
CHAPTER 12

***When the Down-Low
Becomes the New High:
Integrating Queer Politics and
Pedagogies Through Critical
Community Education in Kosovo***

Robert Mizzi

Working in foreign contexts certainly raises a number of unexpected issues and complications for adult educators trying to facilitate social change through their teaching strategies. Adjusting to the different living conditions, languages, social structures, and cultures can be overwhelming for some. However, the journey toward working through this adjustment may create opportunities to deepen knowledge around the critical issues that embody social change. My work in Queer adult education in foreign contexts certainly is one example of how meaningful change can take place through acquiring a deeper understanding of a new living context as a site of adjustment and mediation for the touring educator.

In this chapter, I use “Queer” as a catchall term to describe sexual minorities, including transgender persons, who challenge and rupture a number of social normativities through expressing their forbidden desires. In 2002, I was hired to work in Kosovo as a teacher educator who focuses on social development (Mizzi

This paper was originally titled, “In Solidarity: Using Community Health Education to Build Queer Peace in Kosovo and Japan.” It was delivered at the 2003 LGBTQ&A Pre-Conference, Queer Histories: Exploring Fugitive Forms of Social Knowledge, on June 5, 2003, at San Francisco State University.

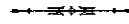
& Moo Sang, 2007). I arrived into Kosovo fresh from completing a graduate degree in international/global education from the University of Alberta. I believed that I was ready to follow Paulo Freire's assertion that the theoretical cannot be distanced from the practical (Freire, 1998), so I eagerly planned to take my acquired knowledge and use it to inform and infuse my practice. However, before I explain my experiences, it is best to provide a history of the context in which I was working.

Kosovo: A Brief Explanation

Kosovo's population of 2.2 million people includes Albanian, Bosnian, and Turkish inhabitants who are predominantly Muslim and a minority Serbian population who are Serbian Orthodox (Anderson & Humick, 2007; Malcolm, 1999; Sommers & Buckland, 2004). Between 1989 and 1999, Kosovar Albanians experienced severe oppression and violent assaults under the regime of then Serbian President, Slobodan Milošević. Albanian schools were banned, antigovernment protestors were arrested, and the flow of information was severely regulated (Malcolm, 1999). In the fall of 1999, after Serbian paramilitary forces began ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians through brutal murder and torture, the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) organized a military assault against the Yugoslavian government, which led to the former country's defeat after an intense three-month battle (Sommers & Buckland, 2004). As a consequence of this defeat, Kosovo, which had been part of Yugoslavia, was designated a United Nations protectorate. Kosovo has since received massive amounts of reconstruction aid and development as well as a mandate to end hostile relations between ethnic groups (Anderson & Humick, 2007; Sommers & Buckland, 2004).

On February 17, 2008, Kosovar members of Parliament, with the exception of Kosovar Serbians, declared Kosovo a sovereign state after repeated failed negotiations with the government of Serbia (formally Yugoslavia) over Kosovo's status. Since then Kosovo has been approaching foreign governments to recognize its independence (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2008a). While there is still no clear uniform agreement among world nations on this issue, fifty countries, including the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, have already acknowledged Kosovo's declaration of statehood (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2008b). Currently, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is conceding administrative obligations and reconstruction protocols to the European

Union and is working to support the local government's mandate to improve living standards.



Critical Community Education

As any other Queer professional living in post-conflict Kosovo, I had many questions about how to meet other Queer persons, local and international, and determine what the “scene” (if any) looked like. Being overseas and away from vital supports and resources can cause a great deal of stress and loneliness (Britt & Adler, 1999), and adult educators like myself need to feel confident about their decision to work abroad so that they will not be overwhelmed when they begin their time away (Lynton, Pareek, & Shepard, 1992). For me, meeting other Queer persons wherever I’m living is crucial for addressing my social needs and ensuring that I have a supportive and positive network. After a few contacts made through a British social networking site for Queers, www.gaydar.co.uk, I was instantly welcomed into the local Queer community. I became involved in lending my emerging knowledge of adult learning, peace building, and community development to assist constructing a “gay rights movement” according to the wishes of local Queer Kosovars.

The unique privilege and ethical responsibility that adult educators face has been widely written about elsewhere and, as such, crystallizes issues relating to sexual diversity in adult classrooms (Brooks & Edwards, 1999; Grace, 2001; Grace & Hill, 2001; Hill, 2006; Kerka, 2001). However, very little has been written on sexual identity issues in adult education, as expressed through community education in non-Western contexts (Mizzi, 2008). By community education, I mean that educators create a space to “encompass a wide range of educational practices and intentions which derive from different traditions, including adult education, youth work, democratic schooling, and community participation” (Hunt, 2005, p. 131). According to Hunt (2005), community education takes shape in four different ways: a) *nonformal/informal education*, where educational activities complement learning outside of formal education; b) *community schooling/learning*, where educational activities take place under the auspices of “community centers”; c) *popular education*, which organizes political momentum to reclaim collective histories in order to change oppressive social and political arrangements; and d) *community organization/development*, which focuses on community self-help processes and is largely linked to adult education. It is the latter of

these forms that defines the community education that is the focus of my work. However, like Hunt, I acknowledge that the term “community” is awkward; it is catachrestic in nature, as it seeks to define *commonality* across a group of individuals who possess *different* histories, life paths, practices, and identities (Godway & Finn, 1994). Godway and Finn question the search for community:

It is up to us to make community: to find it, build it, or encourage it to grow in our fragmented world. But can we? Or should we even try, when in spite of good intentions, the effects of community are often more divisive, more exclusive, and more oppressive, than the absence of community it originally intended to remedy or remove? (p. 1)

To better reflect the diversity of communities that impact the goals of community education, and in order to adhere to the caution that Godway and Finn (1994) share, community education might possess a more accurate fit when referred to as *critical community education*. Central to this critical delineation would be recognition that adult learners usually hold membership in more than one community, which shapes how they connect, contribute, and care about the knowledge they are being taught. As well, critical community education could be self-reflexive, interrogating the concerns of false misrepresentation of the “community” notion and working to defy the establishment of competing hierarchies (Godway & Finn, 1994). Critical community education could also offer pluralistic refuge and encourage learners to speak from their multiple subjectivities and positionalities. For example, in the critical community education work in which I have long been involved, participants often speak from their racialized, sexualized, gendered, able-bodied, and classed communities by finding a space in curricula and classroom life to voice these positions that construct their realities. These dialogues include speaking to the ways that the term “community” deploys very different connotations for each person; a community could simply be geographical by nature, such as a neighborhood, or it could be based on shared social identities, such as being members of a Black community. While multiple goals and backgrounds could exist, there is a shared common belief in developing a more just world for its members.

When discussing critical community education through a Queer topological lens, what situates the “common” is a perceived need to redefine heteronormative gender roles to accommodate same-sex sexual practices and identities. Fulfilling this need concomitantly works toward recognizing the differences Queer persons possess. This basic understanding of critical community education through multiple Queer lenses is the pedagogical entry point I use in this discussion.

Brooks and Edwards (1999) relate, "As adult educators, we must help open spaces where sexuality can be explored rather than exploited" (p. 3). Keeping this in mind, in critical community education, especially in cultural contexts that marginalize Queer bodies, there are largely two educational landscapes that are required in order to develop a greater sense of Queer citizenship. One landscape centers on the self-help of Queer communities so that Queer persons are better able to organize their Queer rights campaigns more smoothly and efficiently. The other landscape focuses on the social help of the dominant heteronormative society with the intention to re-educate it to Queer realities, injustices, and struggles in order to evoke change in public opinion and policy. The two often work in tandem and seek to create human agency that works to improve Queer livelihoods. For example, by training members of the Queer community in Kosovo on peer counseling methods, I worked to create a mutually supportive and empowering atmosphere to enable social change projects to emerge in the public domain.

As a Queer foreigner to the community-building work in which I participated, I cannot ignore my Canadian citizenship. From this perspective, I need to take up Hill's (2004) insightful question: "What if the desire to know others is a colonial hope of speaking for (and possessing) the other?" (p. 92). Being an outsider excludes me from completely understanding local Queer lives and their anxieties while working in foreign contexts. For example, for me, openly discussing matters as a Queer citizen in a public space like a café is a privilege that Queer Albanians cannot afford. They would be unsure who is actually hearing the conversation and would worry about possible ramifications. Nonetheless, my involvement is paradoxical by nature. While I am not able to understand fully the construction and consequence of being gay, Albanian, Muslim, and Kosovar, I am able to take some initial, yet cautious, steps toward co-creating opportunities to discuss change. To say, however, that my own Queer body has been unaffected by local social norms would be untrue. Like my local counterparts, I have also found my sexual identity linked to issues of health, employment, education, housing, and security. My sexual identity becomes radically displaced as I navigate my personal and professional life between un/safe spaces while living abroad. Queer adult educators living in challenging places like rural Georgia or Indiana might identify with this premise. By choosing to teach abroad, I am opening myself up to reduced access to services and supports because of the linguistic, religious, and cultural differences. After all, the nation that I am living in is just as foreign to me as I am to the nation, and I might not entirely understand the highly contested political terrain that constructs the subversive Queer.

Project Background

This chapter reviews findings from a research project in which I interviewed six gay/bisexual male Kosovar Albanians between the ages of 21 and 40. I facilitated a follow-up focus-group session in order for everyone to contribute collaboratively to the critical discussions on this topic. The intention of this data collection was for these men to describe how Queer life has changed for them from the period prior to the 1999 conflict to the current state of post-conflict reconstruction. In doing so, I encouraged the Kosovars to identify their life challenges, needs, and goals. In this research, I wanted to explore connections among the research participants not only in terms of their experiences of same-sex desires but also in terms of the degree to which they experienced a supportive community as gay and bisexual (not heterosexual) men (McCormick, 2006). The research participants had learned to use “gay” and “bisexual” as self-descriptors largely from the Internet, other foreigners, and from each other, long before I even came to Kosovo. I am acknowledging here that these are Western-oriented terms that can be problematic in many non-Western spaces. “Gay” and “bisexual” import a Western understanding of sexuality differences that can silence indigenous forms of sexual identifications and inhibit examination of other forms of social arrangements. This “McPinkings” of the world is further described in Chapter 2 above, “Que(e)rying Intimacy: Challenges to Lifelong Learning,” by Robert Hill. In Kosovo, seeing that the general aim of Albanian Kosovars is to ensure Kosovo joins the European Union, expressing identities and social practices often translates to adopting Western European terminologies and social categories.

Establishing rapport with the participants proved paramount toward ensuring validity and critical analysis and rigor as well as enabling the identification of data limitations or weaknesses (Freebody, 2003; Patton, 2002). Through acting as cultural interlocutors, the gay/bisexual Kosovar Albanian men in my study generously provided me with a look into their daily lives and struggles, which required a history of earning their trust, respecting their boundaries, and encouraging local ownership over what is revealed to me and to others (Smith, 1999). Unfortunately, at that time I was not able to locate lesbians, bisexual women, or transgender persons in order to diversify my complement of research participants. For lesbians, bisexual women, and transgender persons, being doubly marginalized and living in a conflict zone translates into restricted freedom of

movement. Reaching out to include them in my project was simply not possible at the time of this inquiry.

This chapter also reflects my experience as a clandestine adult educator who explored Queer issues as I engaged in voluntary work on evenings and weekends with the nascent Queer rights organization. Following the advice of Baptiste (2001), I wanted to provide a learning space that alleviated some of the social maladies of injustice against Kosovar Queer citizens as they began to construct human agency to resist oppressive structures and regimes effectively. Thus my mission was both educational and political as I engaged in cultural work to empower the Queers with whom I worked so they could make their lives better.

While independence is a significant milestone for this emerging democratic nation, it does not translate into absolute respect for all minorities in Kosovo, including its Queer citizenry. For example, a comprehensive study from COC Nederlands (van der Veur, 2003), a Queer Dutch international nongovernmental organization based out of Amsterdam, confirms that Queer Kosovars feel threatened to disclose their sexual practices despite UN promises of safety and specific mention of “sexual orientation” in Kosovo’s antidiscrimination laws. As a result, living under the threat of homophobic violence has many Kosovars “living to hide/hiding to live” their true sexual desires. While my experiences living in Kosovo validate aspects of the COC Nederlands report, my research and participation suggest that critical community education may provide appropriate sociocultural space in which to address Queer concerns.

The “Down-Low” on the Data Findings

Given the recent discussion of same-sex attraction among “straight” Black American men, known as the “down-low” (King, 2004), I borrow the term since I find that it strikingly resembles the furtive and negotiated experiences of Kosovar Albanian gay/bisexual men, especially among those who are in cross-sex relationships. The interviews and focus-group discussion revealed three interconnecting themes that demonstrate how the social isolation of the Kosovar Albanian gay/bisexual men shapes the decisions they make. These three main points include a) heteronormativity is an embodiment of the nuclear family; b) lack of educational and resource support was pervasive during the pre-conflict period; and c) living was contextualized by hostile (inter)cultural conditions. I will explain each in turn.

Heteronormativity as an Embodiment of the Nuclear Family

Being patriarchal in nature, the Kosovar culture focuses on the lives of young men to continue and improve the socioeconomic status of their families. Regardless of sexual orientation, young Albanian Kosovar men are charged with the primary task to marry a woman and produce children. This social pressure does not consider their ability to support children financially or raise them nor their wish to develop their careers first. This finding echoes the COC Nederlands report, which states, “Many gays in Kosovo, as heard, claim it is good to stay in a heterosexual marriage as bringing stability and family life” (van der Veur, 2003, p. 21).

There are clear gender and sexual boundaries that must be adhered to if young couples are to become successful in their lives and continue to endorse their family’s honor and status. Once the Kosovar Albanian male follows this path, the family secures and elevates its position in the community. Not to follow this “hetero-only” relationship route places both the Albanian male and his family at risk for shame and social expulsion. This life direction is common in predominantly Islamic cultures, as Dunne (1990) attests:

In the Islamic worldview, male and female, masculine and feminine, represent different, complementary “orders.” The harmony on the whole, of the complementarity of the sexual division, is achieved by men assuming their masculine roles and women assuming their feminine roles; the separate orders achieve unity only in the context of marriage as the realm of legitimate sexuality and affiliation. (p. 10)

As a result, perceived social deviances, such as homosexuality, are culturally prohibited. Homosexuality counters Islam’s emphasis on marriage, family, and (hetero)sexuality and brings shame upon the family (Dunne, 1990; Mounneh, 2008). If a family has an openly gay/bisexual family member, then family business, external relationships, and public stature in the community are placed at risk (Barbosa & Lenoir, 2003). In Kosovo, the unmarried men I interviewed described the pressure to marry they experienced from their parents, extended family members, and neighbors as a “daily occurrence” that complicated their Queer desires, practices, and bodies. One participant stated, “The pressure I feel from my family to marry a woman is quite intense. At times I’ve had to fake illnesses just to avoid situations where I predict it will be difficult for me.” This external pressure is ongoing until the covert gay/bisexual male enters heterosexual matrimony.

When offering a comparison to the West, “coming out of the closet” as a discursive formation does not work to describe and liberate gay/bisexual male Albanian Kosovars from their internal struggles with sexuality, ethnicity, and culture. Coming out of the closet in a Western context is understood as a necessary path towards attaining gay/bisexual male liberation, ultimately leading to shared celebration of identity and community (Whitney, 2005). Whitney adds, “Coming out is integral to developing a healthy sense of self” (p. 193). The living realities of gay/bisexual male Albanian Kosovars are, in contrast, fear-filled, fugitive, and secretive. Life-risking decisions to reveal identity and behaviors do not speak to “stepping out” of a life of secrecy and shame but evoke acts of “side-stepping” culture-bound realities in order to provide brief and intense glimpses of sexual freedom. To come out in the Western sense of the phrase would bind gay/bisexual male Albanian Kosovars to complicated lives of shame, guilt, and torment. Clearly, finding the vocabulary to transgress sexual persecution rests squarely upon a critical community education approach to (re)educate a society to respect sexual difference, rather than openly sharing and celebrating a person’s sexual orientation with family and friends.

Lack of Educational Resources and Support

The second finding of this study places an emphasis on the lack of educational and technological advancement that Kosovo experienced under Milošević’s regime. Not being able to engage in comprehensive learning about global events and newly discovered knowledge, learning became an unstable commodity that privileged only the select few who supported the oppressive regime. For example, when I first arrived in Kosovo, I talked about HIV to some Albanian gay men and learned that while some of them were familiar with the infection, there was still some confusion as to whether they were at risk for infection through having unprotected anal sex. Outside knowledge needs to weave itself into society so that crucial life-altering (and life-saving) discussions can take place. Further, such discussions may open up, as Rasha Mounneh (2008) explains, “a frank consideration of sexuality in public health initiatives, and through that can possibly lead to wider discussions about the social conditions that are necessary in order to implement effective interventions and programs” (p. 45). While international interventions are rapidly addressing knowledge gaps in Kosovo, ensuring comprehensive outreach and change in attitudes and behaviors requires a longer period of time. The interviews, the focus group, and my lived experiences point to an interest from the gay/bisexual male participants to “catch up” on what has taken

place outside of Kosovo and, in part, to continue to rely on their own ingenuity. One participant stated, "I learned about the outside world through learning English. From that point, I was able to learn about gay rights in other countries. I then began to feel normal." At the same time, he acknowledged that few gay/bisexual Kosovar Albanian men have access to this much-needed affirmation: "We set up a gay organization to help those who cannot read English, yet need to locate some personal and social support." Generally, the need for increased information about ways to organize programs that educate and advocate for Queer rights was a concern expressed by research participants who also sought opportunities to network with other Queer Kosovars.

(Inter)Cultural Conditions

My interviews echoed the COC Nederlands report in revealing that most heterosexual Kosovars, unsurprisingly, are not respectful of sexual differences among men. For example, gay-bashings against "suspected" gay/bisexual men continue while local law enforcement agencies do little to stop anti-gay violence. During the focus-group session participants pointed out that local police officers treat gay-bashing as not worthy of a criminal investigation and victim support. More so, if the international police officer is from a country where homosexuality is not accepted, such as Nigeria or Jamaica, the gay/bisexual victim will simply not report the crime. This finding illustrates that international agencies, which are meant to maintain objectivity through their interactions, are not doing enough to reach out to Queer communities to ensure they feel safe to report bodily harm. Moreover, they are not accomplishing their goal to train their international police officers to handle concerns faced by the Queer community in at least an adequate manner.

The altered multicultural face of Kosovo has its effects on gay/bisexual males. Kosovo was once renowned for its multicultural make-up of Serbian, Turkish, Roma,⁶ and Bosnian Kosovars (Malcolm, 1999). Gay/bisexual Kosovars, prior to the conflict, had frequent encounters and relationships with each other, regardless of their ethnicity. Since the conflict, very little ethnic mixing has been possible, since UNMIK seeks to minimize any possibility for ethnic tensions. One study participant commented that he missed meeting and speaking with Bosnian, Roma, and Serbian gay/bisexual male Kosovars: "We used to have a broken-down old house to meet other gay men. I made many friends there, and

⁶ Peoples of South Asian descent, including those who have been labelled with the pejorative term, "gypsy."

from different backgrounds. Ethnicity was never a problem. I miss these experiences as they brought us together.” While the presence of international gay/bisexual males has replaced this loss to a certain degree, participants reflected that it was just “not the same” as meeting someone who shares similar attributes and histories but different ethnic roots. This shared sense of camaraderie might explain why I witnessed many friendly and respectful social gatherings between gay/bisexual Albanian and Serbian males but rarely saw social cohesion between the two ethnic communities within non-Queer contexts. It appears that non-Queer Kosovars have not developed such intricate multiethnic relationships as their Queer counterparts.

Additionally, without the law firmly on their side, participants described a tense atmosphere when trying to meet other gay/bisexual men. Often, the nascent relationship can take cautious tones, as the gay/bisexual man does not know if he will be “outed” or misled by his new acquaintance. Meeting someone on the Internet is risky business, as no one is absolutely sure about the true intentions of the man he is chatting with. In one stirring encounter, a gay Albanian Kosovar male went on national television to describe his “fugitive” gay life (in the sense employed by Hill, 1996) and was shunned after the interview by his community and family and, surprisingly, by the majority of his gay/bisexual male friends as well because they were afraid of being identified as gay/bisexual by mere association. In reference to his social ostracism, one participant reflected, “It was a brave step, but not a very smart one.”

Conducting research that provides such findings as entrenched cultural heteronormativity, lack of educational resources, and difficult intercultural conditions helps inform programs relating to critical community education and those it serves. Through recognizing how heteronormativity is defined and shaped in Kosovo, and through acknowledging some of the structural and societal barriers, I was better prepared to work with the gay/bisexual male Albanian Kosovars to ensure that progress toward social acceptance of Queer Kosovars remains on track.

Becoming the “New High” Through Critical Community Education

After completing the research, two critical community education programs were launched to “build learning communities on identities of difference” (Brooks & Edwards, 1999, p. 3) and to address some of the issues uncovered in

the data. One opportunity came through working with a bisexual male Albanian Kosovar to facilitate a seminar for a group of physicians so they could learn to address safety concerns in the medical field for Queer persons. Safety in this context refers primarily to speaking openly about marginalized sexual practices without fear of losing confidentiality and to positioning a core team of physicians as helpful allies. Of course, taking a “sexual history” in a respectful and nonjudgmental way is not only a problem in Kosovo. Even in the developed world there are challenges to be met in this area (Bachmann, 2000; Tomlinson, 1998). However, my local counterparts felt it would be a positive first step. The second opportunity came through creating a curriculum for adult educators from a nonprofit organization to educate about developing healthy sexuality. This included educating secondary school students about Queer issues. While both opportunities might seem small in scale, they began to transgress homophobia and create a safe space to discuss sexual difference.

Much cultural learning was associated with both critical community education projects. First, in relation to training the physicians, while there was some keen interest from the female physicians, some of the male attendees would take several “cigarette breaks.” This finding is not new, as a Canadian study concluded that female physicians are more likely to counsel patients on appropriate sexual behaviors (Maheux, Haley, Rivard & Gervais, 1997). However, the male physicians resisted learning the material that fervently challenged heteronormative values, despite repeatedly trying to structure time for their breaks. Learning how Queer citizens, who are considered perverts according to prominent Kosovar medical health professionals (Haxhiaj, 2003), are “wrongfully” persecuted and learning about the effects on their health and wellness implicate physicians and hold them accountable in their work. Some Kosovar physicians just could not handle this responsibility given their deeply rooted assumptions that are inherent in Kosovar culture about homosexuality. These assumptions were challenged by the Queer Kosovar representation and authenticity in the training session. Despite this, perseverance does have its merits, and the Albanians were able to reach out to more physicians at a later time.

In contrast, in the second project there was a much more positive response to notions of sexual difference, as the curriculum reflected the democratic ideals of a plural society. Underlying notions included that everyone was at risk for sexually transmitted infections and that, given how teenage audiences are diverse in nature, it is important to be inclusive in the programming. While homophobia is omnipresent, by approaching and including sensitive matters such as sexual dif-

ference, adult learners are better equipped to think through how society shapes everyone's lives and to determine outcomes that result from not living authentic lives. There is rupture when the Queer body is outcast. By adopting an integrative critical community education approach as a forum for discussing human moral development, an attempt to disrupt the segregating processes that attack Queer being is made. While resistances are most likely to take shape, local involvement and ownership of such interventions can help to sidestep the barriers as they present themselves.

Observations

There are three observations that stem from these experiences with critical community education. First, in order to include a Queer topography in adult education while working in developing countries, adult educators need to be aware of how being Queer is perceived and constructed in the wider cultural context. Learning about social expectations, such as familial obligations, informs adult educators about the hegemonic barriers that subvert Queer bodies. In addition, this work is subjective in nature; addressing Queer politics and pedagogies might differ greatly in other settings and cause the adult educator to change her/his approach radically. Learning the various local histories that embody Queer identities contributes to wider discussions on how meaningful changes could be defined and implemented.

Second, when working in intercultural contexts, there is a greater challenge initially of building respectful cross-cultural relationships that form a basis upon which to begin discussions of how change might take place. While living in Kosovo, I studied the Albanian language and learned about Kosovo's history, traditions, politics, and society. These were poignant factors to consider as I engaged in critical community education. Clearly, the intercontextuality of the work shapes and determines each experience differently, which calls for constant communication and a determination shared with local counterparts.

Third, trustworthiness is extremely crucial in order to embark on any kind of critical community education project. For example, if someone maliciously "outs" a gay or bisexual male, then his family life becomes altered, which might cause him to drop out of school or quit his job. If a gay or bisexual male does not continue with his in/formal learning, then he might begin misreading his sexual practices as shameful and engage in unsafe relations affecting the health of his family as well as how he is perceived in Kosovar culture. Combined, cultural norms, disrespect, and distrust work to isolate and prevent gay and bisexual

Kosovar Albanian males from active transgression into living authentic lives. As subversive bodies, some seek ways toward finding some kind of conciliation with their culture. Still, the key to building on Queer strengths, in this instance, lies within creating an inner life support that respects diverse knowledges, behaviors, histories, and attitudes both on a personal and social basis.

Concluding Thoughts

I began this chapter by speaking about my Queer interests and work in community education in foreign contexts. My interest in this topic has not diminished since presenting my initial thoughts on the subject a few years ago. To help nurture a responsive informing/transforming program where Queer people from the global South can educate Queers in the global North and to provide access to much-needed resources for their community development work, I began an organization called Queer Peace International in 2004. This organization facilitates critical community education projects abroad based on adult learning principles, social development, and peace building. It provides opportunities for like-minded foreigners to engage in continuous learning about the emerging issues that face Queer persons in challenging cultural exclusion in their nations and generating spaces for intercultural dialogue. By remembering that speaking for others might reflect cultural appropriation, I work to place the local Queer citizenry in control of the interaction. This is one way to maintain respectful relations and minimize North-South power dynamics.

Engaging in critical community education, given its mission to create a “better-informed citizenry” (Hunt, 2005), is one way I suggest that we can challenge heteronormative structures and improve how Queer persons are treated. The experiences of the gay/bisexual male Albanian Kosovars whom I interviewed and befriended over my two years in Kosovo by no means represent the experiences of the vast population of Queer Kosovars. Still my work points toward meaningful and respectful ways an adult educator may encourage Queer knowledge production in challenging places. Being mindful of how ability, class, ethnicity, language, and gender all work in together to shape a (homo)sexual identity creates pedagogical points of entry for critical inquiries by adult educators and forms the basis of their cultural work. Essentially, there are emerging opportunities for the “new high” to include Queer issues in critical community education in international contexts, which might give some much-needed relief to those who operate on the “down-low.”

References

- Anderson, G., & Humick, B. (2007). The educator development program in the Balkans, 2001-2007. In G. Anderson & A. Wenderoth (Eds.), *Facilitating change: Reflections on six years of the educator development program* (pp. 1-23). Ottawa: Universalia.
- Bachmann, G. (2000) The importance of obtaining a sexual history. *American Family Physician*, 62(1), 52.
- Baptiste, I. (2001). Educating lone wolves: Pedagogical implications of human capital theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 51(3), 184-201.
- Barbosa, P., & Lenoir, G. (Directors). (2003). *I exist: Voices from the lesbian and gay Middle Eastern community in the U.S.* [Documentary]. United States: AFD.
- British Broadcasting Corporation. (2008a, February 17). *Kosovo MPs proclaim independence*. Retrieved February 17, 2008, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7249034.stm>
- British Broadcasting Corporation. (2008b, October 10). *Kosovo receives recognition boost*. Retrieved October 10, 2008, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7662149.stm>
- Britt, T., & Adler, A. (1999). Stress and health during medical humanitarian assistance missions. *Military Medicine*, 164(4), 275-279.
- Brooks, A., & Edwards, K. (1999). *For adults only: Queer theory meets the self and identity in adult education*. Paper presented at the 40th Adult Education Research Conference, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.
- Dunne, B. (1990). Homosexuality in the Middle East: An agenda for historical research. *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 12(3/4), 1-23.
- Freebody, P. (2003). *Qualitative research in education: Interaction and practice*. London: Sage.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who teach*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Godway, E., & Finn, G. (Eds.). (1994). Introduction: Community: Catechresis: Community. In E. Godway & G. Finn (Eds.), *Who is this "we"?: Absence of community* (pp. 1-9). Montreal: Black Rose Books.

- Grace, A. (2001). Using Queer cultural studies to transgress adult educational space. In V. Sheared & P. Sissel (Eds.), *Making space: Merging theory and practice in adult education* (pp. 257-270). Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Grace, A., & Hill, R. (2001). *Using Queer knowledge to build inclusionary pedagogy in adult education*. Paper presented at the 42nd Annual Meeting of the Adult Education Research Conference, Michigan State University, Lansing, MI.
- Haxhiaj, S. (2003, April 5). Experts say: "This is moral descent..." *Zëri Magazine*, 12.
- Hill, R. J. (1996). Learning to transgress: A sociohistorical conspectus of the American gay lifeworld as a site for struggle and resistance. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 28(2), 253-278.
- Hill, R. J. (2004). Activism as practice: Some Queer considerations. In R. St.Clair & J. A. Sandlin (Eds.), *Promoting critical practices in adult education* (pp. 85-93). *New Directions in Adult and Continuing Education*, No. 102. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hill, R. J. (2006). What's it like to be Queer here? In R. J. Hill (Ed.), *Challenging heterosexism and homophobia: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and Queer issues in occupational settings* (pp. 7-16). *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, No. 112. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hunt, C. (2005). Community education. In L. English (Ed.), *International encyclopaedia of adult education* (pp. 131-136). NY: Palgrave/MacMillan.
- Kerka, S. (2001). Adult education and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities. *Trends and Issues Alert*, 21, 1-5. Available at <http://www.calpro-online.org/eric/docs/tia00089.pdf>
- King, D. L. (2004). *On the down low: A journey into the lives of 'straight' Black men who sleep with men*. Louisville, KY: Broadway Press.
- Lynton, R., Pareek, U., & Shepard, H. (1992). Competence, personality and culture: Rules of thumb for change agents. In R. Lynton & U. Pareek (Eds.), *Facilitating development: Readings for trainers, consultants and policy-makers* (pp. 56-58). New Delhi: Sage.
- Maheux, B., Haley, N., Rivard, M., & Gervais, A. (1997). Do women physicians do more STD prevention than men? Quebec study of recently trained family physicians. *Canadian Family Physician*, 43, 1089-1095.
- Malcolm, N. (1999). *Kosovo: A short history*. NY: New York University Press.

- McCormick, J. (2006). Transition Beirut: Gay identities, lived realities. In S. Khalaf & J. Gagnon (Eds.), *Sexuality in the Arab world* (pp. 243-260). London: Saqi.
- Mizzi, R. (2008). *Queer eye for the pedagogical guy/girl: Adult education meets sexual difference in foreign contexts*. Paper presented the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, May 31- June 3, Vancouver, British Columbia.
- Mizzi, R., & Moo Sang, B. (2007). Developing social sensitivities and insights through social development. In G. Anderson & A. Wenderoth (Eds.), *Facilitating change: Reflections on six years of the educator development program* (pp. 177-203). Ottawa: Universalia.
- Moumneh, R. (2008). Sexuality and the politics of development in Lebanon. In R. Mizzi (Ed.), *Breaking free: Sexual diversity and change in emerging nations* (pp. 36-49). Toronto: QPI Publishing.
- Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.
- Sommers, M., & Buckland, P. (2004). *Parallel worlds: Rebuilding the education system in Kosovo*. Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning.
- Tomlinson, J. (1998). ABC of sexual health: Taking a sexual history. *British Medical Journal*, 317, 1573-1576.
- van der Veur, D. (2003). *Homosexuality in south-eastern Europe*. Amsterdam: COC Nederlands.
- Whitney, E. (2005). Coming out, youth. In J. Sears (Ed.), *Youth, education, and sexualities: An international encyclopedia* (pp. 193-197). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.