omit from my selection Sybil (Petrie & Babbin, 1976), which to me is a story about a child who was horribly abused, and whose ability to dissociate allowed her to survive the trauma. What I find offensive about the
film is that the protagonist’s alterity apparently justified to filmmakers the weaving of a tale about childhood trauma, and depicting that abuse in an unnecessarily frank fashion. I simply did not think, absent Sybil’s remarkable ability to dissociate, that such a movie could have been made, and I was distressed that the movie was a story about “curing” Sybil of the talent that enabled her to survive, instead of treating her for her deep wounds as a survivor of childhood abuse. However, as I branched out along the rhizomatous trails from my other cinematic texts, I found that some scholars believed that Sybil provided the model for today’s understandings of alterity:

Prior to Sybil, MPD had been one of the rarest of mental disorders…. After Sybil, MPD exploded. One expert estimates that between 1985 and 1995 there were almost 40,000 new cases. And curiously, the latter-day multiples looked a lot like Sybil. (Acocella, 1999, p. 4)

Indeed, Rieber (2006) blamed the Sybil book (Schrieber, 1973) and movie/mini-series Petrie & Babin, 1976) for the widespread appearance of a disorder (MPD/DID) which he believed to be quite rare, and Spanos (1996) noted that the popularity of the story helped lead to therapeutic conventions that included therapists who “prod [patients] repeatedly in an attempt to unearth such memories” (p. 267). While my sample of cinematic texts was non-random, I felt that I could not ignore Sybil, despite my personal misgivings. It was too important to the cultural rhizome constructing alterity.

The other texts I selected were chosen primarily because I found them personally engaging. The United States of Tara (Cody & Kaplow, 2009, 2010) is a comedy that, since it effectively delineated contemporary notions of Dissociative Identity Disorder, was immediately relevant. Tara’s story, while not a “true” story like that of Sybil or Eve,
is written as if it could be true. Like a fictional ethnography (Visweswaran, 1994), The United States of Tara effectively conveyed many of the beliefs underlying contemporary notions of alterity in the United States, and it did so in a fashion that I found easy and delightful to review repeatedly, as I knew I must.

I selected two cinematic texts including expressly fictional depictions of alterity. The first was Fight Club (Linson & Fincher, 1999), which I chose in small part for its critical theory underpinnings—the main character, Jack, and his alter, Tyler Durden, seek the destruction of credit card companies and consumerism--- but primarily for the manner in which the main character and his alter communicate with one another. In all of the texts selected, the alters communicate with one another at times, but in Fight Club the two alters are in almost constant communication, sharing the screen and dialoguing with one another continuously. In a very clever depiction of alterity, until late in the movie only the protagonist (and also perhaps the viewer) is unaware that only one of the two alters is present to the other characters at any given time—both are onscreen, but only one is inhabiting the shared body. I selected this movie despite its strong depictions of violence and Giroux’ (2002) claim that the film is “morally bankrupt and politically reactionary” (p. 274), since I was not focused on its depiction of hypermasculinity and violence. While there is a vibrant tradition in adult education of educating adults about the danger of over-consumption through such theatrical means as faux evangelism and performance art (Sandlin & McLaren, 2010; Sandlin, 2010, 2007), I did not select this movie in order to explore its messages regarding commodity capitalism, either. I selected it because of its depiction of the protagonist’s disordered psyche and the manner in which his alter worked both for and against his interests.
I selected *Youth in Revolt* (Arteta, Permut, Weinstein & Weinstein, 2009) late in my analysis, because it depicted cinematically, for one of the first times, alterity as something that is benign, rather than destructive, for the main character. Just as there were movies in the 1960’s and ‘70’s that transitioned LGBTQ characters from laughable fairies or monsters into fully developed and interesting characters (Russo, 1987), *Youth in Revolt* may be such a transitional movie, as the protagonist intentionally creates his alter and never seeks to eliminate him, through therapy and remembering childhood trauma— as in *Eve, Sybil, and The United States of Tara*— or through violence— as in *Fight Club*, where Jack resolves the film and eliminates his alter Tyler Durden by shooting himself in the head and destroying part of his brain. *Youth in Revolt* ends with the protagonist going off to a juvenile prison for a few years, where his alter ego protects him from bullies and continues to accompany and assist him. His alter does not act contrary to his interest, but helps and advises him while only sometimes controlling his bodies. This represents a dramatic shift in the way alterity has been depicted, and I felt that made the film worthy of study.

There was, however, no grand scheme or rational logic for the selection of my cinematic texts. With one exception, I chose these movies and shows because of a confluence of two factors: first, they included depictions of alterity, and, second, I found pleasure in viewing them. *Sybil* met only the first of those inclusion criteria, but the film was too important to omit. My research, like other queer research endeavors, was designed to be “less a knowledge or the production of knowledge than it is a pragmatics, and interruption of the production of knowledge” (Haver, 1997, 284). Since a rhizomatous model of truth does not require tracing knowledge back to a true and certain
origin or first cause, the selection of specific texts was less important to my project than
the selection of texts which I could endure watching repeatedly as my work progressed.

The Process of Rhizoanalysis

I proceeded in my analysis of the selected films by breaking the rhizoanalysis into
three types of activities: tracing, writing and mapping. The distinction between these
steps is wholly conceptual, since I experienced the process of rhizoanalysis in neither
discrete nor discontinuous stages, but, conceptually and in retrospect, it helps to use these
categories to explain the research process. In tracing the phenomenon in question, I was
working as an ethnographer of sorts, living among these texts and interrogating the
characters for their stories and perspectives. In writing, I worked as a creative
professional researcher, making new connections and creating new forms of knowledge
during the process of inquiry. And in mapping the phenomenon of alterity, I was
working as, well, a cartographer of knowledge and of human experience. I will address
each type of activity in turn.

Tracing the Cinematic Texts

Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) distinguished tracings, which attempt to
directly represent the real in some degree, to mapping, which are rhizomatic, tangential
and experimental. The tracings I made were my notes and observations taken during my
many viewings of these texts, both during and after each showing. They were my
attempts to organize, in a retrievable manner, concrete examples and stories drawn from
the texts, coupled with my immediate insights and reactions. In a rhizoanalysis, tracings
are taken, but they are only taken in order to enrich the process of mapping: “the tracing
should always be put back on the map” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 13). The
tracings I made were, then, my written representations of what I saw and learned. I took
these notes in order to assist my later, and more important, analysis, my connection of
these texts to contemporary popular and psychiatric notions of the Self:

Plug the tracings back into the map, connect the roots of trees back up with a
rhizome….If it is true that it is of the essence of the map or rhizome to have
multiple entryways, then it is plausible that one could even enter them through
tracings or the root-tree, assuming the necessary precautions were taken (once
again, one must avoid any Manichaean dualism). (Deleuze & Guattari,
1980/1987, p. 14)

Such an apparently conventional approach—of simply taking notes of what one sees and
discerns—is acceptable in rhizoanalysis because the rhizome has so many entry points.
In rhizoanalysis, I can begin at any point, and in virtually any method, provided I guard
against dualistic thinking and never ultimately purport to represent the real in a
transparent fashion.

I am a trained cultural anthropologist who has produced an ethnography of United
States gay male culture and its attempts to adapt to the AIDS crisis in the early 1990’s
(Walker, 1993). To some degree, the “tracing” that I undertook was an ethnography of
the films in question—that is, my tracings were effectively field notes, or “inscriptions of
social life and social discourse” (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 8, italics in original)
depicted in the films. Fieldnotes are often a product of participant observation, wherein
an ethnographer utilizes “participant observation, in-depth interviewing, life history,
documentary analysis and investigatory diaries” (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 104) to
analyze culture and societies. I lived among the characters, took notes of their behavior,
dialogued with them in my notes and in my imagination. I asked questions about what their experiences were like, how they learned, and how they managed their affairs. I made observations of what they did and said, and kept a diary of my reactions to these characters.

Of course, the texts were not people and could not react to my presence as would the members of a society that an ethnographer studies. But, from a Deleuzean perspective, the texts were, after all, reactive, since they follow the law of the book. “The law of the book is the law of reflection, of the One that becomes two…” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1984, p. 5). The book is a text, or assemblage, that pretends to be a direct representation of the real, while it is only an assemblage which is in contact with other assemblages. That is, there is no real that we can access through books—we access only reflections of the real, books or assemblages, which are themselves after all only reflections of other reflections, and further are both intricately and immediately grounded in our own personal lives and experiences. A text is constantly in dialogue with other texts, and when I experience a cinematic texts, or re-experience it by viewing it again, it presents itself as a perishable entity that flows through my experience in a rhizomatic fashion. In other words, every time I experience a text, it is different. So perhaps it would not be false to say that I was an ethnographer of these texts. They spoke to me, and I responded to them, and what we said to one another changed over time and through experience.

I was not, however, attempting to write an ethnographic monograph, or summary and representation of what I viewed in these films. Ethnographers often tell stories about other cultures, allowing us, for examples, to understand how “Devil songs” can charm
away sickness in Native American O’Odham country (Kozac & Lopez, 1999), or how “coming out” can be a rite of passage for young gay American men (Herdt 1992), or, more generally, to interpret cultures and human experience in new fashions (Geertz, 1983). Since this was a rhizoanalysis, rather than an ethnographic analysis, I was focused more on making connections between my cinematic texts, adult learning and theory, and other texts—that is, I was interested in inhabiting, to the extent possible, the middles (Alvermann, 2000) instead of telling stories or presenting ideas which have beginnings, middles, and ends. To the limited extent that I was working as an ethnographer, I was following Jackson (1989) in a radical empiricism which “seeks to grasp the ways in which ideas and words are weeded to the world in which we live, how they are grounded in the mundane events and experiences of everyday life” (pp. 5-6). I was accepting the experiences of the characters in the cinematic texts as ordinary, rather than extraordinary, and trying to understand how that ordinary experience is transformed into a psychiatric illness rather than a human difference.

Writing as Inquiry

But how did I follow the dictates of the rhizome, and prevent my tracings and notes from becoming representations of some putative “real”? I attempted to do so by employing writing as a method of inquiry. The easy formulae of the professional researcher, where qualitative research can be set out in taxonomies that insure that issues of validity and reliability are properly addressed (Merriam & Simpson, 2000), have little currency when the assumptions of realist qualitative inquiry are supplanted with poststructural models of truth as rhizomatic. A nuanced exploration of human phenomena cannot be accurately cataloged and described before it is undertaken. And, while
language and writing are no longer transparent and words no longer have clear centers (Derrida, 1966/1978)—that is, as I no longer attempt to create a transparent written account of real events through my words and writing—the tool (writing) can now become the method, as sort of “rhizo-textual analysis” when then “follows the paths provided by provision linkages, through and across the various discursive plateaus that are formed by disparate flows and fragments” (Honan, 2007, p. 538).

Richardson (writing separately in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) posits that writing after poststructuralism is different because the difference between social scientific writing and fiction writing is recognized to be one of the intent of the author’s truth claims. While genres have blurred boundaries now, a social scientist still makes truth claims and, while she may not “triangulate” data, a poststructuralist social scientist does “crystallize” meaning into words (p. 963). Writing can be deployed in Richardson’s “Creative Analytic Projects” that produce a new type of ethnography. For Richardson, the process of writing moves her into a space where “both my compassion for others and my actions on their behalf increase” and where she can “see more clearly interrelationships between and among peoples worldwide” (p. 967). Writing itself creates new possibilities for inquiry and understanding.

Richardson’s endorsement of writing is understated and tame, as writing is only one type of inquiry, and she is only writing one thing, stories. St. Pierre’s understanding of writing as inquiry is more robust. First, St. Pierre (2000a) posits writing as “nomadic inquiry,” where “[n]o longer transparent, ethnography must always be a provisional space, one coded as soon as it is imagined, yet mobile, nomadic” and where the writing is an “administrative review” of experience (p. 276) that produces endless new possibilities.
St. Pierre is drawing on a very ancient technology (in the Foucauldian sense), that of the “care of the self” developed by the ancient Greeks, which itself used writing as a method of capturing, understanding and analyzing experience through a sort of administrative review of daily and life events (St. Pierre, 2004; Foucault, 1984/1990, 1984/1988). But she is using this ancient technique in new ways, to reconfigure not simply personal experience but professional research inquiry as well.

Writing works as a system of inquiry because postmodernist theory posits experience as the product of discourse. “It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience” so that experience is not “the origin of our explanation” but rather “that about which knowledge is produced” (Scott, 1991, pp. 779-780). In other words, language precedes and creates experience, and not vice versa.

The process of writing itself, as conceptualized by St. Pierre (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), is both a method of data collection and of data analysis. Connections are made during the process of writing that were not apparent before:

Data collection and data analysis cannot be separated when writing is a method of inquiry. And positivist concepts, such as audit trails and data saturation, become absurd and then irrelevant in postmodern qualitative inquiry in which writing is a field of play where anything can happen—and does. (St. Pierre, writing in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 971)

In a bold departure from traditional views of writing, where a researcher “writes up” findings almost as an afterthought to research, writing as inquiry does not describe experience. Rather, it produces a new type of experience, as it allows new connections between the rhizomatic folds of meaning and discourse that engulf our social worlds. For
example, in analyzing a cinematic text from another time—say, *Three Faces of Eve* (Johnson, 1957)—I reconnect the truths of that era and reconfigure them with contemporary understandings. According to her contemporary narrator, Eve is disturbed, because, having three personalities, she cannot be a good wife and mother. I juxtapose that with my observations that Eve White is an abused spouse; that Eve Black should not be considered evil or “Black” because she enjoys sex; and that there is not a single person of color in a film set in Augusta, Georgia, which has always had a large African American population. This juxtaposition allowed me to posit new understandings about the parallels linking the imposition of the singular Self in adult education discourse and the overt racism and sexism that were a staple of yesterday’s popular culture. In this analysis, it has allowed me to implicate the imposition of the singular Self with other forms of oppression, and to understand the characters in the selected cinematic texts as different rather than disabled.

**Mapping the Texts**

I both placed my tracings back on the map (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987) and mapped the phenomena of alterity. The findings of my study are not tracings of an imagined reality but rather maps of my cinematic texts. Deleze and Guattari (1980/1987) made an important distinction between the process of tracing a territory to create a one-to-one correlation between the traced object and the real object, and the process of mapping a territory to create a more fluid and rhizomatic representation:

Make a map, not a tracing. The orchid does not reproduce the tracing of the wasp; it forms a map with the wasp, in a rhizome. What distinguishes the map
from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. (Deluze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 12)

Thus, while I immersed myself in cinematic texts that have become old and familiar terrain, I have not analyzed them in order to fix this terrain, and their meaning, once and for all. In viewing them again and again, I have not sought to trace or inscribe the outlines of some imagined real territory, but rather to map the phenomena I am studying—that is, to bring meanings and make connections between the texts of various sorts that comprise human experience. “Maps, unlike tracings, are always becoming; they have no beginnings and endings, just middles. It is by looking at middles that we begin to see how, in perspective, everything else changes” (Alvermann, 2000, p. 116).

**Conclusion on Methods**

I employed rhizonalaysis to analyze a purposively selected sample of six cinematic texts. Since rhizoanalysis is a search for middles, and for truths that follow the logic of the rhizome rather than that of the tree, I sought to produce maps of the human experience of alterity, and how adult learners in the United States might learn from cinematic texts to experience alterity within their culture. That is, I attempted to map the current regime of signs and meaning that govern the experience of alterity, as well as the signs and meanings that resist the dominant regimes. I sought to examine the interplay of the psychiatric machine, which posits that all experiences of alterity mental illnesses, with the extraordinary experiences and abilities which were available to the characters in the cinematic texts. That is, my rhizomatic analysis focused on the multiple, conflicting regimes of truth that are present for adults who experience alters:
There are many regimes of signs….There is no reason to identify a regime or a semiotic system with a people or historical moment. There is such mixture within the same period or the same people that we can say no more than that a given people, language, or period assures the relative dominance of a certain regime. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 119)

I made “tracings” of my cinematic texts to assist my analysis, but I used St. Pierre’s notion of writing as inquiry to place those tracings back on the map of signs. This research was revolutionary, by design, in one regard. To the extent that, to create alterity as Dissociative Identity Disorder, psychiatric discourse requires that presenting a single Self is a natural condition, and that childhood trauma must interrupt development to produce polyvalent selves and alters, the mere suggestion that some people might learn from movies how to dissociate into alters threatens the symbol system buttressing the industry of psychiatrists and counselors who treat Dissociative Identity Disorder. While other researchers have challenged the suggestion that trauma always causes alterity (Rieber, 2006; Merskey & Piper, 2004a, 2004b; Aocella, 1999; Spanos, 1996), their writings create the patients who believe they have Dissociative Identity Disorder as victims of bad psychiatry, rather than as adult learners who display amazing gifts to learn and change. This analysis has sought to map both the psychiatric power that represses those who experience alterity and the power of adult learners to resist that power and express themselves as polyvalent selves in a culture which forbids, on medical grounds, the expression of anything other than a single Self.

The mere suggestion that alterity might be learned, that Selves are created and not discovered, and that some people might wish to learn to experience alterity, is
revolutionary. This project is, by its design, a map to a possible future where people who experience alterity speak for themselves and about their own experiences. It may even be part of the beginning of a subculture such as that imagined by science fiction writer Robert Silverberg (1983/1992) in his short-story titled *Multiples*, in which his protagonist, who is a “singleton” who experiences a single Self, pretends to experience alterity because she was romantically attracted to “multiples”. In that story, everything now assumed about alterity has been turned on its head in a San Francisco subculture where a protagonist with a single Self, rather than flaunting that Self, proclaiming her authenticity, and trumpeting her moral virtue for achieving that singular status, pretends to have alters in order to achieve love and fulfillment:

She wished she did not have to be pretending to have other selves. But they had to be brought forth now and again, Cleo felt, if only by way of maintaining his interest in her. Multiples were notoriously indifferent to singletons, she knew. They found them bland, overly simple, two-dimensional. They wanted the excitement that came with embracing one person and discovering another, or two or three. And so she gave him Lisa, she gave him Vixen, she gave him the Judy-who–was-Cleo and the Cleo-who-was-someone-else, and she slipped from one to another in a seemingly involuntary and unexpected way. (Silverberg, 1983/1992, p. 167)

If Spanos (1996) is correct, then current psychiatric and cultural ideas, taught in cinematic texts, are just that, ideas and constructions that govern human experience. Alternatives are possible if they can be imagined. If there is nothing natural about having a single essential Self, then perhaps some people will manifest an assemblage of alters
instead of such a Self, and others, like the protagonist in *Multiples*, will love them because and not in spite of their difference. This project is, then, a map to a revolution for polyvalent selves.
Chapter 4: ¹

Alterity: Resisting Disabling Notions of the Self

It is because we no longer have anything to hide that we can no longer be apprehended…. To have dismantled one’s self in order to finally be alone and meet the true double at the other end of the line. A clandestine passenger on a motionless voyage. To become like everybody else; but this, precisely is a becoming only for one who knows how to be nobody, to no longer be anybody…. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 197)

This chapter queries how one type of human difference—alterity, an assemblage of multiple distinct consciousnesses or “alters” sharing a human body—is pathologized in American culture. In doing so, the notion of the modernist subject or Self as a linear, cohesive, unitary consciousness is challenged as a method of suppressing difference, and alternative language is proposed for talking about the Self. Those who experience alterity can be said to experience polyvalent selves functioning in an assemblage. If a singular Self is commonplace, then polyvalent selves are queer, unusual, different, and worthy of study because such difference represents a creative and dynamic uncertainty that cannot be easily suppressed, explained or interpreted away by Modernist institutions and theories. I conducted a rhizoanalysis of cinematic texts which depicted alterity to identify messages in popular culture that might be disabling to an adult learner who experiences

¹ During the course of the writing of this dissertation project, portions of this chapter were published in New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education No. 132. See Walker, 2011.
alterity. The films reviewed consistently depicted alters as distinct and separate entities, which, despite inhabiting the same body, communicate with difficulty. They also usually depicted alterity as a diseased condition caused by trauma, which must be remembered in order to restore and heal a single Self.

**Dissociative Identity Disorder as Mental Illness**

This chapter is an offshoot of a larger project, grounded in adult education’s public pedagogy theoretical discourse (Sandlin, Schultz & Burdick, 2010a, 2010b) and similar analyses of movies and television shows as pedagogical instruments (Wright & Sandlin, 2009a). “As a form of public pedagogy, film combines entertainment and politics and… lays claim to public memory…” (Giroux, 2002, p. 6). I analyzed depictions of alterity in cinematic texts in order to explore the implications for adult learning when and if an adult learner experiences the following:

A. The presence of two or more distinct identities or personalities or personality states (each with its own relatively enduring pattern of perceiving, relating to and thinking about the environment and self).

B. At least two of these identities or personality states recurrently take control of the person’s behavior.

C. Inability to recall important personal information that is too extensive to be explained by ordinary forgetfulness.

D. The disturbance is not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance… or a general medical condition. (American Psychiatric Association, 1994)

In American culture, this person has been declared, by medical fiat, mentally ill. Interestingly, just as “homosexuals” were once declared mentally ill based on their status
as subjects desiring members of the same sex, there is no requirement that hosting multiple selves must cause the person who experiences it some distress. The distress, and the diseased condition, is presumed.

Central to this phenomenon is the presence of alternate personalities or “alters” which displace one another and alternatively “take control” of a body. The label for this experience has been changed from “Multiple Personality Disorder” (American Psychiatric Association, 1980) in previous psychiatric discourse, which deployed the following diagnostic criteria:

A. The existence within the individual of two or more distinct personalities, each of which is dominant at a particular time.

B. The personality that is dominant at any particular time determines the individual’s behavior.

C. Each individual personality is complex and integrated with its own unique behavior patterns and social relationships. (American Psychiatric Association, 1980, p. 259)

These changes made to the diagnostic criteria were made conform the diagnosis more closely to that of other mental illnesses and to assert that alters were not personalities, but rather fragments of personalities (Hacking, 1995). This further linguistic limitation on those experiencing the presence of alters is a discursive position which functions to further subordinate the human experience of alterity to that of illness, by denying these “fragments” their personhood.

The certainty regarding the Self created by these discourses—that there is one Self in each human body, that this Self fractures or multiplies in predictable ways—has
led to a proliferation of books regarding the subject. Former University of Georgia football hero Herschel Walker penned *Breaking Free: My Life with Dissociative Identity Disorder* (Walker, Brozek & Maxfield, 2008), describing how Christianity and psychology enabled him to overcome his Dissociative Identity Disorder: “[Alters] are unsettling invasions of a person’s mind, and can wreak havoc with one’s self of self. The good news is, one can have a fulfilling and satisfying life, WITH THE PROPER TREATMENT” (p. 231, all caps in original). Stories relate the heroic efforts of doctors in treating DID (Baer, 2007; Mayer, 1988; Schreiber, 1973), and those doctors urge readers with DID “to accept your diagnosis, to work with your alter personalities, and to seek help if you are not already in therapy” (Mungadze, 2008, p xviii). Mental health professionals warn that there is a hidden epidemic of dissociative disorders (Steinberg & Schnall, 2001), while self-identified dissociatives provide self-help manuals for living with the disorder (ATW, 2005).

**Other Explanations of Alterity**

This study began with an axiom: many adult learners profess alterity, and their utter refutation of something too often presumed as basic to humanity, the singular modernist Self, has tremendous implications for how those individuals grow, navigate their lifeworlds, and engage in lifelong learning. There is an anthropological adage that human experiences marginalized as deviant in one culture can be honored in another. “Normality is not an objective given from which unproblematic behavioral assessments can be rendered independent of historical era, culture, subculture, or social group” (Bartholomew, 2000, p. 3). The human experience of alterity is no exception.
In many cultures, alterity takes the form of possession trance, which occurs when an alter, deemed a god, an ancestor, or spirit, assumes control of a person’s body. “In Bali ritual possession is common, controlled, desirable, socially useful, highly valued, positively reinforced by society, and individually satisfying” (Suryani & Jensen, 1993, pp. 45-46). The Balinese studied by Suryani and Jensen socialized the experience of alterity, and they concluded that

The fact that there are a number of phenomenological differences noted between MPD [alterity] and possession in the Balinese… does not detract from the hypothesis that both represent fundamentally the same psycho-biological process (p. 214).

Indeed, the experience of alterity as possession by spirits in other cultures may contradict and refute Western dualism inherent in the concepts of Self and even of spirit (Willis, 1999).

Of course, contrary explanations of alterity were also once present in Western discourse. One classic method of social control is to erase alternative explanations from history. When the “true” story outline in the movie Three Faces of Eve (Johnson, 1957) and its corollary psychiatric monograph (Thigpen & Cleckley, 1957), the case of Eve was thought to be the only case of Multiple Personality Disorder in existence at that time (North, Ryall, Ricci, & Wetzel, 1993, p. 117). There had, however, been an “epidemic” of multiple personality disorder diagnoses at the end of the 19th Century (Shamdasani, 1994, p. xxxi). This epidemic was associated with spiritualism and mediumship, which included possession trance by alters—the same spiritualist movement which Braude (2001) has argued was an important component of the women’s rights movement in the
19th Century. Mediums, who were usually women, were regularly possessed by spirits, and during that epoch

The medical attack on mediums was a special case... of the medical attack on women in general. Doctors who viewed the female organization [the Spiritualist Movement] as inherently pathological saw mediums... as prime examples of pathology (Braude, p. 157).

Such spiritual explanations for alterity arguably linger in New Age spirituality and trance channeling (Brown, 1997). Yet, despite this history, the psychiatric explanation of alterity—that it is always a diseased condition—remains hegemonic, in popular culture and in adult educational theory on the Self and learning.

**The Theoretical Importance of the Self**

There is not simply a heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990/2006) constraining affectional expressions within its grid of regularity and binaries of control. There is also a matrix which demands that that each learner produce her- or himself as someone with an essence, someone with a coherent and knowable Self, which is necessary to achieve the favored status of authenticity (Caursetta & Cranton, 2005) and continuous personal growth (Rogers, 1979).

Other poststructuralist scholars have flirted with the notion of the fractured subject (Tierney, 2001), the subverted subject (Rosenau, 1992), the subject that is neither fixed nor stable but articulated in discourse (Honan, 2007), the self as a fiction inscribed by discourse (St. Pierre, 2000b), and the self as a sort of wounded entity which can be freed by discourse (Jackson, 2003; Talburt & Rasmussen, 2010). Clark and Dirkx (2000) postulated that the unitary self is a construct that must be interrogated as the “Big
Enchilada” which is “foundational to how we think about and theorize learning and a lot of other things—everything, in fact, that we care about as adult educators” (p. 101)—though these scholars appear more intent on breaking the unitary self into parts than in theorizing the possibility of multiple discrete but interconnected selves, or of polyvalent selves forming an assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987).

However, even the most radical of these knowledge-making projects, such as queer theory, too often succumb to the cultural imperative that the Self be made knowable and unified, even if that unity is paradoxically comprised only of an essential indeterminacy. “By accepting representational and transformational premises as fundamental to its purposes, queer research participates in producing the subjects on which liberalism (and neoliberalism) depends” (Talburt & Rasmussen, 2010, p. 7). In much academic discourse, then, the Self is a concept that resists reinterpretation or expansion. Alterity, as a human phenomenon, matters because its study challenges much existing thought on how adults learn, grow and change.

Assuming that the experience of alters is a human experience that is mediated by culture and learning, this chapter explores notions in popular culture which, if believed true and acted on, create alterity as a disabling condition and a mental illness rather than a benign human difference. I do not contest that many people experiencing alterity may be experienced by others and themselves as mentally ill. I am questioning the deeply-ingrained and peculiarly Western notion that all adult learners who present alters are mentally ill.
Disabling Notions of the Self

While mental illness is always mediated by culture, for those who experience alterity, the effects of culture and learning may arguably be more profound, given the documented suggestibility of those who experience alters (Spanos, 1996; Bliss, 1986). This appears to be a psychologically vulnerable population. The definition of Dissociative Identity Disorder, given above, does not specify any sorts of distress. The distress is presumed in the diagnosis and, since those who experience alterity in other cultures do not always experience this distress (Suryani & Jensen, 1993), it must be to some extent learned.

My rhizonalysis identified two key disabling messages within popular depictions of alterity. These notions include that alters must be discrete and self contained, and so have difficulty communicating; and that alterity is invariably created by trauma.

Alters as Discrete, Autonomous and Conflicted

In all of the cinematic texts analyzed for this project, the characters experience their alters as discrete and autonomous selves. This is true even as alterity may transgress social norms and the history and reality of the character’s body, as a protagonist experiencing alterity might have alters that profess different ages, different sexual orientations, different social classes, and even different genders. Dominant discourse on the Self requires that multiple selves remain separate and unique until they can be unified into a single, unique and enduring Self. Alterity must be placed within a modernist psychiatric grid that can, for example, diagram with boxes and arrows the personalities of the protagonist in Three Faces of Eve (Johnson, 1957) as measurable entities that change
over time (Osgood & Luria, 1957). Each Self must be represented as “an essentially abstract entity, the ‘monological self,’ the self-contained individual having no transactions with and unaffected by anything ‘other’ to itself….,” (Usher, Bryant & Johnson, 1997, p. 94).

This is an unusual message to send regarding alters, which, after all, inhabit the same body and must perforce share experiences and sensations. This complete separation and autonomy is also demonstrably false, because in every cinematic text analyzed for this project the alters experience co-consciousness or co-presence. However, by conceptualizing each alter as discrete and self-contained, arguably memory lapses become inevitable and the adult learner spends much time in a confused state, compensating for those lapses and discontinuities. People forget all the time; for those diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder, these lapses are presumed pregnant with meaning. Further, since “co-consciousness” of alters is possible, this division into discrete and isolated selves is not universal and may be learned or imposed. The public pedagogy of these films emphasizes the discrete nature of the alters, and their difficulties in communicating with one another, rather than the occasions in which alters cooperate toward common goals or the experiences and sensations which they share.

**Alterity as the Product of Trauma**

While other cultures might explain alterity as the product of spiritual forces and events, Western psychology requires that alterity be a diseased state created by trauma. Indeed, Acocella (1999) argues after *Sybil* (Petrie & Babin, 1976) Multiple Personality Disorder “now had a clear cause: childhood abuse” (p. 3). In popular depictions of alterity, alters must be identified so that they can be merged into a single Self. Despite
solid psychological research on memory that indicates that childhood sexual abuse is not processed or stored in a manner which would allow such recoveries (Clancy, 2009), that false memories of abuse can be created (Bjorklund, 2000; Loftus & Ketcham, 1994) and that the trauma myth damages patients (Ofshe & Watters, 1994), this continues to be the imposed treatment of choice for many adults experiencing alterity. Turkus and Kahler (2006) thus write that they deploy “psychoeducational” interventions in order to assist patients in “understanding the patients’ experiences as normal human responses to trauma and how it disrupts one’s life” (p. 246). The trauma is assumed and treated on the basis of the presenting symptom, the fractured or multiple Self.

This theory, that abuse always causes the experience of alterity, has become such a certainty that Ross (1989) admonishes therapists to remember that “the personality system… is driven by pain” (p. 109), and that therapists look for extreme abuse to explain the creation of what is always labeled a sickness or disorder. It is psychiatric canon that “Effective treatment of MPD requires an understanding of its traumatic precipitants and the initially adaptive role of dissociation in mitigating overwhelming trauma during childhood” (Putnam, 1989, p. 45). Indeed, more contemporary accounts of Dissociative Identity Disorder report that it was caused by more extreme forms of abuse, including abuse by Satanic cultists (Ofshe & Watters, 1994; Mayer, 1991).

Imagine an adult learner who experiences alterity and has no grounding in postmodernist, feminist and queer theory—that is, who has not considered the “disciplinary power” of psychiatric discourse that “functions through networks and the visibility of which is only found in the obedience and submission of those on whom it is silently exercised” (Foucault, 2003/2006, p. 22). On viewing such films, our imagined
learner will likely perceive alterity as a disease and either hide such a condition or seek treatment from a therapist who will reinforce the idea that alterity is always an illness. Such a quest for traumatic roots in all people who experience alterity is likely to be, itself, disabling, time-consuming, and incredibly disruptive to family systems as “recovered memories” of decades-old abuse suddenly appear.

**Conclusion: Resistance**

I began this chapter with the observation that many people experience alterity, which is currently either constrained as a mental illness and a reprehensible state or dismissed as a false illness and imaginary condition. “Skeptics contend that unlike disorders such as schizophrenia and mental retardation, [Multiple Personality Disorder] has no medical validity, and that it is more properly viewed as a social identity, often constructed as a joint effort of patients and their therapists” (Nathan & Snedeker, 2001, p. 48). Within dominant discourses, people who experience alterity face a binary choice: they are either mentally ill or their condition is a fabrication and neither real nor true.

But we, as a culture, would not create so many cultural texts about a subject if it were not in some fashion collectively intriguing. Just as people were gay even when homosexuality was illegal, people clearly and repeatedly do report that they experience alterity, and many others are eager to view cinematic depictions of this human difference. By utilizing a rhizoanalysis (Alvermann, 2000), this study has begun the process of thinking about alterity differently. This work suggests that perhaps some adult learners can forego the psychological torture of recovering memories of trauma in favor of more fulfilling pursuits. If alters are not broken fragments of a single Self but rather polyvalent selves that function in an interconnected assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987),
what is needed is less psychiatric discourse and more robust inquiry into poststructuralist notions of discourse and subjectivity, where such assemblages contain both form and expression and are not defined by either.

As a work of postmodernism as resistance (Britton, 1996), this chapter has sought to outline a few of the ways in which the grand ideology of the Self limits the experience of alterity as a disabling event. Like the once pervasive fear of homosexuals which is still slowly dissipating, there is apparent in these movies a deep and abiding and perhaps peculiarly American terror of those who experience alterity. This chapter has been a prelude to larger questions, raised in the next chapter, about identity and learning: if learners can legitimately experience disjunctures in their experience, if they can learn in radically new ways and are not constrained by the theoretical word-prison of the presumed Self, what new sorts of learning opportunities might be possible? In every cinematic text reviewed, those who experience alterity are depicted as having at least one alter with specialized, almost superhuman abilities to learn new skills rapidly, to create art, to speak other languages, or effectively manipulate social systems. What extraordinary feats of learning and human accomplishment might alterity facilitate? This chapter explored how the films reinforced the existing psychiatric regime of truth; the next explores how they both resist and transgress existing notions of the Self even as they articulate them.
Chapter 5

Learning to Dissociate:

How and Why Adult Learners Experience Altery in Selected Cinematic Texts

Stop! You’re making me tired! Experiment, don’t signify and interpret! Find your own places, territorialities, deterritorializations, regime, lines of flight! Semiotize yourself instead of rooting around in your prefab childhood and Western semiology. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 139).

This project has sought to explore the public pedagogy of alterity in selected cinematic texts. This chapter focuses on two questions guiding that exploration. The first is why characters in these films experience alterity—that is, what extraordinary benefits and abilities do they express because of their experience of alters? What could be a conscious or unconscious purpose, for the person experiencing alterity, of dissociating into alters? Assuming that having a single Self is not a naturalized state and that therefore the experience of alterity is to some degree informally and unconsciously or even intentionally and consciously learned, I inquire into the benefits of alterity for the characters who manifest alters that are depicted in these films, or why might a viewer wish to learn to experience alterity. There must, after all, be some benefits to a “disorder” which so fascinates audiences in a culture which heavily stigmatizes alterity. My findings related to this first question begin with a review of the stated reasons that the characters experience alterity—usually, they attribute it to sickness and to childhood
trauma—but continues on to explore the extraordinary abilities, even genius, that alters display in learning new abilities and in navigating social environments.

The protagonists in all of these films dissociate into alters. The second question is *how* the characters cultivate alterity. That is, what apparent techniques do the characters display that facilitate the experience of alters? If someone viewing these cinematic texts wanted to learn how to encounter, create, or be controlled by their own alters, what lessons would they learn? This includes a discussion of the mechanics of dissociating into alters. Such methods include the basic process of naming the alters and providing props, including costumes and articles of clothing. They also include more complex cues and strategies for developing and maintaining alters, including the creation of complex backstories, visualization and fantasy, and the cultivation of different desires.

**Why Characters Experience Alterity**

I begin my exploration of why characters experience alterity with a discussion of the two “true” cinematic texts, as told in *The Three Faces of Eve* (Johnson, 1957) and *Sybil* (Petrie & Babin, 1976). These stories are important because they arguably created or greatly facilitated the creation of current psychiatric understandings of Dissociative Identity Disorder (Acocella, 1999; Rieber, 2006). This review will underscore the psychiatric truth later present and assumed in *The United States of Tara* (Cody & Kaplow, 2009, 2010): that dissociation is caused by childhood abuse.

But the psychiatric regime of truth is, in this rhizoanalysis, only one of several competing regimes. There is present in each of the cinematic texts another story—that people who experience alterity display amazing abilities, even genius, with dramatically different sets of skills and abilities expressed by different alters at different times. This
discussion of the “why” of alterity would therefore be incomplete without a brief
catalogue of the amazing abilities these characters display, in both “true” stories of Eve
and Sybil (Petrie & Babin, 1976) and the fictional stories in Fight Club (Linson &
Fincher, 1999), Youth in Revolt (Arteta, Permut, Weinstein & Weinstein, 2009), and
United States of Tara (Cody & Kaplow, 2009, 2010). I will move from a discussion of
depictions of alterity in Eve and Sybil to later depictions of alterity, which may or may
not be caused by trauma, and which in every text provides the protagonists who
experience alterity both a license to violate social norms and expectations and
extraordinary abilities to act and learn.

In the Beginning There Was Eve

The Three Faces of Eve (Johnson, 1957) (alternatively, Eve) is an acclaimed film
that won Joan Woodward the Academy Award for best actress in 1957. A melodrama, it
provided the viewers with “a panoptic yet outsider’s view” (Johnson & Lloyd, 2004, p.
108) that fascinated audiences. Eve’s story was so important and evocative and formative
to contemporary thinking about alterity that it “set the pace” (Hacking, 1995, p. 40) for
later understandings and, indeed, for the creation of the “movement” of psychiatrists
determined to ferret out and treat alterity as a disorder (Spanos, 1996; Hacking, 1995).
The film has become such a part of our culture that Eve has become a metaphor for
internal conflict requiring resolution of some sort-- for example, Merriam (1988) used
Eve as a metaphor for the need for adult educators to reconcile work and career,
referencing the movie in the title of her presentation but never citing it in her
bibliography. Because of the importance of this film, I will explore it in more detail
before proceeding further.
Eve’s story begins with a White man in a suit standing before a movie screen and reciting that this is the true story of a woman who suffered from Multiple Personality Disorder. It proceeds to depict Eve as a “baffled” young woman, as a woman with three alters. The first, Eve White, is a quiet woman who experiences headaches and blackouts. During these blackouts, her alternative personality, Eve Black, emerges. Whereas Eve White is a demure wife and mother who has taken her husband’s name, Eve Black has retained her maiden name and asserts that she is not married to Eve White’s first husband, Ralph. While Eve White is later described by one of her psychiatrists as a “dreary woman,” Eve Black is a vamp who loves to dress well, to drink, and to dance with handsome strangers. These two alters follow a basic Western duality: Eve White is “good” because she follows accepted social scripts for women, and Eve Black is “bad” because she drinks, dances, and behaves as if she is unmarried.

Eve White’s husband discovers that something is wrong with his wife when expensive clothes arrive at their house—ordered, of course, by Eve Black, without Eve White’s knowledge or consent. Eve White is taken to a psychiatrist, Dr. Luther, who, initially skeptical, is visibly delighted when he realizes she has not one, but two, personalities. Dr. Luther treats Eve with accepted psychiatric interventions, including talk therapy, hypnosis and psychiatric hospitalization. He learns that Eve White knows nothing of Eve Black, but that Eve Black knows everything that Eve White knows. Eve’s husband, supportive at first, eventually becomes enraged when he discovers that Eve Black has been going to nightclubs and seeing other men. After repeatedly threatening domestic violence and then actually striking Eve Black when she returns home late from a night on the town without him, Eve’s husband divorces her. Interestingly, at a time
when divorce was uncommon and women were still to a large extent the property of their husbands and could, for example, be required to use their husband’s surnames and reside at his address (Polikoff, 2008), this films provided an early cinematic justification for divorce—viewers learned from this “true” story that if a woman manifested alter personalities, she could utilize psychiatric treatment and hospitalization to escape an unattractive and abusive husband.

When her relationship with her first husband deteriorates, Eve manifests a new, and initially unnamed alter, Jane. While Dr. Luther disapproves of both Eve White and Eve Black as “inadequate” or incomplete people, he becomes increasingly supportive of Jane. Eventually, Eve Black says that she is having blackouts, and that she believes that Jane must be displacing her. After Eve White, under hypnosis, remembers a traumatic childhood experience when she was forced to kiss her dead grandmother, Eve White and Eve Black both “die” and are subsumed by Jane, who suddenly recites the names of every elementary and high school teacher she ever had, apparently to demonstrate to Dr. Luther and to the audience her new dominance and completeness as a person. Pronounced cured by her doctor, now complete and whole as a single personality, the protagonist ends the movie as Jane, riding away in the passenger seat of a car driven by her new and loving second husband, the tall and understanding Earl, reunited with her daughter from the first marriage, Bonnie, who is riding in the back seat. Whereas Eve White and Eve Black were inadequate figures in the social world of a white woman in 1950s Augusta, Georgia, Jane is fully prepared to fulfill her roles as wife and mother. At a time when antipsychotic medications were beginning to appear and challenge the utility of talk therapy, the story also provided support for continuing such therapy—Eve was cured, not
by the wonders of new antipsychotics available after the beginning “of the so-called ‘psychopharmacological revolution’ of the 1950s” (Snelders, 2010, p. 356), but by old-fashioned psychoanalysis.

Importantly, *The Three Faces of Eve* was based on a story that was alleged “true” in its opening frames. It was based on a case study of the same name by two psychiatrists (Thigpen & Cleckley, 1957), of a “real” Eve, one Chris Costner Sizemore, who went on to write books including *I’m Eve* (Sizemore & Pittillo, 1977) and *A Mind of My Own* (Sizemore, 1989). This cinematic text, then, expressly provided viewers with a map of a particular kind of human experience, which viewers learned was a mental illness called “Multiple Personality.” It had huge social and cultural impact, and became a metaphor for the challenges that modern American women faced in juggling multiple roles and increasingly complex social expectations, and the challenge of integrating these roles into some whole and coherent Self (Merriam, 1988).

*Eve* was, however, simplified for popular audiences by, for example, reducing the number of alters—Sizemore reports she had many more than three alters (Sizemore & Pittillo, 1977)—and by resolving the two alters into a single persona at films end, something that Sizemore later reported she never experienced until much later in life (Sizemore, 1989). The story can be read as a depiction of conflicts in the changing roles allocated to women in 1950s America (Johnson & Llloyd, 2004) and as a flawed documentary of an actual life (Sizemore & Pittillo, 1977). As an adult educator, however, my analysis focused on the public pedagogy (Sandlin, Schultz & Burdick, 2010b) embodied in the film, that is, on the impact that the film might have on adult
learners, and in particular on what adults who experience alterity might learn from this movie. Why Eve experiences alterity is not resolved until late in the film.

Indeed, in *Eve*, we see an early articulation of the now prevailing psychiatric notion that alterity must be created by childhood abuse or trauma. This theory later became such a certainty that Ross (1989) admonishes therapists to remember that “the personality system… is driven by pain” (p. 109), and that therapists look for extreme abuse to explain the creation of what is always labeled a sickness or disorder. It is psychiatric canon that “Effective treatment of MPD requires an understanding of its traumatic precipitants and the initially adaptive role of dissociation in mitigating overwhelming trauma during childhood” (Putnam, 1989, p. 45). Indeed, more contemporary accounts of Dissociative Identity Disorder report that it was caused by more extreme forms of abuse, including abuse by Satanic cultists (Nathan & Snedeker, 2001; Ofshe & Watters, 1994).

Dr. Luther never expressly proclaims that Eve’s dissociations were caused by childhood trauma. However, after two years of therapy and shortly before the appearance of Jane, Dr. Luther laments that the patient is deteriorating and that Eve can recall no childhood trauma--implying that, if he could identify such trauma, his patient could be cured. At the film’s climax, a hypnotized Eve White remembers being forced, as a six year old child, to kiss her dead grandmother at a wake. After remembering this event, Eve White and Eve Black “die,” and Jane replaces them. Remembering a traumatic event magically resolves what years of therapy could not. It invalidates the dual childhoods of Eve Black and Eve White by replacing and superseding them both with a new, complete person, Jane. Dr. Luther never needs to announce that Eve’s dissociation was caused by
trauma, because the connection is obvious to the viewer when Eve is cured by remembering her trauma.

The story of the “real” Eve, Chris Costner Sizemore, likewise ends with an invalidation of much of her experience by the psychiatric establishment. The real-world equivalent of the film’s psychiatrist, Dr. Thigpen, pronounced Chris cured well before her alterity reportedly was resolved, urging her to always remember that “the most important thing in her life was to make [her second husband] happy and to devote the rest of her life toward that end” (Sizemore & Pittillo, 1977, p. 370). Though a woman who regularly experienced alterity from her early childhood, Eve learned that she was a victim of a disease, and that her previous experiences must be repudiated and overcome for her to recover:

This book [A Mind of My Own], however, begins on the day in 1974 when I, as the birth personality, finally resurfaced in my own life. Technically, I was forty-seven years old at the time. But I remembered so very little that I was deeply confused. I had to catch up on a lifetime of many lives, and the process has taken years. (Sizemore, 1989, p. 9)

When Chris wrote this passage, Jane, who appeared as the final Self in Eve, was long “dead.” The real-world Dr. Luther had attempted to eradicate her as well. This was a betrayal, from Jane’s point of view, because

The doctor who, she felt, once helped to create her, who nurtured her, who aided her in the elimination of her own competitors, now ignored her, described her as merely a “poisonous apple that the stomach is attempting to disgorge.” And her body, the one that she had fought for and had a rightful claim to, had been
usurped by another who was stronger and more possessive about inhabiting it.

(Sizemore & Pittillo, 1977, p. 368)

*The Three Faces of Eve* is ultimately the story of a woman and the construction of her reality by psychiatric doctrine. The “true” Self that emerges as a result of treatment, in both the movie and in real life, is that of a woman who has no memories. She also has no agency to define herself as anything other than a single Self, or to even raise the questions that intrigue me most: what might this woman have accomplished, had she found a manner for her alters to live with less conflict and more cohesion? If she did not ascribe to psychology’s mythology of the true “birth” Self? What possibilities might have existed for her, had there been a social movement that allowed for such human difference, and for her alters to learn cooperation rather than conflict? These questions are neither asked nor answered, since the story is resolved, and the years and expense of therapy justified when the therapist assists Eve in remembering her childhood trauma. The cause of alterity in *Eve* is simple and easy for moviegoers to view and understand: Eve was forced to kiss a dead body as a young child, and she was therefore traumatized and split into several versions of herself.

**Sybil and Severe Childhood Abuse**

Compared to other accounts, the trauma that produces Eve’s dissociation into alters is mild. After *Sybil* (Petrie & Babin, 1976), the psychiatric machine began to function more efficiently, because there was no longer any doubt as to why someone might experience alterity—after Sybil, alterity has been most often viewed as the product of childhood trauma (Rieber, 2006; Acocella, 1999). Sybil is depicted as a patient with a broken Self, a young girl who fragmented into many personalities because she was
horrendously abused by her mother. Only the heroic efforts of her psychiatrist, Dr. Wilbur, over years and 2,534 office hours (Hacking, 1995, p. 42) of therapy that Sybil could not possibly afford, transform Sybil back into a whole Self. Indeed, late in the film Sybil recants her previous appearances as alters, and states that she was sorry, that she made everything up. Her psychiatrist does not believe her, and investigates Sybil’s story in Sybil’s hometown, without Sybil’s presence. When she finds evidence that supports she abuse Sybil reported, she returns to Sybil and confronts her with that evidence. When confronted, Sybil admits that she is, really, a victim of abuse and of her mental illness, and after years of additional therapy, finally resolves her internal conflicts. In the final resolution, Sybil and Dr. Wilbur meet in a park, and Dr. Wilbur calls out each of Sybil’s alters, one by one, to introduce them to Sybil. The film concludes with Dr. Wilbur proclaiming that, after 11 years of therapy, Sybil has gone on to become a successful college professor who teaches art, and that “She tells me she’s happy. I know she’s free.”

Sybil was different from Eve in that she had sixteen, rather than three, alters; that some of her alters were children; some of her alters were male; and the alters were in conflict, with at least one alter trying to destroy her. Sybil was arguably “a prototype for what was to count as a multiple” (Hacking, 1995, p. 43). After Sybil, the MPD/DID “movement” blossomed, and patients began to present with many more alters, with child alters, with cross gender alters, and with suicidal or destructive alters (Hacking, 1995). The movie and associated bestselling book were important in connecting cultural ideas regarding alterity with childhood sexual abuse:
Even if some of Sybil’s abuse memories were accurate, the etiological significance assigned to them by her therapist was more a reflection of a zeitgeist in which such ideas appeared intuitively reasonable than of any empirical demonstration of a relationship between early abuse and Sybil’s symptoms. Whatever the reason for the connection between Sybil’s abuse memories and her MPD symptomatology, it was this combination that caught the attention of the public and made Sybil perhaps the best-known patient in the history of psychiatrist. (Spanos, 1996, p. 291)

Following the logic of the tree, Sybil is a first cause, an acorn that presents opportunities for cultural branching. I cannot ignore the implications or the impact of this branching. But I can follow the logic of the rhizome and note the resistance embedded in Sybil, the resistance of her alters to the single sovereign Self that Dr. Wilbur would impose. When Dr. Wilbur asks Sybil’s sophisticated French alter, Vickie, whether or not she would accept that all of the other alters were “pieces” of Sybil, Vickie responded that they were all people. At film’s end, when Sybil meets her child alter, Peggy, and exclaims what a “little thing” she is, Peggy protests that “I’m not a little thing. I’m a person.” Indeed, the film’s resolution, where Sybil meets all of her alters in a beautiful sunny field, can have more than one interpretation. Dr. Wilbur assumes that Sybil integrated, and proclaims her healthy, as evidenced by her ability to obtain a job and her statement that she was happy. The psychiatric machine appears to have worked its magic, and restored a single Self—except that Sybil never says so. Another interpretation would be that Sybil learned to work with and across her alters, and to cooperate for mutual self-interest. If Peggy was a person, and Sybil accepted her as a
person, maybe Sybil chose not to speak further as Peggy to Dr. Wilbur, who was clearly and expressly prejudiced against accepting Peggy as anything more than a fragment or a piece of Sybil. With this observation, I move from tracings to mapping (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987), and merge my tracings of these two “true” movies with my tracings of the fictional cinematic texts to create a map of learning and alterity.

**Manifest Skills and Abilities in All the Cinematic Texts**

The psychiatric machine creates Multiple Personality Disorder/Dissociative Identity Disorder as a naturalized state, produced by childhood trauma pursuant to known laws of cause, or “why” (childhood trauma), and effect (dissociation into alters). But there is another reason, or “why,” that a person might experience alterity. Alters are, after all, by definition different from one another, and those differences are often pronounced and amazing.

While the psychiatric machine remains insistent that alterity must be the product of trauma (Ross, 2009) or that it be an entirely false and iatrogenic (created by therapy) disorder (Piper & Merskey, 2004a, 2004b), there are present in the popular and psychiatric discourse stories of people who experience alters and display extraordinary, sometimes apparently impossible abilities or traits. Alters inhabiting the same body often display differences that should really only be seen in different bodies, such as differences in visual acuity and in allergies. In *Three Faces of Eve*, as Eve White first transitions into Eve Black, she removes her stockings in Dr. Luther’s office, asserting that she is allergic to nylon, which Eve White can wear without difficulty. In *Sybil*, the protagonist wears thick glasses, and a key indicator that she has transitioned from one alter to another is the removal of her glasses. In *United States of Tara*, the protagonist’s male alter, Buck, is
left handed, and the others are all right handed. It is commonly understood that alters residing in the same body frequently have distinguishable and different physical measurements, such as distinct respiratory patterns and handwriting styles (Sidis, 1905) and other measurable traits including handedness, voice quality, visual acuity and color perception, blood pressure, sensitivity to pain, and even allergies (North, Ryall, Ricci, & Wetzel, 1993; Wilson, 1982).

However, studies on such measurable differences are essentially part of a prolonged academic discussion on whether or not alterity is a “real” disorder, since there continues to be a split in psychiatric circles, with many psychiatrists arguing that “there is simply no such thing as a multiple personality disorder” (Hacking, 1995, p. 8) and many others proclaiming that multiple personality disorders are everywhere (Steinberg & Schnall, 2001) and that only when our society is ready “to acknowledge that family violence is everywhere [can we] find multiple personalities everywhere” (Hacking, 1995, p. 8). Definitive physical tests that could distinguish individuals diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder remain elusive, as the measurable differences between alters in the same body could represent either “the essence of the mechanism producing distinct personalities in [DID]” or, alternatively, represent “a by-product—through ordinary physiologic response—of the extreme emotional displaces of severe mood instabilities seen in patients tested for [DID]” (North, Ryall, Ricci, & Wetzel, 1993, p. 64). Tests for measurable physiological differences between people who have been diagnosed with DID and people who have not fail to provide undisputable evidence supporting the “reality” of the disorder, even when those tests follow logically from the leading etiology theory of disorder, that it is caused by childhood trauma. For example, if
DID were caused by trauma, then the reductions in size of brain tissue in the amygdala and hippocampus found in other forms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder should be found in patients diagnosed with DID, but this structural change has not been found or measured (Irle, Lange, Sachsse, & Weniger, 2009; Weniger, Lange, Sachsse & Irle, 2008). This could mean, of course, either that the trauma theory of the etiology is incorrect, or, as Karl (2009) replied to Weniger et al. (2008), perhaps patients who experience alterity display “more efficient coping with severe traumatic stress” (p. 331). To date, the measures of physiological responses of people who experience alterity has proved fascinating, but have not resolved the debate over whether DID is a “real,” naturally occurring disorder or an iatrogenic condition caused by bad therapy (Lowenstein, 2007).

More importantly, these differences may be inconsequential to those who experience alterity, as such differences are simply an accepted part of life. Such physiological differences between alters inhabiting the same body are a given in the cinematic texts. At the conclusion of the first episode of The United States of Tara, season 1, Tara’s family goes bowling, and one of Tara’s alters, Buck, tutors her children in the game. Tara’s daughter notes to her father that it is “weird” that Buck is a “lefty” and all of Tara’s other alters are right handed. Her father simply agrees with her, and they continue bowling. In the cinematic texts, then, little discourse is wasted on whether or not alterity is real. The audience can see the protagonist transition from alter to alter, the reality of alterity is assumed, and differences in handedness, in allergies, and in visual acuity as simply part of the story. The audience learns that such differences are expected when alters transition.
These apparent physiological changes are really not that important to the viewing public except as a first lesson, that alterity is a “real” phenomenon, and that people who experience alterity can perform seemingly miraculous feats like changing their allergies by switching between alters. In asking why someone viewing these texts might wish to learn to dissociate into alters, it is hard to imagine that a person would desire, consciously or unconsciously, to dissociate in order to change their food allergies or handedness. The other abilities displayed by the alters are much more compelling. While these abilities are not in and of themselves remarkable, what is extraordinary is (1) how good the alters are at these abilities, and (2) how many different sets of abilities one person, acting through alters, might display. In discussing these manifest abilities of the alters in these cinematic texts, I will break this down into discussions of diversity of skills learned and displayed, of excellence or virtuosity at the skills displayed, and of the apparent manner in which those skills were learned or acquired.

**Diversity of Skills and Abilities**

In all of the selected cinematic texts, the protagonist displayed a remarkable diversity of skills across alters. This is, however, least apparent in the earliest film, *Three Faces of Eve* (Johnson, 1957). In *Eve*, there are three alters. Eve White, the initial presenting protagonist, displays the skills excepted in that era of a dutiful wife and mother, and a love and knowledge of poetry, but she is otherwise unremarkable and quite awkward in social settings. Jane, the final alter who possesses the body exclusively at movie’s end, is less socially awkward, but is nonetheless depicted as primarily a wife and mother. Eve Black, on the other hand, displays the skills of a woman who knows and loves nightlife. She sings beautifully, dances gracefully and seductively, and is
charismatic and mesmerizing on the screen, especially to a certain sort of men—the soldiers and sailors who dance with her in nightclubs. Eve Black, then, has a social acumen and a willingness to perform and sing publicly that the other two alters do not express.

Perhaps Eve can best be understood as period piece, provocative for its time, that nonetheless reinforced social norms regarding the proper role of women. But Eve’s is a true story, and so it is easy to follow the rhizome to discover how the cinematic storytellers muted both the number of alters and their manifest abilities in making the film. The “real” Eve, Chris Costner Sizemore, reported that her twenty-two alters had remarkable and different skill sets:

… ten [alters] were poets, seven were artists, and one had taught tailoring. Today, I paint and write, but I cannot sew. Yet these alters were not moods or the result of role-playing. They were entities that were totally separate from the personality I was born to be, and am today. They were so different that their tones of voice changed. What’s more, their facial expressions, appetites, tastes in clothes, handwritings, skills and IQs were all different, too. (Sizemore, 1989, p. 9)

While only Eve Black displays skills that the other alters lack, this understatement of the abilities displayed by “real” Eve was arguably in the service of a large goal of the public pedagogy for women in the 1950s: Eve Black, after all, “died” before the end of the movie. Just as early depictions of homosexuals in film almost invariably ended in the death or suicide of such characters (Russo, 1987), women like Eve Black, who went to wild parties and made out in cars with strangers, had to come to a bad end.
In *Sybil* (Petrie & Babbin, 1976), the alters are described almost as places where Sybil could deposit her skills and talents, so that they would not be lost. Vickie is a sophisticated young girl who speaks French, a language that Sybil does not remember. Vanessa plays the piano beautifully, whereas Sybil does not. Peggy possesses Sybil’s artistic abilities. These alters hold skills for Sybil so that the skills would not be lost to an abusive mother, who punished Sybil severely for displaying any talent. Sybil’s mother is a monster, and the positioning of skills within alters, rather than in Sybil herself, is a method to retain those skills without further provoking her mother’s wrath. While the existence of such diverse skills sets across different alters is subordinated to the abuse narrative, Sybil’s alters nonetheless show a variety of different skills. Many of the alters, however, are children, including Ruthie, who is an infant, and thus display few abilities. Interesting, Sybil has a grandmotherly alter, Mary, who, despite her years, displays few talents in the movie.

In *United States of Tara* (Cody & Kaplow, 2009, 2010), Tara is herself an accomplished artist, though she makes her living painting murals for wealthy patrons. Her alters display facilities that are remarkable, and that Tara can describe to others: Alice is a 1950’s homemaker who, while perhaps drinking too much, cooks well and cleans impeccably and who plays the piano. T is a teenager who is very good at dancing and whose other skills, including irresponsible shopping and seducing strange men, are less appreciated by Tara. Buck rides a motorcycle, is an expert with firearms, and fist-fights to protect his family. And Shoshana, an alter who professes to be a Jewish psychologist from New York, displays an amazing command of psychological theory and astute abilities as a therapist.
It’s not surprising that the fictional accounts of alterity include descriptions of alters with different, and quite interesting, skills. In *Fight Club* (Linson & Fincher, 1999), there is only one alter, Tyler Durden, but, while the protagonist is quiet and reserved, Tyler is charismatic and intriguing. Tyler also displays skills at bomb-making and networking that enable him to destroy credit card companies by forming an international terrorist organization. In *Youth in Revolt* (Arteta, Permut, Weinstein & Weinstein, 2009), the protagonist, Nick Twisp, is shy and awkward, but the alter he intentionally creates, Francois Dillinger, is dangerous and seductive and displays social skills that enable Nick to ultimately obtain the affections of the young woman with whom he is enamored. In both fictional accounts, the alters display social and other skills that allow the protagonists to achieve goals that they could not hope to achieve on their own.

In summary, a Self is something that can and, indeed, must be inscribed with specific attributes. Perhaps this is inherent in language and thinking: I am so-and-so. I am good at this. I dislike that. I am not good at that. As soon as something is said about the Self, something is also not said. With polyvalent selves, more can be said, because there are more selves to be discussed. A character can simultaneously be Tara, who paints murals; Buck, who shoots firearms and rides motorcycles but has no time for art; and Alice, who is an amazing cook. Polyvalent selves increase the possibilities for such inscriptions, as each self provides another canvas which can be inscribed with likes, dislikes, abilities and talents. While such alters might be faced with negotiating who will be “out” to display such talents, polyvalent selves, as a whole, can display an incredible diversity of skills and talents. Polyvalent selves functioning in an assemblage transcend
the limitations on skills, abilities, and life history imposed by modernist conceptions of
the singular Self.

**Virtuosity at Displayed Skills**

But it is not simply that alters display a variety of skills: in the cinematic texts,
alters inhabiting the same body display an amazing accomplishment at the skills in which
they specialize. In *The Three Faces of Eve*, the somber Eve White would never sing or
dance, but Eve Black does both beautifully. In *Sybil*, the alter Vanessa plays concert
Club*, Jack’s alter Tyler Durden displays both remarkable social skills and a consummate
ability to make explosive devices from such ingredients as lye and human fat. These
skills are marked and remarkable; the viewer does not need to be told that the alters are
very good at specialized abilities, because the viewer can see for her- or himself how
accomplished and proficient these alters can be. The level of skill possessed by these
alters verges on the superhuman. Viewers learn that to experience alterity is to have
alters with advanced and specialized skills. For the two “true” stories, those of Eve and
of Sybil, the virtuosity of the protagonists and alters in the films is supported by the skills
and abilities reported in nonfiction biographical and autobiographical accounts
(Sizemore, 1989; Schrieber, 1973).

**Acquisition of Skills and Abilities**

If skills are displayed, they must presumably have been acquired in some fashion.
In the films, however, little attention is paid to skill acquisition. Only the skills of Sybil’s
alters were presumably learned through old fashioned diligence, study and practice.
In *Sybil*, the alters are preserving the protagonist’s own skills from an abusive mother figure—Sybil learned piano, but her mother tortured her for playing, so Vanessa hid and preserved her ability to play piano from the abusive mother.

In the other texts, it is less clear how the skills were acquired. Sometimes the alters teach skills to one another. We learn in Episode 8 of Season 1 of *The United States of Tara* that Tara’s alters learn skills from one another, when Alice laments that she has not yet learned to paint from Tara, but discusses other exchanges of knowledge between alters. In *Fight Club*, Tyler Durden teaches Jack to make bombs, and in *Youth in Revolt*, Francois Dillinger teaches Nick Twisp how to seduce the girl he loves. But these interactions may represent a form of co-consciousness, or the sharing of skills and thoughts between alters, rather than initial skill acquisition. How did Tyler Durden learn terrorism and bomb-making before teaching these skills to Jack? And how did someone like Tara, with so many alters, have time in her life to acquire all of the skills her different alters display? These questions remain unanswered.

One possible explanation, suggested but never expressly stated in the cinematic texts, is that alterity represents an altered state of consciousness in which skills are learned and acquired rapidly. Discourse regarding dissociation in the West is often closely tied to discussion of hypnosis (Spanos, 1996; Putnam, 1986; Wilson, 1982), and with it to the notion that “hypnosis is an altered state of consciousness that enables people to have unusual experiences and to do things that they could not normally do…” (Spanos, 1996, p. 18). While Spanos argues that this is a myth—that is, that hypnotized subjects do not have extraordinary abilities—the alters in the cinematic texts certainly behave as if they have some extraordinary abilities to learn and master specialized skills,
and Wilson (1982) argues that there is some sort of “multiple personality mechanism” (p. 141) tied in to hypnotic phenomenon that explains differences between voice tones, handwriting styles, and language usage between alters. Wilson stops short of addressing different skill sets—or how they were acquired—shown by alters, because he is focused on debating the “reality” of such phenomenon as past life regression, and on paranormal explanations of alterity.

Viewers learn from these cinematic texts that alters have many distinct skills sets, but are left to determine for themselves how those skills were acquired. They may fall back on existing cultural notions regarding hypnosis (Spanos, 1996), or perhaps on the supernatural explanations implied by Wilson (1982). However, to the extent that the cinematic texts represent a “real” ability of alters to learn many skills very well and very quickly, another explanation is present in these films, but patent only in *Youth in Revolt*: perhaps the Self is a cultural construct which sometimes limits, rather than facilitates, the ability to learn and grow and acquire new skills. Perhaps fixed ideas about a Self—I am good at this, and therefore I don’t also have time to be good at that—hobble and disable human potential. Only in *Youth in Revolt*, where Nick Twisp’s dissociation into an alter is not treated as a disease but as something he does, intentionally, in order to obtain love and romance, do we see this explanation play out. Nick inscribes his Self with words that include “shy” and “awkward.” Only when he inscribes another self, a polyvalent self or alter named Francois Dillinger, with words that include “sexy” and “dangerous,” does he learn the social and other skills needed to obtain the object of his affection. Nick could never blow up cars or dress as a woman to obtain his love interest; Francois does so with style and panache.
Violations of Social Norms

When a patient accepts the social roles assigned to the mentally ill, she or he arguably accedes to “the right to be excused from normal role obligations [and] the right to be excused from blame for the incapacitation or illness” (Morrison, 2005, p. 1). If alterity was created by childhood trauma, then, as victims of horrendous abuse, people experiencing alterity may often be excused from the consequences of their action. In these cinematic texts, the experience of alterity allows characters to sometimes successfully transgress social norms and assigned roles and positions in society. Often, the transgressions are sexual. In *Eve*, the protagonist maintains her relationship with her husband as Eve White, while enjoying affairs with other men as Eve Black. In *United States of Tara*, Tara is a faithful wife while her body, inhabited by T or Buck, engages in sexual affairs with men and women, respectively. Indeed, in Episode 2 of Season 2 of *The United States of Tara*, Buck has a prolonged love affair with a woman named Pammy, which only ends after Tara confronts Pammy and apologizes. When Tara tries to excuse her behavior as the result of a false personality named Buck, Pammy responds that “It’s always the disease’s fault. Never somebody just being an asshole.” Pammy goes on to make it abundantly clear that, to her, Buck is real and Tara is the fake personality.

But if separate alters inhabit the same body, and they are truly distinct entities, it makes sense for them to do as Tara does, and to maintain separate lives and sets of relationship. In a society that prohibits polyamory, these protagonists are breaking the rules. The sort of license to transgress social expectations includes Buck’s ability to flout his own biological gender and to explain that he is a man whose genitals were “blown
off” in the Vietnam War. They include T’s ability to declare herself a teenager, even though her body is that of a woman in her late 30s or early 40s. It is perhaps this ability to transgress social expectations, including expectations related to gender and age that have been naturalized as biological, that is so threatening to the status quo that many scholars continue to focus on the experience of alterity as a hoax or a scam (Piper, 1997). For those trapped within modernist grids of essential categories and inscribed and immutable positionalities (St. Pierre, 2000b), or whose intellectual capital depends on unchangeable qualities including “age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities and qualities, race, and sexual and affectional orientation” (Baumgartner & Johnson-Bailey, 2008, p. 45), the ability of a person experiencing alterity to ignore and blur those categories and essences challenge fundamental notions and patterns of thinking. It may be easier to dismiss the experience of alterity as “faking”—as one of two treating psychiatrist’s initially does, when confronted with Eve Black, in The Three Faces of Eve—than to revisit the performative (Butler, 2006) nature of such presumed essential categories.

How Characters Facilitate the Experience of Alters

This project reverses traditional analysis of depictions on alterity, by asking, not how we can learn to integrate multiple identities into one Self, but rather how the characters in the cinematic texts dissociate into their alters. Adult learners often learn to construct their identities through cinematic and other popular culture texts (Carpenter & Ludovic, 2010; Alvermann & Heron, 2001). It follows that consumers of popular culture could also learn to fashion multiple identities from such sources. If a viewer of these cinematic texts wanted, consciously or unconsciously, to learn how to dissociate, what
would they learn from these movies? This question is important, as some scholars have argued that patients learn to express polyvalent selves through movie watching:

The protagonists in these depictions gain self-esteem and dignity and receive abundant sympathetic attention from significant others, and sometimes from highly recognized experts, as well as from the media. The picture painted by these accounts may be especially compelling for the individuals who are most vulnerable to this disorder. (North, Riall, Ricci, & Wetzel, 1993, p. 118)

These scholars seem to focus on a certain subset of the populace, whether characterized as prone to hysteria (Munford & Liberman, 1982) or hypnotizable (Spanos, 1996; Wilson, 1982). Their arguments imply that these depictions have the negative aspect of encouraging the development of a mental illness. Such a position is analogous to that used by censors of homosexuality in U.S. films during the 20th century, when “Gay characters and references to the existence of homosexuality were routinely laundered off the screen for the better part of half a century” (Russo, 1987, p. 63). Just as absurd cultural notions linger that heterosexuality is a natural condition that might be lost on “hearing homosexuality spoken too often” (Halpern, 1995, p. 46), these scholars seem to view cinematic depictions of alterity as something that might destroy the natural condition of maintaining a single Self and replace it with a disease state of multiple selves.

My analysis breaks from the scholarly tradition that expressly or implicitly calls for censorship to protect vulnerable viewers, because I have refused to naturalize the singular Self. Breaking the assumption that the heterosexuality that most humans display should be the starting point for any discussion of homosexuality changes the nature of
that discussion—and makes the whole discussion about whether or not someone might “catch” homosexuality from a pre-school teacher (Halpern, 1995) or a movie absurd. Gay people watching films learn how other gay people express their homosexuality, but they do not learn to be homosexual. Such viewers might model their behavior on film portrayals, but their subsequent behavior is not contracted, like a disease, from those films. Similarly, if the singular Self, which may exist for most people, is not assumed for all people, then people cannot “catch” Dissociative Identity Disorder from movies. People who experience alterity can, however, learn how other people, fictitious or otherwise, express their alterity. That is my interest explored here: how do these film characters manage their alterity to produce themselves as polyvalent selves?

Finally, in enumerating the techniques used by characters to facilitate the appearance of alters, I am not following modernist traditions of counting them, or of coding them as better or worse techniques, or of positioning them in a grid or a hierarchy. I am simply noting and describing my observations regarding how a viewer could determine that an alter was present. A technique need only be present in one scene to warrant inclusion, and there are no techniques that I would regard as “true” or “better” than the others. Indeed, I believe that one of the techniques—searching for repressed memories of abuse—is probably damaging to the seeker, as any alters produced or discovered would be deeply troubled by the abuse and the betrayal of trust that it represents. Nevertheless, it appears on the list, because the search for lost memories appears in the cinematic texts. I am outlining here that the public pedagogy of these films suggests that alters appear when:

1. Alters have different names;
2. Alters express different backstories;
3. There is some sort of physical sign of a transition to a new alter;
4. Mannerisms and speech patterns change;
5. Different clothes are worn and specific props engaged;
6. Therapists are consulted;
7. Characters search for memories of repressed trauma;
8. Social contexts are changed;
9. A character visualizes herself as a different physical being; and
10. Different desires are cultivated and enjoyed.

These ten techniques for developing and expressing alters are certainly not the only techniques, but they are the ones patent in the films. There are doubtless other techniques that are not presented in these texts. For example, the adoption of differences in handwritings between alters, while commonly reported among people who experience alterity (Hacking, 1995; Wilson, 1982), is not easy or entertaining to depict in a movie, so it does not appear. I will discuss each of these ten methods in turn.

**Naming**

Across time, culture, and history, humans invest power in naming. There are too many citations to cite, so I will provide but a few examples. In the Judeo-Christian scripture, the Bible, a monotheistic Deity creates the world, gives dominion over the animals to man [sic] (Genesis 1:30) and with it the right and the duty to name each one (Genesis 2: 19-20). Changing a name can require a ritual and invest an adult with new status and revised social roles. Among the Native American Pawnee in the 19th century, a man’s name could be changed if three facts were true:
1. A man had shown that a new name was needed by his actions;

2. His tribesmen agreed; and

3. “it was proclaimed by one having in charge the mediatory rites through which man could be approached by the supernatural” (Fletcher, 1899, p. 87)

More recently, among the Native American Lakota, a two-spirit shaman or “winkte” can provide a boy a secret and special name which provides spiritual protection for the male child and helps to insure good health and a long life. The boy’s father goes to the winkte and flirts with him sexually. If he favors the father, the [wintke] will decide on a secret name, which is invariably erotic. A winkte can do no more than four naming ceremonies per year. (Williams, 1986, p. 37)

Likewise, in the two “true” cinematic texts, the process of naming permits what Althusser (1971) labeled interpellation, or “calling out.” Interpellation occurs when ideology transforms individuals into subjects operating within a particular set of power-relations. Ideology calls out individuals and reorients them in the fashion required by power:

I shall then suggest that ideology “acts” or “functions” in such a way that it “recruits” subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or “transforms” the individuals into subject (it transforms them all) by the very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: “hey, you there!” (Allthuser, 1971, p. 174)
Just as ideology transforms subjects by hailing them, in my cinematic texts the naming of alters calls them to appear and experience the world through the body shared by polyvalent selves. In *Eve*, her psychiatrist trains the protagonist to shift rapidly between alters, by saying “Let me speak to Eve White!” or simply “Eve Black!” In *Sybil*, when the protagonist is prepared to leap from a window because of a suicidal alter, her psychiatrist says “Sybil?” and calls Sybil back into control of her body, and thus the body away from the ledge and suicide.

In more fictional accounts of alterity, alters are less likely to appear when called on by name. In *United States of Tara*, for example, the protagonist can discuss with her husband the actions of other alters without their sudden appearance in the scene. In *Fight Club* and *Youth in Revolt*, the protagonist and his alter share the screen, so it is often difficult to know who is actually occupying the shared body, and calling an alter into the body by naming him is thus impossible. Nevertheless, in all of the cinematic texts, each alter has a distinct and different name which is consistent and enduring. In fact, many alters have a first and last name, like Tyler Durden in *Fight Club* and Eve Black in *Eve*. An adult learner viewing these texts would thus learn that, in order to properly experience alterity, the alters must have distinct and, preferably, complete names. If they do not appear with names, alters must immediately choose them for themselves—as does Jane in *Eve* and as does Francois Dillinger in *Youth in Revolt*. Calling the name of an alter can interpellate, or call, that alter into a shared body.

**Backstory**

Once an alter is named, he or she can be described and remembered, and those descriptions can include a back-story or counter narrative which is at variance from the
history of the other alters. This is congruent with what is know about dissociation in the clinical literature, as Spanos (1996) has noted that “MPD patients behave as if their different identities have their own unique memories and experiences… “ (p. 1).

Sometimes, this history is composed of a distinctive part of the history and memories of the person as a whole. In *Three Faces of Eve*, Eve Black and Eve White shared a common childhood, but Eve Black remembered parts that Eve White could not. In *Sybil*, too, the alters are fragments of the whole, each with a piece or a clue to Sybil’s autobiography.

More interestingly, sometimes the memory of an alter is completely fictional. In *The United States of Tara*, Tara’s male alter, Buck, professes to be a Vietnam War veteran. He then behaves consistently, and displays skills consistent with, that back-story—by, for examples, riding a motorcycle, shooting guns, and behaving aggressively toward a boyfriend who hits Tara’s daughter. Likewise, Tara’s therapist alter, Shoshona, is an alter based upon Tara’s reading of the writings of a therapist from New York, and would presumably have that therapist’s history, rather than Tara’s own.

Even if an alter does not begin with a separate back-story, over time one is likely to develop, since alterity is often accompanied by some degree of amnesia between alter identities. As noted by Spanos (1996), discussing patients identified as suffering from Multiple Personality Disorder, “MPD patients also exhibit a wide range of amnesic deficits that are difficult to explain in terms of involuntary memory dysfunction. Some report a one-way amnesia between alter identities, whereas others report a two-way amnesia” (p. 43). In *Fight Club*, Jack and Tyler Durden share common memories of a shared childhood, but have independent existences, so that Jack does not realize that Tyler Durden is part of an
international criminal conspiracy until it is almost too late. Tyler knows what Jack
knows, but Jack does not easily remember what Tyler does. Because they have different
interests and goals and moral standards, their stories diverge, and different back-stories
develop over time.

**Transitioning**

When characters transition from one alter to another in these cinematic texts,
there is often some physical sign of the transition enacted by the protagonist. Early in
*Three Faces of Eve* the transition is debilitating, as Eve White lies down with a migraine
before Eve Black can emerge. Eve Black later reports that the headaches represented her
attempts to get “out” and into the body. In *Sybil* and in *Tara*, the protagonist becomes
silent for a moment, often lowering her head and eyes, before another alter emerges.

**Mannerisms and Speech Patterns**

When a transition occurs, the small physical acts and markers are quickly
supplemented by a total change in the facial expression, body language, and demeanor of
the protagonist as the alter emerges. In all of these cinematic texts, the actors portraying
the protagonists are required to communicate a complete transformation of their persona
and role when a switch occurs and one alter supplants another. Alters have different
vocabularies, different ways of speaking, different tones of voice, difference facial
expressions, and different postures. In *The United States of Tara*, when Buck emerges
and Tara recedes, even if Buck continues to wear Tara’s clothes, it is apparent that he is
present in the body because of his changes in demeanor and expression.
Costumes and Props

In some cinematic texts, alters change clothing when they emerge and come “out” into the shared body. In *Eve*, Eve Black takes off Eve White’s hose, or puts on a pretty dress; in *United States of Tara*, Buck dons motorcycle boots and a t-shirt with a cigarette pack in the sleeve; and in *Youth in Revolt*, Francois Dilligner always appears in the same clothing, regardless of what Nick Twisp is wearing. Makeup and hairstyles are changed as well—Tara’s subdued makeup yields to Alice’s bright red lipstick when Alice is “out,” and Buck immediately ties back Tara’s hair when he emerges. Transitioning to an alter often entails transitioning to a different wardrobe and look.

A few alters employ props to indicate their presence. In *Youth in Revolt*, the alter Francois Dillinger is seldom present without a lit cigarette in his hand. In *Tara*, Buck usually has some or all of the following: cigarettes, a bottle of hard liquor, and/or a handgun. In *Sybil*, Sybil herself always has a pair of thick black-rimmed glasses. These items indicate the presence of alters because the other alters seldom or never use them—e.g., Nick Twisp never smokes, Tara is allergic to tobacco, and Sybil’s alters do not require glasses. Like clothing, props can serve as a positive visual indicator of the presence of an alter.

Therapy

Characters in these cinematic texts often spend a lot of time in therapy. In *Eve*, both Eve Black and Jane first appear in therapy sessions. Eve Black later states to Dr. Wilbur that he was the first person to whom she had presented herself openly, and Jane, who picks her name during therapy, apparently did not exist before therapy began. The movie *Sybil* is in large part of therapy sessions and flashbacks from those sessions.
While the alters in *Sybil* pre-exist therapy, they only discover one another, and become cooperative with one another toward common goals, through therapy. In *United States of Tara*, Tara also sees a therapist, and, when that therapist fires her because her disease is too difficult for her to treat, in the second season manifests an alter, Shoshona, who is herself a therapist. This is consistent with the sociocognitive theory of dissociation (Spanos, 1996), and the notion that therapists help create alterity in their patients: “Therapists routinely encourage patients to construe themselves as having multiple selves, provide them with information about how to convincingly enact the role of “multiple personality patient,’ and provide official legitimation for the different identities that their patients enact” (Spanos, 1994, p. 144).

**Searching for Repressed Memories of Trauma**

A corollary and accompaniment to therapy is the search for lost memories of trauma. Key to Western psychiatric discourse on alterity is the notion that child abuse creates the fracturing of a whole Self that creates the disorder. Therapists often presume that “Children who are abused often develop dissociative mechanisms that are specifically aimed at escaping from the body which is being violated or tortured” (Mollon, 1996, p. 5). Acocella (1999) refers to the recovered memory movement (RM movement), which posits a secret epidemic of child molestation as the cause of vast numbers of unreported cases of Multiple Personality Disorder, as a “cult” because of the techniques it employs to indoctrinate members:

A cardinal principle of the RM movement, as of other cults, is that new members must avoid contact with any potential source of disconfirmation. Your therapist,
above all, must believe that you were abused. So must your friends; any who
don’t should be weeded out. (Acocella, 1999, p. 42)

Cultural beliefs about child abuse were arguably the basis for the epidemic of Multiple
Personality Disorder patients in the late Twentieth Century, as “In order for multiple
personality to take off, it needed a larger cultural framework within which it could be
explained and located. That framework was child abuse” (Hacking, 1995, pp. 40-41).
Since child abuse creates the disorder, “Supposedly, one function of alter personalities is
to ‘hold’ memories of severe childhood abuse of which the host personality is unaware.
During psychotherapy, these forgotten memories are recovered when the alters reveal
them to the patient” (Spanos, 1996, p. 2). The search for memories of abuse, and for
alters holding those memories, is the cure for the supposed disorder.

It is no surprise, then, that in both the “true” cinematic texts, the protagonist’s
search for lost memories of trauma is central to the story. In *Eve*, the alters Eve White
and Eve Black can only “die” and be replaced by Jane when the protagonist remembers
the traumatic experience of kissing a corpse as a small child. In *Sybil*, the treating
psychiatrist, Dr. Wilbur, explores the protagonist’s alters in order to identify those that
remember child abuse and so cure Sybil of her disease. And in *The United States of
Tara*, Tara states repeatedly that she was abused and began to dissociate into alters as a
result, and much of the story involves her search for the memories of her abuse.

The search for memories of abuse, by Tara, is especially interesting because, in
season 2, Tara does so as her own therapist, an alter named Shoshona, who treats both
Tara and Tara’s husband in (mock?) therapy sessions. Tara’s search for memories of
abuse, and her stated certainty that, if those memories can be recovered, she will be
healed of her dissociations, cause her to visit a childhood foster home and provokes the appearance of Tara’s child alter, Chicken. Congruent with dissenting psychiatric criticisms that the search for repressed memories of abuse actually creates alters, two of Tara’s alters, Shoshona and Chicken, arguably would not have existed without that search. One lesson from these cinematic texts is that, if an adult learner wishes to have more alters, and especially alters like Chicken which are children and barely able to function in an adult’s social world, a searched for repressed memories of abuse is likely to be effective:

Modern cases of MPD have tended to take on truly bizarre characteristics….Child sexual abuse was not a prominent feature of MPD cases reported before 1970. However, cases reported after 1975 have almost always involved descriptions of childhood sexual abuse, and the kinds of abuse purported experienced by these patients have grown progressively more lurid and more extensive….Typically, patients have no memories of sexual abuse when they enter therapy, but they recover increasingly outlandish and implausible abuse “memories” as their treatment proceeds…. (Spanos, 1996, p. 2)

There is little doubt that the search for memories of abuse can generate false memories of abuse (Spanos, 1996; Ofshe & Watters, 1994) that have socially devastating consequences for patients and their families (Campbell, 1998). In the cinematic texts, this search also produces the appearance of new alters.

**Interactions with Different People in Different Social Contexts**

If the self, however conceptualized, is relational, rather than pre-existing, if selves exist as assemblages rather than as discrete structures, then changing social contexts
would facilitate different formulations of polyvalent selves, and, indeed, different expressions of alters. In some cinematic texts, there are some alters that favor some social contexts and relationships and shun others. For examples, in *Eve*, Eve White only appears in a nightclub when Eve Black, injured by a date, transitions away. (Eve Black frequently abandoned Eve White to cope with the consequences of her behavior, gloating once to Dr. Luther that she went on drinking binges then left Eve White to suffer the hangover.) Otherwise, the nightclub was the social context Eve Black enjoyed, while Eve White preferred quiet evenings at home.

In *United States of Tara*, Tara and her alters all had specific places and social settings they preferred. Buck is depicted enjoying shooting ranges, bowling alleys, bars, and the house and family of his lover, Pammy. Tara’s teenage alter, T, prefers a specific video arcade in a distant city. In season 2, viewers discover that Alice, the perfect housewife, has apparently been living an entirely separate life with the next door neighbor, who kills himself when Tara goes back on medication and Alice never gets “out” to visit him anymore. And Shoshona, the therapist alter, sets up an office where she conducts her therapy sessions. The autonomy to select and cultivate an appropriate social context is important to the expression of alterity, or at least to satisfying the social and other human needs of alters as they appear.

**Visualization and Fantasy**

In *Sybil*, when an alter is “out” in Sybil’s body, that alter sees her- or himself in the mirror as she or he believes she appears. That is, Sybil is not reflected in the mirror, the alter’s self image is. Whatever the outward appearance of the body, the alter sees her- or himself as she ought to be, rather than as she is. The ability to fantasize is tied to
dissociative phenomenon (Lynn, Pintar, & Rhue, 1997), and Hacking (1995) noted that “In order for it to be clear that the alters are distinct personalities, it does help to have them of different ages, races, sizes, and voices” (p. 32). Visualization and fantasy are apparent, too, in Fight Club, where the alter Tyler Durden acknowledges that he is not real and refers to himself as Jack’s “imaginary friend,” and in Youth in Revolt, where the alter Francois Dillinger is himself a fantasy creation of Nick Twisp. Absent their extraordinary abilities to fantasize and visualize their alters in physical form, the alters would be less real, and these stories less compelling.

**Cultivating Different Desires**

Desire is both a means and an end for the experience of alterity. In Three Faces of Eve, Eve White is resides with a controlling husband who denies her pretty clothes and parties, so Eve Black emerges as a party girl who buys expensive dresses and dances late in nightclubs. But the differences in desire are more than repression of desire by Eve White and expression of desire by Eve Black, because Eve White has her own desires— to be a good and faithful mother, and to read and understand poetry—that require different behaviors to fulfill. A person experiences alterity in order to experience difference desires—In United States of Tara, Tara loves her husband, T loves strangers, and Buck loves Pammy—but those alters can likewise be described, or inscribed, by the desires that they express. To do something different, to be someone different, to have others respond in a different way, to change the world—these motivate and distinguish alters in these cinematic texts as polyvalent selves.
Conflict among Alters

Drama is essential to story telling, and the conflict between alters inhabiting a protagonist’s body is present as a dramatic element in every cinematic text. This conflict is part of the “why” of alterity, since difference alters endow a protagonist to simultaneously pursue conflicting goals and objectives. Tara, for example, can pursue her goal of an established and enduring monogamous heterosexual relationship, while her alter Buck pursues a relationship with another woman, Pammy. The goals conflict, but by switching between alters, and by forgetting the existence of one relationship when dealing with the other, the protagonist is able, for a time, to successfully seek both. The conflict is also part of the “how” of alterity—without the conflict, the alters might be too similar to differentiate, or less clear and distinct. Conflict between alters makes them different, distinguishable, complex, and compelling.

Conflict between alters is also potentially disabling, perhaps life threatening, especially if one alter becomes suicidal or sociopathic. In Sybil, one alter, Marcia, is suicidal, and threatens the survival of the protagonist, but interventions by another alter prevents actual suicide. Vickie, the French alter, calls Dr. Wilbur and says: “That window is beginning to look awful good to Sybil. You better come quick.” The psychiatrist arrives in time to rescue Sybil from her suicidal alter. Likewise, in Eve, Eve Black emerges when, in a suicidal depression, Eve White cuts her wrist. Eve Black is not suicidal in the least, and effectively prevents Eve White from significantly harming the shared body. And in Fight Club, Jack shoots himself in the head when he discovers his alter’s plans to destroy credit card companies, destroying Tyler Durden in the process.
A short digression is in order. In clinical discourses, which must include the psychiatric practices displayed in *Sybil*, *Eve*, and *The United States of Tara*, many beliefs facilitate the model of psychodynamic therapy that requires many, many sessions for alterity to be resolved into a single self. One such belief is that conflict can be resolved because all alters will honor their agreements. In therapy, when one alter is suicidal or sociopathic or otherwise dangerous, therapists must take special steps, like negotiating contracts with antagonistic alters:

A psychiatrist may have to make contracts with such persecutors, getting them to agree that they will not go beyond certain limits. Alters are said to be literal but litigious. They abide by their promises, but the contract must be ironclad; if there is a loophole, an alter will find it and take advantage of it. (Hacking, 1995, p. 28)

This conception, of alters as dangerous and destructive, but somehow likely to honor their agreements, is not supported by the movie data and seems a bit too convenient for a therapist, who will see a patient, at most, once or twice a week, and must rely on such “contracts” to prevent inappropriate behavior. But since “Multiples are incredibly suggestible and easy to hypnotize” (Hacking, 1995, p. 31), perhaps the belief is effective, if patients are informed about the “literal but litigious” (p. 28) nature of all of their alters.

If two or more people are present, and they do not believe exactly the same things and hold exactly the same values, conflict is expected. Alters, to the extent that they have different values and perspectives, must likewise come into conflict. In many clinical settings, such as family therapy, appropriate resolution of conflict, by compromise, mediation or discussion, is important— conflicts are, after all, only resolved without compromise in war. However, clinicians treating MPD or DID have largely sought to
resolve conflict between alters by integration into a single Self (Mollon, 1996), as “the goal of therapy in MPD is the unification of the patient into one personality” (North, Ryall, Ricci, & Wetzel, 1993, p. 181), rather than to mediate disputes among alters or teach patients how to resolve conflicting agendas among their alters. While an assemblage model tolerates conflict, since assemblages might function through or because of conflicts among alters, if an alter is conceptualized as a structure or thing or mini-Self, conflict must be cured and differences eliminated.

The stereotypes that drive the psychiatric machine—that alterity is always a mental illness, that alters are all for some reason litigious and contractual in nature, and that there is always at least one dangerous or destructive alter—may be giving way to more nuanced cultural understandings not entirely driven by appeals to the presume Self. In The United States of Tara, Buck is potentially dangerous, but the viewers understand that his violence is in defense of Tara and her family. And in Youth in Revolt, Nick Twisp intentionally creates an alter, Francois Dillinger, who cooperates with Nick in achieving his goals. The two have conflicts—Nick dislikes the sociopathic and amoral methods deployed by Francois—but they cooperate to achieve the common goal of a relationship with the story’s love interest. The conflict between alters, so necessary for the differentiation of the alters from one another and for the telling of a good story, need not necessarily and always end with the extermination of alterity and the unification of a single Self. Alters functioning within an assemblage can remain both conflicted and cooperative, since the indeterminate nature of the assemblage means that the storyteller doesn’t ask what the Self is, but how the selves function.
Conclusion on Learning Alterity

This chapter has reviewed the why and how of alterity in my selected cinematic texts. Viewers of these texts learn why characters experience alterity—they do so because they suffered from childhood abuse, but they also do so because alters display an amazing diversity of skills; because alters learn new skills very quickly; because alters are often very good at the skills they display; and because alters routinely violate social norms, such as cultural prohibitions on polyamory, with few repercussions. Viewers learn how characters experience alterity, that is, by naming their alters; by displaying physical cues when transitioning from alter to alter; by changing mannerisms and accents between alters; by assigning different and distinct clothes and props to different alters; by seeking out therapy, and with it repressed memories of trauma; by navigating radically different social contexts; by visualizing clearly the appearance of each alter; and by cultivating different desires for different alters. The chapter concluded with a review of the special case of conflict between alters, which is both a part of the why of alterity, as such conflicts allow a protagonists to simultaneously pursue competing goals, and the how of alterity, as their conflicts to a great degree define the alters and distinguish them from one another. With these findings, I have begun challenging the prejudices and stereotypes that underlie the current psychiatric regime of truth, by contrasting the cinematic texts with the history and practices of psychiatrists in opposing and seeking to extinguish alterity in their patients. I now turn from adult education as a descriptive analysis of the public pedagogy of alterity, to adult education as a vehicle for public policy.
Chapter 6:

Public Policy, Alterity, and the Self:

Challenging the Regulatory Function of the Psychiatric Machine

Through Adult Education as Social Policy

*It is imperative that educators and trainers, dedicated to the belief that difference is a fundamental human right, design learning opportunities and interventions that foster full citizenship for all youth and adults.* (Hill, 2009, p. 61)

This chapter responds to my fourth research question, and moves from the particulars of my study to general questions of adult education’s role in formulating public and social policy derived from those findings. Chapters 4 and 5 represent my findings, outlining the discourse constructing or governing the experience of alterity that is embedded in the public pedagogy of my selected cinematic texts. Given that the experience of alterity is structured by learning and culture, I have concluded that there must be room for non-clinical, non-disease models of alterity. If the Self is not a naturally occurring artifact or thing but rather an imposition upon human experience, the experience of polyvalent selves is not necessarily pathological, but may in fact bring satisfaction and new possibilities for learning. After all,

There is nothing invariable or inevitable about the notion of a unitary self, and the same processes that validate the conception people hold of themselves as unitary
selves can be used to validate alternative conceptualization that people consist of multiple selves. (Spanos, 1994, p. 144)

This chapter broadens this simple insight by expanding my discussion to the arena of public and social policy.

I begin by outlining how adult education, as a discourse, a profession and an instrument of neoliberal policy, benefits from existing and modernist notions of the Self. Drawing from my cinematic texts, the literature on the psychiatric survivor movement, and Foucault’s notions of power as productive and not simply repressive, and utilizing the Kettering model of deliberation and policy making (Matthews & McAfee, 1998), I ask how adult education, as a discourse, can challenge psychiatric hegemony and ask different questions regarding the self and personal experience. I argue that, as a matter of public and social policy, adult education should not be tied to existing systems of power-relations, but should align itself with possibilities for the self and for human experience that include the experience of alterity and that honors, rather than suppresses, human differences. I argue that adult educators can reverse the discipline’s historic neglect of its public policy roles (Cunningham, 2001) and properly play the role of policy advocates and effectively challenge hegemonic forces that marginalize adults who experience alterity.

Introduction on Policy

Some problems repeat themselves in different forms, generation after generation. One such problem is posed by society’s adverse treatment of people who are different from the majority, but whose difference, viewed through the lens of history, should never have mattered. In the United States, such minorities have too often faced systematic
discrimination, whether on the basis of race or gender or sexual orientation. If difference were somehow conceptualized as a fundamental human right (Hill, 2009), arguably such discriminatory practices would have been more difficult to maintain.

This policy exploration is an offshoot of larger research on the public pedagogy of alterity, the experience of alters or alternate “personalities,” a phenomenon often labeled as “Dissociative Identity Disorder” or “DID” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) formerly known as “Multiple Personality Disorder” or “MPD” (American Psychiatric Association, 1980) in the United States. This relatively widespread phenomenon, which is often channeled into religious or spiritual terms in other cultures (Suryani & Jensen, 1993; Spanos, 1994), is pathologized as a mental illness in United States medical and psychiatric culture. Simply put, existing psychological models do not tolerate violations of assumptions regarding “personality” and the assumption that all adults must produce themselves in a consistent, “authentic” (Carusetta & Cranton, 2005) manner. This chapter explores and challenges public and social policies underlying the psychiatric hegemony over this phenomenon—that is, why there is no alternative to the linear, cohesive subject/self criticized by poststructuralist and feminist writers like St. Pierre (2000b).

This chapter is a work of social policy, which should have as its goal to “improve the well-being of people and assist them to secure education, a living wage, affordable heath care, decent housing, a clean environment, and the identity-based right to be different” (Hill, 2010, p. 105). The social policy in question goes to the right to be different and relates to the definition of the self and mental illness, and who gets to decide what is normal. Since the self is the “Big Enchilada” of adult educational constructs (Clark & Dirkx, 2000), this policy discussion could have implications beyond
the relative minority of people who experience alterity, and significant impact on educational doctrines and practices.

**Stakeholders**

Discussions of public and social policy should begin with an evaluation of the stakeholders who are involved in the issue under consideration (Matthews & McAfee, 1998), and so explorations of the social policy of alterity must center around the social landscape of the regulation of human experience through what Foucault would refer to as the psychiatric machine (Foucault, 1974/2003, p. 138). This “machine” is not a literal construct but rather a discursive formation, a collection of beliefs and practices that directly impact individual lives. The goal of the social policy intervention is to move this machine from its current position, that all people who express alterity are mentally ill (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) and should seek treatment for their condition (Mungadze, 2008; Steinberg & Schnall, 2001). In many ways, the challenge is similar to that faced by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer (LGBTQ) activists in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, when homosexuality was considered always a mental illness, and LGBTQ people were thus subjected to imprisonment in mental hospitals and “treatments” that included electric shocks, insulin-induced comas, castration, and long-term psychiatric harangues regarding the patients’ deep and abiding pathology. The policy makers in this process would be, then, first and foremost the psychiatrists and psychologists who revise the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual (DSM) every few decades.

But there are other social actors who are important to the social policy discussion as well. The psychiatric machine functions throughout and across contemporary culture. The common popular confusion of schizophrenia (a psychotic disorder characterized by
hallucinations and treatable by medication) with Dissociative Identity Disorder (a “disorder” which features no hallucinations and cannot be treated by medication) is a good example, since “the public has inherited the psychiatric profession’s historical confusion of MPD with schizophrenia” (North, Ryall, Ricci, & Wetzel, 1993, p. 119). Thus, the public pedagogy embodied in movies (and the subject of this dissertation) effectively reproduces the psychiatric ideology embodied in the diagnosis.

The stakeholders who are most deeply concerned with issues related the social and psychiatric regulation of alterity include the following:

1. The Dissociative Identity Disorder “Movement” within Psychiatry and Psychology;

2. Anti-DID Movement within Psychiatry and Psychology, which posits either that Dissociative Identity Disorder is not a “real” disorder or that it is significantly over-diagnosed or created by treatment;

3. Patients diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder;

4. People who fit the diagnostic criteria of Dissociative Identity Disorder but have never sought or received treatment;

5. Groups with religious beliefs regarding the spiritual nature of the experience of alterity;

6. Educational theorists and practitioners, including adult educators; and

7. Cultural workers such as writers and producers of cinematic texts.

In order to facilitate this public policy analysis, I will examine each group in turn.
Stakeholder Group 1: The DID Movement within Psychiatry and Psychology

Psychiatrists and psychologists, the group of stakeholders which routinely rewrites the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual and defines and treats mental illness in the United States, can be broken for this analysis into two important sub-groups. The first is the group that argues that DID is a widespread phenomena (Mungandez, 2008; Steinberg & Schanall, 2001). A substantial minority of psychiatrists, psychologists and counselors can be considered part of what Hacking (1995) referred to as the multiple personality psychological “movement” that “germinated in the sixties, emerged in the seventies, matured in the eighties, and [adopted] itself to new environments in the nineties” (p. 39) only to see its fortunes, and credibility, decline in the new millennium as “several ardent defends of dissociative disorders faced criminal sanctions, malpractice lawsuits, and other serious legal difficulties” (Piper & Merskey, 2004a, p. 592). As interest in dissociative phenomena increased in the 1980s and 1990s, a large number of therapists specialized in treating the growing “epidemic” of identified patients, with the creation after 1984 of specialized journals for such therapists and there was “a population explosion in the ranks of MPD, both in the numbers of cases and numbers of alternate personalities” (North, Ryall, Ricci, & Wetzel, 1993, p. 15).

This group of stakeholders, though perhaps diminished in recent years, remains numerous and powerful. While their motives must by and large be altruistic, to a scholar, like myself, who might suggest that alterity is not always a mental illness, they appear very similar to the psychiatrists and psychologists who routinely treat or treated “homosexuality” as a disease—their fixed ideas about the Self are patently absurd. The
ideas can be summarized: Every person is born with a single Self. If a person is abused in childhood, that person may deal with the abuse by learning to dissociate. Remembering the trauma heals the abuse and restores the single Self. Therefore, if a client presents with dissociative symptoms, she or he must be treated, over an extended period of time, with interventions that include hypnosis, in order to identify alters and interrogate each one to determine what memories of abuse the alter hides. Only after years of therapy, and thousands or tens of thousands of dollars in fees, can a client be healed and the natural, whole, organic Self restored:

Within the dissociative disorders field and much of mainstream psychiatry and psychology, dissociative identity disorder… is conceptualized as being a posttraumatic condition resulting from overwhelming childhood experiences, usually severe child abuse. According to this model, the dissociative response to earlier trauma is a creative survival strategy that helped the individual cope with overwhelming trauma. Alter personalities (alters) are conceptualized as dissociated aspects of an individual’s whole personality. Treatment… focuses largely on resolving the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive effects of the trauma; reducing conflict among dissociated ego states; and ultimately achieving an integration of the total personality. (Gleaves, 1996, p. 42)

The model of alterity as a disease process held by this group of psychiatrists, psychologists and therapists is largely based upon The Three Faces of Eve (Johnson, 1957) and the Sybil (Schrieber, 1973; Petrie & Babbin, 1976) stories (North, Ryall, Ricci & Wetzel, 1993). Sybil became the “prototype for what was to count as a multiple” (Hacking, 1995, p. 43) and firmly linked MPD in the psychiatric and public imagination.
to childhood abuse (Spanos, 1996, p. 267; Hacking, 1995). This group of stakeholders often makes a lot of money treating the MPD/DID, and they are proclaimed heroes for their efforts. Psychiatrist Richard Bear (2007) penned what is proclaimed on the cover as “A doctor’s harrowing story of treating a woman with 17 personalities,” and he treated this patient for eighteen years, wrote more than six hundred pages of notes, and received from the seventeen alters “44 drawings, 49 artifacts..., 12 audiotapes..., 2 videos..., 275 e-mails, 60 cars, and almost 5,000 pages of journal entries and letters” (p. 344). Papers, such as those by Piper and Merskey (2004a and 2004b) which challenge accepted psychiatric doctrine regarding DID and alterity as a diseased state, are countered, for examples, by psychiatrists who proclaim that they have treated more than 100 cases of the disorder in Turkey (Sar, 2005); and who attack Piper and Merskey because they did not “warn” readers that they are members of “an organization composed mostly of general members who have been accused of previous child abuse by their now-grown children” (Coons, 2005, p. 813). This group has a lot to lose, in terms of money, social status, and intimate therapeutic relationships, if alterity is not always a disease requiring their heroic efforts to stop the harrowing, and always pre-supposed, problem posed by polyvalent selves.

**Stakeholder Group 2: The anti-DID Movement within Psychiatry and Psychology**

Within psychiatry and psychology, a counter-movement has arisen that seeks to assert either that the DID movement has led to an over-diagnosis of the extremely rare disease of DID (Rieber, 2006), or, more commonly, attack the movement for its connection of dissociative disorders to memory and child abuse (Spanos, 1996), and
arguing rather that “multiple identities can be understood as rule-governed social constructions established, legitimated, and maintained through social interaction” (Chaves & Jones, 1996, p. viii-ix). This perspective has often been labeled the sociocognitive perspective (Spanos, 1996), which,

conceptualizes DID as a syndrome that consists of rule-governed and goal-directed experiences and displays of multiple role enactments that have been created, legitimized, and maintained by social reinforcement. Patients with DID synthesize these role enactments by drawing on a wide variety of sources of information, including print and broadcast media, cues provided by therapists, personal experiences, and observations of individuals who have enacted multiple identities. (Lilienfeld, Lynn, Kirsch, Chaves, Sarbin, Ganaway & Powell, 1999, pp. 507-508)

Psychiatrists have attacked the validity of the diagnosis for its “logical inconsistencies, its internal contradictions, and its conflict with known facts and settled scientific principles” (Piper & Merskey, 2004a, p. 592), as well as its presumed connection with childhood abuse and thus its status as a form or variant of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Merksey & Piper, 2007). Even though the DID movement and adherents to its traditional notions is still clearly alive—note the continuing appearance of tell-all books on healing dissociative disorder through traditional treatments of recovering memories of trauma, both “true” (Walker, Brozek, & Maxfield, 2008; Baer, 2007) and in The United States of Tara cinematic texts (Cody & Kaplow, 2009, 2010)-- some scholars in this counter-movement are prepared to declare the diagnosis deceased:
MPD lasted as long as the consensus of psychiatrists, hypnotic practice, the concept of repression, insurance companies, judges, the campaigns for the prevention of child abuse, the feminist movement, the media and x number of other elements conjoined to make it last, to support its existence in the manner of a “continued creation.” When some of these elements came undone, the reality of MPD was undone at the same time. (Borch-Jacobsen, 2009, p. 70)

The more extreme elements of the MPD movement made it easy to attack the movement’s beliefs and constructs, especially when they resulted in false memories of childhood abuse that were later recanted and resulted in litigation and public outrage (Campbell, 1998; Ofshe & Waters, 1994). Acocella (1999) refers to the movement as a “cult” because of the extreme beliefs of some of its members in Satanic Ritual Abuse, or SRA, an imagined widespread Satanic conspiracy to sexually and ritually abuse children and to breed babies which were then slaughtered and devoured by adherents. These therapists assisted their clients in recovering memories of SRA which tracked a fundamentalist Christian worldview of organized Satanism in opposition to forces of purity and goodness. When massive police and journalistic investigations discovered no evidence of any such Satanic conspiracies (Ofshe & Watters, 1994), Acocella posited that the result was a crisis of faith for “believers” in MPD phenomena:

For MPD believers, [failure to find any evidence of] SRA created a crisis similar to the one faced by American Communists when news of the Moscow trials reached the West in the late thirties. They had two choices. They could defend SRA, which by the end of 1980s put them in the position of kooks, like UFO believers. Or they could repudiate SRA, which meant abandoning their
colleagues and saying that their enemies had been right. Worse, it meant casting doubt not just on SRA but on MPD and recovered memory, for the therapeutic procedures that had produced the SRA stories... were the same ones that had produced MPD. (Acocella, 1999, p. 89)

This group of stakeholders, zealous as they are to protect patients from therapists who might recover false memories of abuse, appears ready to utterly discount the experiences of the large numbers of patients and others who regularly experience alterity. But, as Hacking (1994)—himself a philosopher and not a therapist—appealed to the less virulent members of the anti-MPD movement when he wrote that:

Confident and blatant skeptics cheerfully dismiss all [alterity] as fantasy, but it is the less arrogant and more reflective doubters whom I have in mind. They accept that the patient has produced this version of herself, a narrative that includes dramatic events, a causal story of the formation of alters, and an account of the relationships between the alters. That is a self-consciousness; that is a soul.

(Hacking, 1994, p. 266)

This group of stakeholders, then, includes both those who would dismiss and ignore the existence of alterity, and those who would accept it as a reality, albeit one created iatrogenically, by bad psychiatric theory, rogue therapy, and, sometimes, by strange notions about a vast Satanic conspiracy.

**Stakeholder Group 3: Patients diagnosed with DID/MPD**

An important constituency is arguably the current population of patients either undergoing or whom have undergone treatment for this disorder, many of whom self-identify as mentally ill. The psychiatric establishment offers two alternative narratives to
patients. First, they can side with the Stakeholder Group 1, and define themselves as
victims of childhood sexual abuse who coped with that abuse by creating alters to hide
memories. They can adopt strategies for coping with multiple selves that are often in
conflict (ATW, 2005) and treatment best “realistically portrayed as long term” (Chu,
2001, xii) with psychiatrists and other mental health providers (Haddock, 2001), which,
of course, will often be complicated by comorbid conditions such as substance abuse or
other mental illnesses (North, Ryall, Ricci, & Wetzel, 1993). Or they can accept that
MPD is a “false” disorder and that their experience of alters is some form of hysteria
(Acocella, 1999) in which a patient experiencing alterity utilize “behavioural repertoires
other than those predicted by his or her customary personality… to obtain gratifications
or escape potential punishment and unpleasant consequences” (Munford & Liberman,
1982, p. 297). In other words, patients experiencing alterity can utilize existing
psychiatric discourse to define themselves as survivors of horrible abuse who are
chronically and severely mentally ill or, alternatively, as either rubes deceived by
therapists into false consciousness or charlatans who prey on others through the use of
false alters. Such patients may, perhaps, one day declare themselves integrated into a
single Self (Olson, 1997). Or they can posit themselves victims of psychiatry, and push
back against psychiatric hegemony through the psychiatric survivor movement
(O’Hagan, 1993) through a commitment to exploring problems created by psychiatry and
to “combating psychiatry’s assaults” (Burstow, 2004, p. 143). Existing systems of
discourse offer little affirmation to this group of stakeholders, except for a special status
as wounded survivors of either childhood trauma or bad psychiatry.
Stakeholder Group 4: People who fit the diagnostic criteria of DID but have never sought therapy

This group is arguably quite large, and might include method actors, artists and other creative people (Perez-Fabello & Campos, 2011), and anyone, in fact, who regularly maintains one or more personas, whether professional or otherwise. The social problem posed by the current psychiatric machine is, after all, the pathologizing of relatively common human experiences. Spanos (1996, 1994) argued that there is nothing inherent pathological about the experience of alterity, which he redefined as the social enactment of multiple identities. Creative types, in particular, may experience alterity more frequently than those in other groups. Actors, for example, routinely enact double identities (Edelmann, 1991) and might be subject to “possession” by “dramatic characters, the beings that possess modern actors like succubi, using parts of their emotions, and yet leading an independent existence as the ‘Mask’ seen by the audience” (Bates, 1991, pp. 15-16). For those who experience and draw inspiration from their alterity, it may be that “creative dissociation represents the mind’s evolved ability to escape, transform, and possibly transcend the limitations of ordinary reality, which are, generally speaking, dangerous, depressing, and frequently traumatic” (Grosso, 1997, p. 195). However, just as gay men and lesbians in the 1950s remained closeted to avoid losing their jobs and receiving unwanted psychiatric interventions, given the often extreme social and medical sanctions imposed upon those who experience alterity, individuals who experience alters but are not distressed by the experience are likely to remain quiet about their difference.
Stakeholder Group 5: Groups with religious beliefs regarding the spiritual nature of the experience of alterity

There is a pronounced Western terror of alterity, especially when it is perceived as possession by alien consciousness or spirits. Western Anthropologists studying cults where possession trance is routine and non-pathological have remarked upon “the Otherness of [possession] phenomena [including] its uncanny inexplicability, its screaming incompatibility with Western notions of personhood, its seeming disdain for self-control, its radical otherness…” (van de Port, 2005, p. 151). Arguably, this Western terror traces back to Judeo-Christian fears of demonic possession (Sluhovsky, 2007), which notions were used by the early church to gain converts through the sacrament of exorcism:

The idea that demons can enter into people and take over their functioning entered Western European history as an accompaniment to Christianity… Possession and exorcism were frequently used as proselytizing tools to impress and convert unbelievers. Consequently, possession appears to have been a relatively common occurrence in the early church while Christianity struggled for supremacy among numerous competing relations. (Spanos, 1994, p. 150)

These notions continued into early modern England, where “possession and deliverance [was] a cultural drama played out by all participants within the confines of a cultural script known to all of them” (Almond, 2004, p. ix). These religious beliefs, that alterity might be the result of an intrusion into a person’s body of an alien and evil consciousness, persist to this day, as “The transmutation of diabolic possession into medical or psychopathological diagnoses is only one of a number of current exegetical
strategies explaining (away) the phenomenon” (Sluhovsky, 2007, p. 3). Arguably, this connection of alterity to demonic possession and religious beliefs fueled the Satanic Ritual Abuse scare in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Nathan & Snedeker, 2001; Ofshe & Watters, 1994).

Indeed, Christian fundamentalists have directly incorporated human experience of alterity to validate their religious worldview by positing a vast satanic conspiracy which, through dream logic, produces DID/MPD without actually creating any physical evidence like the bones of devoured babies. There are, after all, treatment manuals for psychiatrists to address Satanic Ritual Abuse (Fraser, 1997; Ross, 1995; Sinason, 1994; Mayer, 1991). Psychiatrists like Ross (1995) might feign objectivity and assert that

Although the content of Satanic ritual abuse memories is a reworking of cultural myths and psychological conflicts, this fact has no weight in trying to determine the current objective reality of Satanic ritual abuse. The widespread existence of such unconscious symbolism can lead to the prediction than the myth is likely being acted-out in the world to some extent, while simultaneously suggesting that the memories are really all mythical symbolism, without any accompanying sociological symbolism. (Ross, 1995, p. 27)

By Ross’s logic, cultures which demonize women as evil witches must perforce create women who are evil witches, and somewhere in America someone must doing the horrible things described by MPD patients. Such a perspective, even though couched in objective terms, validates a fundamentalist Christian mythology of a world inhabited by malicious demons and spirits. Those who refuse to acknowledge the reality of this world are excused as people who do not wish to know because reality is so horrible. “These
accounts [of Satanic abuse] are so horrifying, it is no wonder that most people wish not to believe them to be true” (Casement, 1994, p. 23). According to such clinicians, exploring other religious or occult phenomenon will, of course, eventually lead to Satanic ritual abuse, and requires the immediate intervention by police and therapists: “Teen dabbling [in the occult] can lead to serious consequences; early intervention by therapists and law enforcement agents can prevent or curtail involvement in ritual activities” (Simandal, 1997, p. 230).

Such religious narratives also ignore alternative religious traditions, many of which value or exalt the experience of alterity as some sort of direct contact with the divine or with spirits. “In many traditional societies, and in some subcultural contexts in our own society, multiple self-enactments take the form of spirit possession” (Spanos, 1996, p. 145). These beliefs in benign alterity often conceptualize either a displacement or fusion model of the phenomenon—that is, alters either displace or fuse with the host’s person or persona (Cohen & Barret, 2008a, 2008b). Indeed, in these religious traditions individuals go to great lengths to experience alterity. Murphy (1994) reported how, in the Afro-Caribbean tradition of voodoo, adherents spend three days in ritualized sensory deprivation in order to first experience being ridden, or possessed, by the Loa, or spirits. In Voodoo tradition, the *gros bon ange*, or “big good angel,” represents “the source of the memory and intelligence that defines the personhood of a human being. When the head is washed, the *[gros bon ange]* is prepared to become separable from its visible receptacle and allow a spirit in its place” (p. 23). In Bali, traditional healers experience trance and possession in order to help others (Suryani & Jensen, 1993), and among the African Kel Ewey Tuareg spirit possession rites and verbal artistic imagery form “a continuous code”
(Rasmussen, 1995, p. 78) that both facilitates healing and buttresses the social order. There are thus two religious or spiritual approaches to alterity, one of which considers possession states to be forbidden, evil and demonic, and the other which holds them to be a direct manifestation of the divine and spiritual. In the United States, outside of Afro-Caribbean and other minority religious circles, the former is far more powerful and outspoken than the latter.

**Stakeholder Group 6: Educational theorists and practitioners, including adult educators**

The Self is such a central concept for educational theorists (Clark & Dirkx, 2000) that challenges to the notion of the unitary theory of the self will have profound implications for both theory and practice. Educators whose theories require a Self which can be manipulated, developed, transformed and made more autonomous (Newman, 2008; Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000), or whose theories posit a naturalized Self to which one can be true (Dirkx, 2006; Cranton & Carusetta, 2004a, 2004b) may resist any notions that the Self might be polyvalent as an attack on their theoretical currency and livelihood. Scholars who are dedicated to Hill’s (2009) notion that human difference is a fundamental right will be more open to different formulations and explanations of human experience.

**Stakeholder Group 7: Cultural workers such as writers and producers of cinematic texts**

The fascination of many cinematographers with alterity has driven my research, and creative and cultural workers play a huge role in maintaining contemporary notions regarding the Self. Discussions of alterity in the West can easily trace its history into the
18th and 19th century (Carlson, 1986) and to spiritist and parapsychological notions (Decker, 1986; Flournoy, 1899/1994), and, while the notion that alterity was always a disease began to emerge in the late 19th century, stories and texts involving dissociation have proliferated before and since. The preoccupation with the Victorian era notion of a double consciousness or second self (Wright, 1997; Crabtree, 1986), which appears in such classic stories as the *Strange Case of Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde* (Stevenson, 1886/2004), has yielded to the complex stories of multiple alters found in the cinematic texts studied in this project. The creators of these stories, who profit from their tales of strange transgressions of cultural and psychiatric beliefs about the Self, have a vested interest in how alterity is depicted as exotic, inexplicable, and Other.

**Where Policy Is Made**

In the Kettering model (Matthews & McAfee, 1998), after stakeholders are identified, where social policy is created is the next important analysis. The “where” of the social policy issue addressed herein is trifurcated. On the one hand, the answer is obvious: every decade or so, psychiatrists and psychologists convene to determine who is and is not mentally ill, and to codify their decision in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) for mental health professionals. Any policy discussions challenging and troubling the normative aspects of the Self, and the notion that the radical disjunctures in experience that people who experience alterity report is always a mental illness, could be raised at such conventions where psychiatrists and psychologists meet. Indeed, the DSM V has been in revisions (from the DSM IV) since 1999, based upon peer meetings, the findings of 13 working groups, and grant-funded studies, with the final version scheduled
Dissociative Identity Disorder

A. Disruption of identity characterized by two or more distinct personality states or an experience of possession, as evidenced by discontinuities in sense of self, cognition, behavior, affect, perceptions, and/or memories. This disruption may be observed by others or reported by the patient.

B. Inability to recall important personal information, for everyday events or traumatic events, that is inconsistent with ordinary forgetfulness.

C. Causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. *

D. The disturbance is not a normal part of a broadly accepted cultural or religious practice and is not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., blackouts or chaotic behavior during Alcohol intoxication) or a general medical condition (e.g., complex partial seizures). NOTE: In children, the symptoms are not attributable to imaginary playmates or other fantasy play.

* The workgroup will further consider whether Criterion C is necessary…. (American Psychiatric Association, 2010).

While the diagnosis has not been finalized, a new criteria C is being debated, which would “help differentiate normative cultural experiences from psychopathology”
(American Psychiatric Association, 2010) by adding the element of subjective distress to the diagnostic categories. Some of the issues raised in this project are already being addressed, though apparently only to allow for religious and cultural differences rather than to fundamentally challenge or resignify the presumed Self.

Of course, “cultural experiences” could be expanded to include cultural messages received, for example, through the public pedagogy. This research is in the adult education and public pedagogy of popular culture, and specifically of movies and other cinematic texts. Taking a lesson from the LGBTQ and other civil rights movements, social change begins properly in the streets, where cultural experiences are shaped and redefined. In my work, this translates to the places where such texts are produced or consumed. That is pretty much everywhere. “Social policy accounts for plans or actions designed to create, change, or maintain living conditions that are supportive of human welfare” (Hill, 2010, p. 104). Including the public sphere, and indeed the notion of lifelong learning as itself a type of public policy and policy as a process rather than a fixed and static academic discipline (Griffith, 2011), broadens the scope and impact of social policy deliberations.

Ultimately, this work focuses upon larger questions of human freedom to learn and to be, and to create lives that are not constrained by axiomatic beliefs that human experience can be measured and counted accurately in psychometric tests. If I am even partially correct in my analyses, the move by the psychiatric establishment to foreclose any possibility other than a single Self is an indicator of the type of intellectual currency that the Self creates for established interests. This notion poses certain challenges to academics and other professionals who measure and meter the Self of their clients for
profit, and will be a site of powerful resistance. Thus, academic fora, such as conferences and journals, are a good place to begin these deliberations. Academics who mean well and are dedicated to adult education as an adventure (Grace, 2009) and as a chance to foster human rights might be willing to consider that the notion of the Self underlying “subjectivity statements” and calls for authenticity, as behaving in a true and correct fashion conforming to one’s essential Self (Carusetta & Cranton, 2005; Cranton & Carusetta, 2004a, 2004b) might be peculiar, culture-bound, and sometimes oppressive.

**Choices and Policy Alternatives**

In the Kettering model, after the stakeholders are identified and the places where policy is made reviewed, the analysis turns to possible policy options. This analysis identifies four policy options. I will explore each option in turn, including in each discussion a synopsis of the proposed new social policy.

**Policy Option 1: Maintain the Status Quo**

Under this social policy, psychiatrists and psychologists continue to define the experience of alterity as a mental illness, without regard to whether the identified patient experiences his or her condition as distressing. This would require that the American Psychiatric Association, in revising the DSM-5, would choose to exclude Criterion C, which provides that alterity must produce distress to be problematic, and which change is currently still being debated (American Psychiatric Association, 2010). It would also require a roll-back of proposed changes that include adding Criterion D, which excludes religious and spiritual expressions of alterity from diagnosis as psychopathological. To maintain the status quo, the criteria used for diagnosing and treating Dissociative Identity Disorder remain unchanged from that presented in the DSM-IV. People who experience
alterity would continue to be automatically considered to be mentally ill and, in all cases, in need of immediate treatment. Common thinking about the Self would remain unchanged: Adult educators would continue to assist their students in determining the true attributes of their selves through psychometric and other tests and exercises.

**Policy Option 2: Exceptions for the Sacred**

Since in many cultures and religious groups the experience of alterity occurs in trance or religious states, exceptions to the diagnosis could include religious and sacred understandings. Religions that emphasize possession trance or trance channeling could be more widely understood and accepted. There are, after all, many exceptions already built into the psychiatric understanding for religions, since assertions in many religious mythologies are quite irrational. Under this policy choice, the experience of alterity would generally be considered to be a sign of pathology, but with the understanding that religious experiences including alterity were not automatically pathological. The proposed new definition of Dissociative Identity Disorder appears to adopt his perspective, since subpart “D” excludes from the definition of mental illness the experience of alterity that is based upon religious beliefs: “The disturbance is not a normal part of a broadly accepted cultural or religious practice….” (American Psychiatric Association, 2010). However, there remain problems with this definition. First, alterity is still a “disturbance” rather than a state toward which adherents of a given religion might aspire. Second, and more importantly, the religious exception must be part of a religion that is “broadly accepted.” The definition, as written, would allow mental health professions to determine the validity of an individuals religious tradition, by requiring a determination of
whether or not a religion meets the ill-defined “broadly accepted” criteria. A more
genuine adaptation of this policy option would remove the reference to the
experience of alterity as a “disturbance” of the self and would further remove the
requirement that a religion must be to some degree majoritarian to produce
psychiatrically-acceptable perspectives.

**Policy Option 3: Alterity as Not Always a Mental Illness**

The current definition of Dissociative Identity Disorder, like the diagnosis of
“homosexuality” as a mental illness prior to 1973, does not require that the patient
experience any distress. If a person reports that she or he experiences the presence of
alters, that person can be diagnosed as mentally ill even if she or he reports no problems
from that alterity. This could be easily changed, and a Dissociative Identity Disorder
reserved as a diagnosis for those whose alterity is disrupting their lives or causing them
acute distress. This outcome would be similar to the transitional diagnosis of “Ego
Dystonic Homosexuality” which appeared in the DSM III (American Psychiatric
Association, 1980) but was eliminated in the DSM IV (American Psychiatric
Association, 1994):

**Diagnostic criteria for Ego-Dystonic Homosexuality**

A. The individual complains that heterosexual arousal is persistently absent
or weak or significantly interferes with initiating or maintaining wanted
heterosexual relationships.

B. There is a sustained patter of homosexual arousal that the individual
explicitly states has been unwanted and a persistent source of distress.

(American Psychiatric Association, 1980, p. 282)
After homosexuality was no longer considered a mental illness, it could still be treated if a homosexual said he or she felt bad about being gay, until, after the American Psychological Association’s policy statement that the diagnosis no longer be used (Fox, 1988), it was removed from the diagnostic manual. The diagnosis thus served as a sort of buffer between the more conservative era, when homosexuality was considered always a mental illness, and the present era, when only mental health professionals outside of the mainstream seek to treat homosexuality as a disorder or disease. This transitional diagnosis allowed mental health professionals to treat as diseased those patients who experienced distress at their homosexual urges—homosexuality could be a disease, but only if the patient thought it so.

The proposed revision to the diagnostic criteria which is still under discussion (American Psychiatric Association, 2010) represents a partial adoption of this policy option. Under proposed subpart “C”, alterity is only considered a mental illness if the patient experiences “clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning” (American Psychiatric Association, 2010). This, of course, suggests that the prejudice of others to some degree determines whether a person experiencing alterity is excluded from the diagnostic criteria. In pre-Stonewall America, there was such stigma attached to homosexuality that most person identified as homosexual, even if they were not distressed by their homosexuality, experienced social and occupational distress including ostracization and loss of employment. A truer implementation of this policy option would eliminate the latter part of the proposed subpart “C” and read, simply, “Causes clinically significant distress.”
Policy Option 4: Stakeholders Abandon the Unitary Self as a Foundational Construct

This last, and most radical, policy alternative suggests that perhaps mental health professionals should abandon attempts to impose a single Self on all clients. Just as such professionals have, outside of fringe and extremist religious groups and psychologists, largely abandoned heterosexist attempts to change LGBTQ folks into heterosexual folks, they could seek trying to transform all people who experience alterity into singular and integrated Selves. Just as LGBTQ folk have issues that require counseling and mental health professionals can treat those issues without attempting to change those folk into heterosexuals, mental health professionals can address the issues of those who experience alterity without attempting to change those people. This would require many therapists to abandon some of their authority and to create possibilities for “creative dissociation” where there are “the possibility of new learning experiences, new cognitive adventures, and now stories” (Grosso, 1997, p. 197). This radical policy outcome would require whole scale re-thinking of much academic and adult education thinking, since the singular Self is often presumed as a starting point in much education discourse, or used as an axiom on which to build other notions and theories. With Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) scholars would cease viewing the polyvalent self as “a numerical fragment of a lost Unity or Totality” (p. 32) but instead to focus upon polyvalent selves as assemblages, or collection of multiplicities (p. 34). Without the presumed Self as a foundational concept, adult education scholars would need to reinvent our traditions to include possibilities for human experience that account for the ability of some adult learners to learn and grow through several or many different selves simultaneously.
Implementing and Assessing Policy Options

This section will include a discussion of the alternative approaches, solutions and deliberations necessary under each option.

Assessment of Policy Option 1, Maintaining the Status Quo

In order to implement Policy Option 1, Psychiatrists and psychologists must insulate their discourses from feminist and poststructuralist writings and from data from cross-cultural sources. For the Self to remain naturalized in those discourses as a singular and inherent construct found in all human beings, much data to the contrary must be suppressed or neglected, and the sociocognitive perspective offered by Spanos (1996) and his intellectual heirs must be ignored. Further, patients who have been diagnosed as suffering from MPD or DID must not assert any notions, based upon personal experience, that contradict existing theories regarding the Self. People who experience alterity and have been labeled as mentally ill must continue to engaged in the “sick role,” exchanging normal societal roles and rights for the right to be excused for their behavior, the obligation to seek expert assistance, and the obligation to follow through on the advice of those experts (Morrison, 2005, p. 1). The psychiatric survivors’ movement (Cohen, 2005; Morrison, 2005; Burstow, 2004; Hagan, 1993) must remain fragmented and marginalized.

People who experience alterity but have never been diagnosed as mentally ill must continue to be insulated from alternative models of human experience. If they begin to suspect their alterity, such people must be immediately diagnosed as part of the “Hidden Epidemic” and must learn to recognize their symptoms and seek treatment (Steinberg & Schnall, 2001). Other social actors must remain silent or disinterested in
this topic, and educators continue to peddle and promote programs based upon modernist
notions of the Self. Finally, the fascination of filmmakers and other cultural workers with
alterity must continue to be morbid. Just as LGBTQ folk were once almost uniformly
depicted as sick, perverted and ill, people who experience alterity must continue to be
depicted as inevitably mentally ill, and either dangerous or objects of humor and derision,
such as Tara in *The United States of Tara* (Cody & Kaplow, 2009).

Given the fracturing that has occurred within the community of mental health
professionals, as adherents to the sociocognitive model push back against the more
extreme notions of the MPD/DID movement, it seems unlikely that policy option 1 is
tenable. The revisions suggested for the DSM V (American Psychiatric Association,
2010) suggest that this policy option is no longer viable, as those revisions would move
the mental health establishment into Option 2 or Option 3.

**Assessment of Policy Option 2, Exceptions for the Sacred**

In order for Policy Option 2 to be implemented, Psychiatrists and psychologists
must include in their discourse understandings from cross-cultural sources. In particular,
understandings of religion must be expanded beyond those garnered from the Judeo-
Christian tradition and from monotheistic sects. For those patients who experience
alterity as a result of their religious or spiritual beliefs, there must be a group that begins
to exercise “a degree of autonomy and personal authority that differs from the standard
conception of a patient in the sick role” (Morrison, 2005, p. 13).

For people who experience alterity but have never been diagnosed with a mental
illness, there must be a broadening of discourse on religious and other spiritual traditions
outside of mainstream Judeo-Christian sources. Counselors could be trained in
transpersonal psychology and in the psychology and anthropology of consciousness. They must become more educated consumers of clinical discourse, so that wild theories of Satanic conspiracies (Nathan & Snedeker, 2001) find less fertile ground for growth in the therapeutic imagination.

Educational theorists and academics who are not employed in cross-cultural or religious work might be minimally impacted by this alternative. However, an expansion of basic psychological and sociological coursework to expressly include religious and spiritual traditions that are very different from the Western norm would facilitate the more widespread adoption of this option. This option is likely to appeal to Griffith’s (2011) “accommodating intellectuals” (p. 131) who work within existing traditions and buttress existing systems of power relations while proclaiming that they are above politics and economic issues. Filmmakers and cultural workers could produce more works that contain nuanced and complex (as opposed to exaggerated and imbalanced) images of minority religions and of mysticism.

Proposed changes to the diagnostic criteria for DID indicate that Policy Option 2 may be adopted in the DSM V (American Psychiatric Association, 2010). While, as noted above, there are problems with a diagnostic criteria that allows mental health professionals to validate whether a religion has broad acceptance, this policy option appears likely to be incorporated into the next version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

**Assessment of Policy Option 3, Alterity As Not Always an Illness**

In order to adopt Policy Option 3, that alterity is not a mental illness unless the person experiencing alterity is distressed by that experience, psychiatrists and
psychologists would move away from modernist notions that the Self is a natural and real entity, like a material object, which can be measured and tracked over time. This model could be modified to consider the Self as something that usually appears in each individual as a natural and real entity, but with an understanding that, like other things in nature, there can be some measure of benign variation. Alternatively, the sociocognitive perspective outlined by Spanos (1996) could be adopted, and with it the notion that

There is nothing inevitable about the notion of a unitary self…. [P]eople can learn to think of themselves as possessing more than one identity or self, and can learn to behave as if they are first one identity and then a different identity. People can learn to behave in these ways regardless of whether they were abused as children and regardless of whether they are suffering high levels of distress and exhibiting symptoms of psychopathology. (Spanos, 1996, p. 4)

Counselors would cease assuming that, when they interview someone who reports experiencing alterity, that person must have been the victim of trauma, which must be identified and relieved to “cure” alterity. Alterity would be viewed as not itself a disease but as perhaps either a symptom of some other disorder or a benign condition which might become troublesome if a person experiences too much stress or other troublesome life events.

Patients identified as mentally ill because of their alterity would have to consider the possibility that some of the treatment they have received, such as recovered memory therapy, might have actually been damaging and abusive. They would need to reconsider whether their alterity was itself a disease, or perhaps either a symptom of some other disorder or even a benign condition or talent mislabeled as pathological.
This option requires almost nothing of those who experience alterity but have never been treated for their illness, like LGBTQ people after 1973, they can choose to remain in the closet. Should the policy be implemented, there might begin to emerge a subculture of adults who are willing to self-identify as experiencing alterity. Academics and educators could move beyond exercises designed to reify the Self in their learners and explore poststructuralist and feminist notions of how we produce ourselves in discourse and in our lifeworlds. We could eschew, for example, requirements that educators be able to identify a single, enduring educational philosophy, or that we administer and support tests, designed to produce learners as fungible and measurable entities, in favor of less certain constructions of existence and consciousness. Cultural workers and filmmakers could move away from a morbid curiosity with alterity to a more balanced interest. That is, characters experiencing alterity might be novel and entertaining without being presented as monstrous or diseased.

There is some movement toward adopting this policy option, as the proposed revision to the definition of DID in the DSM V (American Psychiatric Association, 2010) include a possible subpart “C” which suggests that some individuals might experience alterity without distress. However, full implementation of this option will be difficult, as social and economic structures in United States society favor the singular Self, and so changing the definition of DID without addressing those social issues might be insufficient.

Assessment of Policy Option 4, Stakeholders Abandon the Unitary Self as a Key Construct
The most radical Policy Option proposed as a result of this research, the abandonment of the Self as a foundational construct, would be the most difficult to implement. The greatest difference in this option is that psychiatrists, counselors, educators and academics would need to de-naturalize the Self. That is, the Self would not be considered something that is real and measurable, like a material object, but rather as something that is produced culturally and in discourse. Psychiatrists and psychologists would need to rethink the role of the Self in their theories. Further, the connection between the Self and personhood must be broken. Spanos (1996) never refers to multiple selves, only to multiple identities or “identity enactments” (p. 3), so that even the sociocognitive perspectives implicitly removes alters from consideration as a possible different form personhood. Counselors would need to move from the role of a guide to a facilitator of mental health. That is, without the certainty provided by notions of a naturalized Self and the authority to diagnosis and treat that Self, many therapists would become experts who help patients understand their difference, rather than authority figures who regulate, treat, and eliminate such human difference.

For Policy Option 4 to work, people in the psychiatric survivor movement and the recovered memory movement would become more visible social actors as they pushed back against existing notions regarding alterity. They would need to emerge as a social movement to resist psychiatric hegemony (Morrison, 2005). Those who experience alterity but are not mentally ill would need to begin to “come out” and openly express their difference. Academics would need to become transformative and critical, rather than accommodating or hegemonic, intellectuals (Griffith, 2011). If the Self as object and natural construct is abandoned or de-naturalized, then social science might, as
Foucault (1966/1970) imagined, abandon its claim to be a natural science and properly become a human science, with constructs and theories appropriate to the phenomenon studied rather than to the natural sciences.

Cultural workers would begin to tell stories about people who experience alterity, rather than focusing upon alterity itself. Just as filmmakers replaced films about LGBTQ people as monsters with films including LGBTQ people as characters, films would replace a fascination with the criminal and psychopathic expressions of alterity with films about the extraordinary abilities and talents of people who experience alterity. Stories like *Youth in Revolt* (Arteta, Permut, Weinstein & Weinstein, 2009), where alterity is, at least for the protagonist-- and not the victims of his criminal behavior—a benign variation from Self into selves, must become more common and less extraordinary.

**Pros and Cons of Each Policy Choice**

**Trade-offs and Implications of Policy Option 1, Maintaining the Status Quo**

Policy Option 1 is the choice most congruent with a neoliberal philosophy. For the neoliberal machine— which denominates all values in monetary terms, and focuses upon the efficient creation and transfer of capital—to function smoothly, it is best that human beings produce themselves as fungible, predictable entities, and a person who experiences alterity, and who insists on producing her- or himself in radically different ways, poses challenges to those who would predict and control behavior. “[T]he social, economic, and legal institutions of North American culture are premised on the notion that each person is a unitary self who is accountable for his or her own diverse behaviors, and it is this view of the unitary self that is routinely legitimated in social interactions” (Spanos, 1994, p. 144). Challenges to the way the Self is theorized and discussed have
broad implications for today’s economic and social status quo. This option is especially appropriate for those academics and policy theorists whom Griffith (2011) referred to as “hegemonic intellectuals” (p. 131) that is, intellectuals dedicated to preserving the status quo. This outcome would further facilitate the spread of North American cultural assumptions and ideas about mental illness, with its correlated increase in profits for American drug companies (Watters, 2010) and in the utter dependency of low-functioning patients on their mental health providers.

The greatest negative consequences of this alternative may fall upon those who experience alterity and who are identified and treated by the therapeutic establishment. The literature is replete with evidence that those who experience alterity are a highly suggestible, highly hypnotizable group of people (Hacking, 1995; Bliss, 1986), and existing models of why people experience alterity—including that it is always associated with trauma—arguably creates false memories and intense suffering for some people diagnosed with Dissociative Identity Disorder (Offshe & Watters, 1994). Conversely, and ironically, the greatest positive consequences of this policy alternative likewise fall to some people who experience alterity and who are severely mentally ill, since they are able to access health insurance and other benefits through existing diagnostic criteria.

**Trade-offs and Implications for Policy Option 2, Exceptions for the Sacred**

Policy Option 2, if implemented, would allow more alternatives for those who experience alterity to understand their experiences. However, for the many who are traditionally-minded and unlikely to break from majority religious traditions, this is unlikely to change significantly. Likewise, since minority religions are relatively weak and marginal economically and in numbers, this policy choice does little to address the
implications of the Self for prevailing neoliberal power-relations. Not much would change, except that scholars would continue, like Duijl, Komproe and de Jong (2010), to attempt to distinguish “between normal dissociative trance and possession states, for example, as part of cultural or religious rituals, and pathological trance and possession states bringing distress and impairment in functioning” (p. 381).

There are, however, small but vocal segments of the population that will be adamantly opposed to this policy option, that is, fundamentalist Christian sects. Christian fundamentalism has played an important role in the creation of current discourse on alterity, as “religious fundamentalism, with its dramatic notions of sin and penitence” (Acocella, 1999, p. 50) has played a powerful part in creating psychological notions of recovered memory and of alterity as a product of trauma. Indeed, Western perceptions of alterity have been colored with notions of demonic possession since Biblical times (North, Ryall, Ricci, & Wetzel, 1993), and Christian fundamentalists have remained prepared to model healing interventions upon “the ancient ritual of exorcism” and produce therapists who “combined demonological concepts with secular psychology” (Nathan & Snedeker, 2001, p. 49). Indeed, some of those “Christian therapists conceptualize their diagnostic task as determining which of a patient’s alters are dissociated personality fragments and which are actually possessing evil demons” (Spanos, 1996, p. 270), with exorcism prescribed for alters who are demons, and “fundamentalist Christian clinicians even have viewed demonic possession as part of the differential diagnosis of dissociative disorders” (Loewenstein, 2007, p. 290). It seems likely that fundamentalist groups, as they have done since the earliest days of organized Christianity, will continue to resist as demonic or Satanic all other religions and spiritual
traditions. Since fundamentalist groups are often well-funded and outspoken, their resistance to Policy Option 2 is likely to be profound and, perhaps, effective.

**Trade-offs for Policy Option 3, Alterity As Not Always Mental Illness**

This social policy alternative, if implemented, would have some impact outside of psychiatric circles, as adult educators and others began to consider that transformative life changes might be abrupt and discontinuous, and that who or what an adult learner chooses to be or become is something to be determined by that learner. Fewer people would need as much therapy. Since insurance reimbursement for mental health-related conditions is already declining, this reduction would occur anyway, but many counselors would experience a huge reduction in their revenue stream, and Dissociative Identity Disorder is one of the few remaining mental illnesses that requires not medication but rather years of talk therapy.

Like the relabeling of homosexuality to “ego dystonic homosexuality,” and from consideration as always a mental illness to only a disorder if it causes distress in the patient (American Psychiatric Association, 1980), the impact of Policy Option 3 would provide a transition diagnosis toward a day when Policy Option 4 might become possible. It would erode the authority of those in the mental health community who believe that alterity is always a product of childhood trauma and reinforce the sociocognitive perspective (Spanos, 1996) that multiple “identity enactments” are learned and not necessarily pathological or the product of trauma. People who experience alterity and also suffer chronic mental illness could continue to receive treatment. Indeed, the greatest challenges posed by this option might be to the academics who rely upon a singular Self as an intellectual foundation. The de-naturalization of the Self might mean,
for example, that scholars working in the transformative learning tradition might have to make explicit what, exactly, it is that is being transformed. If the Self is not natural and presumed, authenticity to that Self might become impossible.

**Trade-offs of Policy Option 4, Psychiatry Abandons the Self as Construct**

This last, and most radical, policy alternative suggests that perhaps mental health professionals should abandon attempts to impose a single Self on all clients, even if most people experience themselves as a single Self. The actions needed to achieve this outcome are continuations and extensions of those reviewed in Policy Choice 3, and this outcome may naturally flow, over time, from the implementation of that policy. This radical policy outcome would require whole scale re-thinking of much academic and adult education theory, since the singular Self is often presumed as a starting point. The erosion of received and axiomatic authority regarding the Self is likely to be disconcerting to scholars and educators working in modernist traditions, in which rationality and certainty of knowledge are emphasized. Existing epistemologies for social science, based on faux-natural science models, might require modification or replacement, as the prediction and control of human behavior would become more problematic.

**Policy Recommendation**

Following the Kettering model, this chapter has sought to theorize and even create a public, that is, “a body of people joined together to deal with common problems” (Matthews & McAfee, 1998, p 13) around the human experience of alterity. Utilizing this model, the four key questions that have and should drive this analysis are:

1. Questions of value;
2. Questions of costs for various options;
3. Conflicts that will arise from various options; and
4. Questions of emerging common grounds and direction (Matthews & McAfee, p. 23).

This model also provides the basis for a recommended policy option, which is Option 3. This is because of the common ground that has emerged from my analysis; and because Option 3 will, inevitably and inexorably, lead to the implementation, at a later date, of Option 4, and to the deconstruction of the Self as a structure of oppression. I shall elaborate.

Currently, the costs for maintaining the status quo are largely heaped upon one social group, the identified patients who are treated by psychiatrists and counselors. The other groups largely profit from the status quo. Psychiatrists, psychologists, and academics benefit from status and academic currency as existing ideas about the Self are promulgated, and from income as experts and arbitrators of the Self. Counselors reap income from the long-term treatment of people labeled as patients with Dissociative Identity Disorder, and cultural workers and movie-makers make money selling images and stories of mentally ill people experiencing alterity as monsters or victims. People who experience alterity but have never submitted to therapy may, perhaps, find their options for enjoying life and for expressing their human difference reduced, but those who are labeled as “Dissociatives” and must undergo years of therapy bear the costs for this option.

But here the common ground emerges: the people who are profiting from this model are helping professionals, academics, and artists who, at least in theory, should be
committed to helping others and to doing good or, at the very least, not causing social harm. Once people labeled “homosexuals” started speaking out and saying that maybe prejudice, and not their personal desires and sexual practices, was the problem, over time psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors were persuaded, and homosexuality disappeared as a diagnostic category. In order to help their LGBTQ patients, counselors stopped treating them for being gay. There is every reason to believe that, were a core group of people with alterity to speak out and maintain that their alterity was not inherently problematic, these other groups might be persuaded.

Those interested in maintaining the status quo, or some minor variation thereon (like Policy Option 2, Exception for the Sacred), are likewise some of the most educated and knowledgeable members of society. Since these groups value knowledge and learning, they can be persuaded through academic means, by exposure to other cultures and models of human experience. Professional counselors could be reached through journals but, more especially, through regular conferences. The American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses in 1973 as a direct result of scientific studies present at their conference—and the LGBTQ people who showed up to protest the torture of gay people in mental hospitals for no scientific reason. Likewise, educational theorists can be reached through professional conferences and publication. For traditions like Adult and Lifelong Education (ALE), with established histories of progressive and learner-centered thinking, discussions around the construct of the Self and how it is deployed in educational theory and practice are likely to be quite helpful.
I recommend implementing Option 3 because, once the hegemony of the Self is broken, the stranglehold of the construct will become untenable. The notions of the Self underlying treatment of alterity by recovering memories of traumatic abuse—that is, the notions that the Self is so true and natural that it takes a horrible violation of social norms during childhood, which will then be forgotten but can be remembered decades later through hypnosis and guided imagery—are simply preposterous, especially in the light of cross cultural examples of alterity. Once Option 3 is implemented, I believe that these notions will collapse under their own weight, just as replacement of “homosexuality” as an illness with “ego dystonic homosexuality” ultimately led to the total elimination of sexual orientation as a diagnostic category. The move from the proposition that “all who experienced alterity are mentally ill” to the proposition that “some who experience alterity are mentally ill” is a short one; the policy easy to implement; and the outcome likely, in the long run, to overturn existing notions of the monadic Self as a real and permanent construct found in all people.

Conclusion on Policy

This chapter has identified four distinct social policy choices for addressing the problem created by the current social and psychiatric view that the experience of alterity is always a mental illness. The first possible policy is to maintain the status quo, and to resist forces working for change in the definition of DID in the DSM V (American Psychiatric Association, 2010). Drawbacks to this option include the real hardship it works on those identified as Dissociatives, and the economic costs of prolonged treatment for traumatic abuse to resolve alterity into a single Self. The second option is to allow an exception to the rule that alterity is always a mental illness to encompass
religious experiences. This would do little to alter the experiences of most adults labeled as Dissociatives, and might be dramatically resisted by some Christian fundamentalists. The third option is to challenge existing thinking to suggest that alterity is only a problem if the person experiencing alterity experiences it as a problem—that is, that sometimes alterity might be benign. While this would require rethinking much current dogma regarding the Self, it would facilitate the possible emergence of those who experience alterity as a social movement, which could then push back against oppressive beliefs in the therapeutic establishment. The fourth option, radically breaking with the past and urging the position that the experience of alterity is a symptom and not a disease, and that the Self is a fiction created by discourse, is unlikely to be attainable for some time. Worse, it might actually damage the lot of those who experience alterity but who are also mentally ill and are currently receiving treatment, especially if it reduced their ability to obtain treatment.

Ultimately, I have recommended the third option as a sort of common ground. In creating this social policy conversation and deliberative process, common goals and values, including the values of helping professionals dedicated to assisting those in psychological distress, become apparent. When the conversation begins in earnest, there is one final value, expressed by Hill in his work (2009, 2010), which will only grow in importance over time: the right of each human to be different. Policy Option 3 honors that right and the shared values of helping and healing those in distress, because it allows those who are mentally ill to continue to receive therapy without applying the label of mental illness upon all who experience alterity. It also allows those who experience alterity but are not distressed by that experience to live more openly, without fear of
unwanted diagnosis or treatment by well meaning adherents to the cult of the Self, or of
castigation by those prejudiced against the expression of an assemblage of polyvalent
selves.
Chapter 7
Postscript and Perspectives on Future Research

[Learning is a place where paradise can be created…. In that field of possibility, we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (hooks, 1994, p. 207)

Harry Hay was a teacher, labor advocate, and early leader of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) rights movement in the United States. In 1950 when he helped found the Mattachine Society, one of the earliest homophile organizations, he was virtually alone in resisting dominant discourses that made possible the police brutality, the employment discrimination, the familial ostracism, and the torture in mental hospitals against sexual minorities:

In 1948, when [I] wrote [my] original prospectus for a Gay organization, homosexuality in America was illegal, homosexuals were dangerous perverts, and every move a homosexual made was fraught with the danger of self-disclosure and subsequent persecution. (Hay, 1996, p. 37)

By utilizing existing theories, including in particular theories labeled Communist, Harry Hay was able to think something new and to begin the resistance that has resulted in an improved quality of life for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people today.
Like sexual minorities of the past, people who experience alterity can remain trapped in the binary provided them by the psychiatric machine: they are either mentally ill or their condition is a falsehood or contrivance. This project has attempted to move beyond such binary thinking, by approaching alterity as a human difference that is not necessarily or always pathological. It has built upon the sociocognitive model of dissociation proposed by Spanos (1995), which posits that cultural and psychiatric conceptions of alterity are in fact “sociohistorical product[s]” (p. 3) and subject to change and revision:

In the past 20 years, the notion of multiple personality has become common place in North American culture, and it is now a legitimate way for people to understand and express their failures and frustrations…[The] sociocognitive perspective suggests that patients learn to construe themselves as possessing multiple selves, learn to present themselves in terms of this construal, and learn to reorganize and elaborate on their personal biography so as to make it congruent with their understanding of what it means to be a multiple. (Spanos, 1995, p. 3)

However, Spanos’ thinking was essentially negative regarding those who experienced alterity, as it focused upon their “failures and frustrations” and defined them as “patients” (p. 3). The sociocognitive perspective remains a psychiatric perspective, embedded in the discourse of disease and the regulation of human experience by the psychiatric machine. It is still a part of the binary—“multiples” or “dissociatives” are defined by a mental illness, either a real illness caused by childhood trauma or a false syndrome created by bad therapy and viewing films regarding dissociation, like Sybil.
The project has attempted to transgress the existing sociocognitive model and take Spanos’ (1995) suggestion that individuals might learn to express multiple identities more seriously. By analysis of the public pedagogy in the selected cinematic texts, I have presented a review of the manner in which those texts both reproduce and resist existing binary thinking. My review has included many positive outcomes associated with the expression of alterity, including abilities to learn rapidly, to master multiple and divergent skill sets, and, on a more personal level, to renegotiate social relationships. Adult learners viewing these films might wish to experience alterity for such positive outcomes. Even as the existence of alterity challenges established notions of adult development which rely on a linear, unitary Self, when the conflict between alters is minimal or effectively managed, the potential of the experience of alterity to facilitate adult learning is incredible.

If Hill (2009) is correct and the right to be different is a “fundamental human right” (p. 61), then professionals, including adult educators, have the responsibility to engage in policy conversations to protect and expand this right. The preceding chapter has done just that, and sought to outline some policy regarding the experience of alterity, and to challenge psychiatric hegemony on the subject. This final chapter pulls together the other chapters by providing an imagining of the potential for adult learning outlined by the experience of alterity. It posits the possibilities of intentionally creating alters to learn new and important skills and the implications of the breakdown of psychiatric hegemony over the Self for adult learning theory and practice. What if, building on the public pedagogy of alterity and future studies, one day adults who want to learn new material quickly learn to dissociate into an alter to do so? The answer seems plain:
oppression based on difference shared by a community of people can generate identity-based social movements (Eskridge, 2001-2002). A subculture of alterity will emerge.

**The Possible Emergence of a Culture of Alterity**

In my rhizomatic review of these cinematic films and the scholarly and cultural works associated with them and with alterity, I found only two authors who posited that a subculture of people who experience alterity might emerge. The first is the philosopher, Hacking (1995), who dismissed such a possibility as unthinkable. The second is a science fiction writer, Silverberg (1983/1992), who imagined a world where today’s prejudices are reversed and alterity is something people seek to experience. I will address each in turn.

Hacking (1995) noted that at least one self-help group of multiples had already formed, but discounted the possibility of such groups growing and expanding because of the perceived instability of group members: “[I]f one person switched into an aggressive alter during a meeting, everyone else felt threatened. Unless there is a nonmultiple facilitator present, more switching may occur, and pandemonium can break out” (p. 37). Hacking is the most accepting of multiplicity of any of the scholars I reviewed. He did, after all, conclude his *Rewriting the Soul* (1995) with a plea for acceptance of multiples as having a different type of soul, but a soul nonetheless. He nevertheless expresses deep prejudice against those who experience alterity, demanding that such people conform to his stereotyped notions and prejudices regarding their experiences. In his view, many such people apparently have “aggressive alters” who show up uninvited at meetings. Such people are also, in his regard, especially vulnerable to threats, so that, when they are faced with an aggressive person, “pandemonium” results. For Hacking, only the
intervention of a normal person can save this group of patients from disorganization and confusion. In reading his work, I wonder if heterosexual philosophers, writing in the early twentieth century, imagined that, if homosexuals gathered, they must perforce do so only for sexual purposes, and that a heterosexual chaperone would be necessary to prevent orgiastic excess. I also note that Hacking is apparently afraid of pandemonium, which I sometimes enjoy.

Indeed, even while raising the prospect of a subculture based upon the experience of alterity, Hacking shows these deep and abiding prejudices and preconceived notions about multiples:

Could this cease to be a disorder and become a way of life? Some multiples feel threatened at the thought of being cured, of developing one and only one personality, for they lose companions who help them cope with difficulty.

(Hacking, 1995, p. 37)

To Hacking, then, alters are functional. He believes that multiples fear integration because they will lose companions who “help them cope,” not because they might lose alters which have value to them and provide sources of meaning and new experiences. While acknowledging that some people who experience alterity do not wish to revert to a single Self, he never considers that alterity might be something other than a coping mechanism. He never considered that alters might function within assemblages rather than exist as miniature and broken versions of the modernist Self.

In an odd literary twist, Hacking quotes one of his own 1983 lectures to both raise and dismiss the possibility of a subculture of multiples, with an analogy to the gay liberation movement in which doctors are the “knowers” and patients are the “known”: 
Take the famous example of gay liberation. The word “homosexual,” along with the medical and legal classification, emerged during the last half of the nineteenth century… The knowers determined, at least on the surface, what it was to be a homosexual. But then the known took charge. I do not suppose, even now, that multiples will do that. But I am well aware of how things change. In the fall of 1983 I said, “At the risk of giving offense, I suggest that the quickest way to see the contrast between making up multiple personalities and making up homosexuals is to try to imagine multiple-personality bars. Multiples, insofar as they are declared, are under the care [of], and the syndrome, the form of behavior, is orchestrated by a team of experts. Whatever the medico-forensic experts tried to do with their categories, the homosexual person became autonomous of the labeling, but the multiple is not.” I may yet to come to eat those words. (Hacking, 1995, p. 38).

Hacking missed a very important point: the homosexuals imagined by the psychiatric machine of the early twentieth century were stereotypes, predatory monsters who behaved in a manner offensive to the social structure because they were victimized by their upbringing or other homosexuals. They were not autonomous actors, they were mental patients who were defined by their perceived illness. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer people do not refer to themselves as homosexuals anymore. As a member of the LGBTQ community, I personally find that term offensive, because it contains the baggage of past oppressions and horrible heterosexist ideas. Hacking’s use of the term in 1995 suggests that he either had little contact with the LGBTQ community
or intentionally elected to be offensive. Autonomous communities define their labels, and he has elected to ignore LGBTQ convention.

More importantly, he has missed the vital point implicit in the transition from “homosexual” to “LGBTQ”: a community of people conforming to psychiatric stereotypes about “multiples” or “dissociatives” would, of course, be impossible, but a community of people who share alterity (the label I have constructed and proposed) or the experience of alters under any other label is of course very possible. While some LGBTQ people defined themselves by their therapists’ stereotypes, many did not. I am reminded of Evelyn Hooker, the heterosexual psychologist who bravely undertook the study of gay men during the McCarthy era because a gay friend said to her, after a night on the town at a drag show together, “We have let you see us as we are, and now it is your scientific duty to make a study of people like us…. We’re not insane. We’re not any of those things they say we are ” (Evelyn Hooker, quoting an unnamed gay friend in Markus, 1992, p. 18). Only by refusing to behave in accordance with such stereotypes were LGBTQ people able to form the strong and vibrant communities that exist today, unsupervised by heterosexual chaperones and therapists. Hacking has not understood that, if communities of people who experience alterity are to emerge, then the people who compose those communities will not conform to his prejudices and beliefs. Members of such a community will define themselves, and do not require a therapist to sit in on all meetings to prevent pandemonium.

In 1983, the same year that Hacking (1995) reportedly declared multiple-personality bars unthinkable, the science fiction writer Robert Silverberg (1992/1983) penned *Multiples*, a short story about a woman who goes to multiple-personality bars to
pick up men with more than one personality. As a work of imaginative fiction, Silverberg does add utterly fictitious elements to his story—in his subculture, multiples go to bars to use specialized mirrors to experience co-presence of two or three alters. And in his story, a psychiatrist who is himself a multiple utilizes psychiatric procedures to transform people with only one personality, or “singletons,” into people with multiple personas:

The therapist’s name was Burkhalter and… to the multiples community he was very close to being a deity. His specialty was electrophysiological integration, with specific application to multiple personality disorders. Those who carried within themselves dark and diabolical selves that threatened the stability of the group went to him to have those selves purged, or at least contained. Those who sought to have latent selves that were submerged beneath more outgoing personalities brought forward into healthy functional state went to him also… And in recent years he had begun to develop techniques for what he called personality augmentation. (Silverberg, 1983/1992, p. 169)

Silverberg’s protagonist is a “singleton” woman who is romantically interested in men who are multiples. Because such men eventually lose interest in singletons, and because she is in love with one such multiple, she goes to Dr. Burkhalter to undergo “personality augmentation,” or the splitting of her mind into multiple selves. She undergoes sedation, electroshock treatment, and drug therapy. She is delighted when she manifests multiple selves. But in this story “the structure of a multiple’s brain is fundamentally different from a singleton’s. The hardware just isn’t the same, the cerebral wiring” (p. 169). Silverberg’s protagonist is saddened when, after only a few short and
blissful weeks and because she lacks the requisite brain anatomy to support multiple selves, she reintegrates into a singleton, a single personality.

In his 1992 introduction of the story, Silverberg wrote “[The story] gets me occasional letters from actual multiple personality people, who want to know if I’m one myself, or married to one. (The answers are No and No—so far as I know)” (p. 156, italics in original). In 1983, a year in which an expert on the subject, Hacking, declared a subculture of multiples unimaginable, Silverberg penned this wonderful and engaging little story which, in contrast to the many heavy, ponderous, and serious psychiatric discourse on MPD and DID, is funny and light. For example, Silverberg’s psychiatrist who transformed singletons into multiples “was a multiple himself, but three of his selves were psychiatrists, so there was never any real problem about his office hours” (p. 170). Indeed, Silverberg took as a given problems experienced by MPD patients, such as memory lapses and conflict between alters, and imagined methods people experiencing alterity could utilize to work around such difficulties. The alters of a multiple were autonomous, but alters could, like the protagonist’s boyfriend in the story, cooperate to decorate an apartment where “[t]he segmented nature of his life was immediately obvious: the prints and paintings on the wall looked as though they had been chosen by four or five different people…” (p. 163). Memory lapses were addressed by experiencing co-presence of two or three alters at multiple bars, by keeping journals in which all alters leave messages to one another, and by establishing that each multiple had a “trace,” with full awareness of what the other alters were doing:

All multiples, she knew, had one alter with full awareness of the doings of all the other personalities—which a child, an observer who sat back deep in the mind
and played its own games and emerged only when necessary to fend off some crisis that threatened the stability of the entire group. (p. 166)

Silverberg (1983/1992) could successfully imagine a subculture of multiples because he imagined multiples speaking by and for themselves. In his story, psychiatry works to troubleshoot the experience of alterity, by containing or eliminating destructive alters and facilitating cooperation of individuals who function as if they were groups of people. Perhaps because he lived in San Francisco and witnessed firsthand the birth of the LGBTQ subculture as a powerful, active, and vibrant community, Silverberg imagines such a community of multiples and asks his readers “Why not?”

This research project represents an attempt to follow Silverberg by asking whether any person or group of stakeholders has the right to impose notions about an essential and unitary Self upon the experience of others. The answer, which easily follows the question, is an emphatic no. The stories we tell ourselves about alterity, in our collective cinematic texts, both reproduce and reinforce psychiatric notions of the Self, but the viewer, and not a panel of psychiatrists, determines which lessons are appropriate in his, her or their own lives.

This work has also been a labor of resistance, a scholarly work opposed to oppression of people who experience alterity by the psychiatric machine, in the tradition of Dr. Hooker. Late in life, Dr. Hooker reflected on her early psychological study, which found that gay men were as well adjusted as heterosexuals and helped turn the tide of psychological theory and remove “homosexual” from the list of mental illnesses in 1973, and said:
But what means the most to me, I think, is. . . . Excuse me while I cry. . . . If I went to a gay gathering of some kind, I was sure to have at least one person come up to me and say, “I wanted to meet you because I wanted to tell you what you saved me from.” I’m thinking of a young woman who came up to me and said that when her parents discovered she was a lesbian, they put her in a psychiatric hospital. The standard procedure for treating homosexuals in that hospital was electroshock therapy. Her psychiatrist was familiar with my work, and he was able to keep them from giving it to her. She had tears streaming down her face as she told me this. I know that wherever I go, there are men and women for whom my little bit of work and my caring enough to do it has made an enormous difference in their lives. (Marcus, 1992, p. 25)

I have followed Hooker’s example. In an academic and scholarly world in which experts on multiplicity like Hacking (1995) declare that subcultures of multiples cannot exist, I counter that they will and must exist. We have written too many stories for this phenomenon to simply go away, and, to use Hacking’s own words, the known must always eventually speak out about their own experience and against the knowers. The silly, unfounded and almost religious faith by the psychiatric establishment in the unitary and modernist Self must yield to stories told by those whose experience of alterity calls the very existence of such a Self into question.

**Future Research**

Perhaps the Self is, after all, a linguistic problem. When I speak of “I,” of whom am I speaking? The capitalized “I” suggests a capitalized “Self,” an actor with agency and power, an actor who can be known. The problem of alterity, which I resolved by
referring to the main character and all of his or her alters in each cinematic texts as the “protagonist,” is also a linguistic problem: how does language accommodate alters? Must each always give his or her full name to speak or be known? When two or more alters are co-present, who and what is speaking? The protagonist experiencing alterity has agency and can act in the world, but that agency cannot be easily defined. If we must know who is acting, only the protagonist can say, but, given the memory lapses associated with alterity, that protagonist may be wrong, may lie, or may simply not remember.

And so to the most compelling issue for future research, a disabling notion which I have not addressed because I could not easily locate it in my cinematic texts, the notion that alters transition inappropriately. That is, alterity can be disabling because a protagonist might inappropriately become someone who does not belong in a given social situation, like Tara transitioning to her child alter, Chicken, during her sister’s wedding. In the psychiatric literature I followed in this rhizoanalysis, I found implicit the notion that patients with MPD or DID might suddenly and inappropriately become someone else and abandon their duties and charges. Although it is nowhere in the diagnosis, there is an assumption that the person experiencing alterity cannot control their transitions between alters.

This is also a linguistic problem, of course. When the protagonist in Eve stops being Eve White and becomes Eve Black, Eve White presumably does not want the transition to occur, while Even Black clearly does, since she reports that she fights to get “out.” How do we even discuss this phenomenon? It is difficult to determine, if there were agency to take control of a shared body, who holds such agency. More importantly,
in the cinematic texts I reviewed, this problem exists only in the minds of the psychiatrists. The protagonists obtain what they desire by dissociating into alters, albeit often at the expense of others. In *Eve*, Eve Black puts on pretty dresses and goes to nightclubs. In *Youth in Revolt*, Nick Twisp obtains a girlfriend through shared efforts with his alter, Francois Dillinger. In *Fight Club*, the protagonist destroys all the credit card companies in America. How can these characters be said to be involuntarily transitioning or to be behaving inappropriately when their appearance allows the protagonist to achieve desired results?

Nevertheless, the incongruence of the actions of people expressing alterity with their life script, and their perceived refusal to behave appropriately in given social contexts, is arguably what brings to bear the full force and fury of the psychiatric machine. After all, absent such inappropriate transitions or self-disclosure in therapy, people who experience alterity could not be identified and forced into or otherwise provided with treatment. I have proposed that, by conceptualizing alters as functioning within an assemblage, that problem might be resolved or mitigated, as an assemblage might have a collective linguistic agency and govern its own affairs. But, of course, in poststructuralist theory the very notion of agency is problematic, since we are created by the discourses we employ. Future research is needed to address the question of transitioning between alters, not only to provide a better way to speak and write about the phenomenon, but also to explore why, when in so many of these stories transitions between alters benefits the protagonist, the psychiatric machine assumes that the transitions are involuntary, as alters alternately somehow “take control” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) of a shared body. That is, what is the agency that a
singular Self has that an assemblage of alters is lacking? Perhaps neither or both have such agency.

I have limited my research to the cinematic texts and scripts that might inform the lives of adult learners who experience alterity. Further research is needed among such people themselves. This research should not be focused upon pathology, but rather upon testing whether the ideas about alterity in these cinematic texts conform to the experience of people experiencing alters. How, in fact, do transitions between alters occur? How does learning between and among alters take place? What extraordinary abilities to people expressing alterity actually display?

Finally, adult learning theory and practice need to be revised to include insights drawn from the study of alterity. Transformational learning theory and practice could be updated and made more nuanced by moving from a conveniently enduring, stable and teachable Self to notions of reversible transformations, of changing selves, and of multiple and contradictory transformations that occur in rapid succession. When a protagonist like Tara experiences a transition to one of her alters she is, after all, experiencing a profound transformation of perspective. If transformative learning theory cannot be reconfigured to imagine and explain such transformations, then it should be discarded. Likewise, notions of authenticity in teaching and learning must be assessed in the light of the human experience of alterity. When, after all, is Tara authentic? Is it possible for one’s authenticity to be contingent upon which alter controls her body—that is, when Tara transitions to Buck, is he/she authentic when womanizing, boozing, and shooting guns? Or does the notion of authenticity rely upon the psychiatric machinery of the Self, so that Tara is inauthentic when she is anyone other than Tara? If so, must adult
educators position themselves as arbiters of which alter is “real” and which are false? Who determines which version of Tara is real, and which are the inauthentic illusions? And does the possibility of indeterminate assemblages of alters utterly negate and make useless the notion of authenticity?

This study is only the beginning of what I hope will be a rich and nuanced conversation over the place and role of the Self in adult educational discourse. If alterity is not always an illness, if some people experience alterity without being or becoming mentally ill, then the potential of alterity for rapid acquisition of skills is worthy of study. More importantly, since I concur with Hill (2009) that difference is a fundamental human right and believe that adult education as a field of practice is and should be dedicated to protecting that right, adult educators have an ethical duty to ask these and other hard questions about the Self and the role that we play in the oppression of people who experience alterity when we assume and impose that Self on all adult learners. Perhaps the Self is and has always been not just stale and empty but dead and lifeless. Perhaps the Self functions to subordinate, to subvert, and to distort the flow of human experience. Perhaps it is time to explore the implications of selves in an assemblage for our profession and for better understanding human experience.
### Table 1
Summary of Selected Cinematic Texts

| **Three Faces of Eve**  
(Johnson, 1957) | This very early depiction of a “true” story of one of the first documented cases of “Multiple Personality Disorder” depicts a housewife with three alternate personalities— *Eve White*, a depressed and abused housewife; *Eve Black*, a vamp; and *Jane*, her emerging and conventional self—and her struggle to become a single person and so fulfill her social role as a wife and mother. The film is theoretically interesting both for its early depiction of alterity and, in light of its overt sexism, in the regulatory function that having a single self serves to maintain the then extant social order. |
| **Sybil**  
(Petrie & Babbin, 1976) | Another depiction of a “true” story of a girl named Sybil who was brutally abused as a child. This more than three hour long film (originally a television miniseries) depicts a woman with many alters who, through years of psychoanalysis with psychiatrist Dr. Wilbur, revisits the tortures she received as a small child at the hands of her mother and finally learns to accept all of her alters as parts of herself. Key alters include: *Sybil*, the primary personality, a depressed school teacher; *Peggy*, a little girl alter; *Vickie*, a sophisticated French girl; *Marcia*, a suicidal young woman; *Vanessa*, who plays the piano beautifully; and *Mike*, a young boy. |
**Fight Club (Linson & Fincher, 1999)**

This film depicted a man with two alters, one quiet and reserved and the other violent and charismatic, who conspire together to foment a hyper-masculine ideal of resistance to consumerism. It is interesting because the dominant alter, the shy and reserved self, is initially unaware that his alter inhabits the same body as he, and because they eventually communicate directly. The protagonist’s name is Jack, and his alter is Tyler Durden.

**The United States of Tara, Season 1 (Cody & Kaplow, 2009) and The United States of Tara, Season 2 (Cody & Kaplow, 2010)**

The longest and most complex of these texts (actually two texts treated here as one), these two seasons of this series depicts the struggles of a woman to remember the abuse that she believes cause her to break from a whole person into several people. This work is most interesting for its depiction of the contemporary and express regime of truth regarding alterity: that people who experience alters were invariably abused in some fashion, and that remembering specific instances of abuse can allow such individuals to become one person rather than several. Alters include:

1. Tara, the protagonist;
2. T, a teenage girl;
3. Alice, an accomplished homemaker;
4. Buck, a male Vietnam veteran;
5. Gimmie, an animalistic creature;
6. Chicken, a very young child; and
7. Shoshona, a Jewish therapist from New York

**Youth in Revolt (Arteta, Permut, Weinstein & Weinstein, 2009)**

A whimsical and funny coming-of-age film about one Nick Twisp, a shy and introverted teenager, who creates an alter, Francois Dillinger, in order to seduce a girlfriend. While Francois is clearly an alter, who inhabits Nick’s body and...
| speaks and acts independently, the film is remarkable because both Nick and Francois act together toward common goals and because they are neither merged nor integrated at the film’s end. |
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