

Learning for Earning or Learning for Life?  
A Case Study of Women Adult Educators in the 'New Era'

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## Dedication

I wish to express my gratitude to friends and family for their steadfast reminders of those things which are important and true.

Fred and Baba - your presence inspired and sustained me.

## Chapter 1 Introduction to the Study

### *The Problem*

Adult education in Canada has a rich and deep history, one that is steeped in a tradition of social activism, community development and participatory democracy. The ideals and values that inform this tradition have shaped the practice and underlying philosophy of adult education in Canada for the past seven decades. Contemporary adult education is undergoing a transition from its roots in social movements and voluntary associations toward its current status as preparation for employment and a marketplace for educational products and consumers (Lakeland, 1994). As a consequence, the role that adult education once played in addressing public issues has decreased (Welton, 1995b).

Many educators of adults, including Welton (1995b, 1998) and Lakeland (1994) for adult education and Smyth and Dow (1998) for teachers' work, sound alarm bells about the condition of contemporary adult education. They suggest that adult education no longer prepares students for citizenship, and that educational institutions are reproducing and preserving the social ills that exist in our society.

Much of the literature in adult education emphasizes how a changing economy, neo-liberal government policies, and public perceptions about the need for a skilled workforce are influencing the course of adult education. Economic and technological goals have begun to define adult education (Copa & Ammentorp, 1997) such that although it was "first conceived as a tool for social change [it has become] a more functional tool" (Proulx as cited in Heaney, 1996, p. 8). The erosion of education for citizenship is lamented, but there are few discussions that offer insight into the personal philosophies of those who are responsible for the education of adult learners.

Compounding and adding to these broader philosophical concerns about contemporary adult education practice is dwindling public support for post-secondary education. Over the last decade, national and provincial political leaders have embraced 'new era' social and economic policies that can best be described as neo-liberal (Brodie, 1996). A neo-liberal ideology promotes the view that economic and social strategies aimed at reducing federal and provincial deficits are the means to economic progress and development (McQuaig, 1995; Menzies, 1996). Unemployment is viewed as a temporary problem that stems from the inadequacies of individuals, and from the education system's failure to teach marketable skills that will enable people to compete in the global marketplace (Hart, 2002). The lack of work, particularly for women and marginalized citizens, is attributed to individual deficiency, as opposed to a decrease in the number of available jobs (Brodie, 1996; Hart, 1992; Menzies, 1996). Adapting and responding to new era economic and social policy often places new and competing demands on publicly funded post-secondary institutions.

Although post-secondary participation rates have increased in this province over the past decade, provincial and federal funding levels have been reduced (Lee & Long, 2001). The number of full-time equivalent students per full-time adult educator has risen in both university and college environments across the country. In British Columbia, a provincial tuition freeze (in place since the mid-1990s), and lifted in 2002, resulted in an increase to tuition fees ranging from 25% to 50% for university and college programs (Post-secondary Website, 2002). Lee and Long argue that, in Canada, tuition inflation rather than "increased public expenditures [have been allowed] to address post-secondary funding issues" (p. 24). There is a mounting concern for the future and quality of

education in a social and political environment that emphasizes productivity and efficiency over the needs of individuals and society (Lakeland, 1994; Hart, 2002; Welton, 1998). Significant growth in the number of students enrolled in colleges and universities, increased class size, a decline in the number of full-time educators, and a rise in "part-time [teaching] staff (with accompanying lower wages and fewer benefits) ... function as indicators of general institutional support [and] speak to the quality of education and instruction" (p. 24).

The restructuring of provincial funding formulas for post-secondary institutions and cuts to student services and supports at the college where this study takes place were announced during the course of the inquiry. Provincial and organizational efficiencies and budgetary restraint measures resulted in the cancellation or reduction of programs and student services at Legare College, and directly affected the work of some of the adult educators who took part in this study. The women were grappling with the consequences of recently enacted provincial legislation that would increase workload, tuition fees and class sizes, and reduce financial and social supports to post-secondary students. As members of an organization immersed in a period of change and transition, these adult educators were contemplating not only the obstacles presented by the anticipated budget cuts, but also possibilities and opportunities for the future.

The impact and complexity of both the real and anticipated changes, as experienced and understood by the women, adds yet another dimension to the philosophical considerations associated with contemporary practice. Educators who are committed to the ideals of adult education for individual, social and democratic purposes face the added challenge of enacting their aims in an uncertain and unstable social

climate. They are remembering the past, contemplating the present, and preparing for the future in an environment that seems to be shifting from familiar traditions and legacies to the uncertainties of the future.

*Adult education defined.*

Defining adult education, its purposes and functions, is a difficult task. Adult education can refer to a range of phenomena including the activities and programs in which adults participate, the organizations or social systems that are concerned with educating adults, and the cognitive processes by which adults learn. According to Selman, Selman, Cooke, and Dampier (1998), the matter of satisfactorily defining adult education is far from being settled.

The UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education Hamburg Declaration (1998) sought to describe and define adult education for the new millennium. As such, the following excerpt from the Hamburg Declaration has been chosen to inform this study:

Adult Education thus becomes more than a right; it is a key to the twenty-first century. It is both a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society. It is a powerful concept for fostering ecologically sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and culture of peace based on justice. (The Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning, 1998, ¶ 2)

In this thesis, I consider adult education also to be the legitimate concern and responsibility of all those who work with adults and who learn in an adult community. In

this sense, educational administrators and community workers are considered ‘adult educators’ as are the College faculty who participate in this study. In recognition of the traditional chasms that separate school from adult learning, I intend that this interdisciplinary study will stimulate conversation between the “two solitudes” (Welton, 1995c, p. 2).

### *The Purposes of the Study*

Two other purposes are central to this inquiry. The primary aim is to explore the individualistic and social imperatives of adult education as expressed and understood by adult educators. This objective offers insight into participants’ values and beliefs about the purposes of adult education, and into the life experiences that shape and form their perspectives. The exploration of adult educators’ experiences, beliefs and values leads to the secondary aim of this study. That is, what supports or obstacles do adult educators in a community college encounter that aid or hinder them in achieving their goals?

### *The central questions and sub-questions.*

Two key questions were designed to meet the purposes of this study. Each question is accompanied by several sub-questions, developed to elicit meaningful, substantive, and reflective descriptions of experiences and recollections. The sub-questions are also intended to encourage participants to expand and elaborate upon the central topics of the study, and to generate detailed descriptions to enhance my understanding of individual perceptions and viewpoints.

The first question “what do adult educators believe to be the imperatives of adult education?” probes each participant’s perceptions of the imperatives of adult education. The three sub-questions developed to support this question include:

- What life or work experiences contribute to, or shape, personal beliefs and values about adult education?
- What do adult educators believe to be their responsibility for, and role in, preparing learners for life?
- Are the original ideals and values of the adult education movement evident in the views and beliefs of adult educators?

A second key question, “what supports and barriers do adult educators experience in enacting their aims?” provides insight into personal and organizational influences on values, beliefs and actions. This and the subsequent questions were designed to explore and identify the personal and organizational supports and barriers that adult educators experience in enacting their aims. These sub-questions are:

- What values and beliefs concerning the purposes of adult education are stated in the organization’s mission and value statements?
- What values and beliefs concerning the purposes of adult education are implicit or unstated in the organization’s mission, value statements and practice?
- Are the personal philosophies of adult educators compatible, or in conflict, with stated or implicit organizational values?
- To what extent are adult educators successful in realizing their beliefs and values within the workplace and the community?

These questions guide and inform all aspects of the study, and provide a framework for exploring, describing and understanding the perspectives and experiences of the adult educators who participated in this inquiry.

*Significance and limitations of the study.*

This study provides the opportunity to learn about the values and beliefs of adult educators in one post-secondary institution. Through an exploration of personal philosophies and life and work experiences, my knowledge of the breadth and scope of the contributions the participants have made to adult education practice in our community has been heightened. Those original ideals of the adult education movement that reflect an ethos of social responsibility and caring for others are an integral part of these educators' thinking and understanding about the purposes of adult education. A variety of internal and external supports and barriers influence their ability and desire to enact their aims, and they respond and react to obstacles by creating opportunities for action and change.

This study will be of interest not only to adult educators who work in community colleges, but also to those involved in the development and design of adult education curricula. An enhanced awareness of the philosophies, supports and barriers experienced by adult educators can inform and potentially benefit the quality and future of post-secondary supports and services. By improving our understanding of adult educators' values and beliefs, we gain insight into why some educational and organizational goals and reforms may be endorsed, and others rejected, by adult educators. 'Naming' the beliefs and values that are shared by adult educators in one post-secondary institution may also benefit those who wish to identify a unifying philosophy for adult education. This expression of common values and beliefs could provide the means for a collaborative and meaningful pursuit of objectives that enrich both adult learners and the community. Individual reflections on the merits of adult education for individual as well as social

imperatives will be of interest to those involved in charting the course of adult education in turbulent and uncertain political, economic and social climates. It is also of value to recognize and acknowledge the breadth of knowledge and experience that exists within the membership of one organization.

In addition to exploring and revealing the experiences, values and beliefs of a select number of adult educators in a community college, this study investigates possibilities for action. Although time constraints affect the scope of this research, the opportunity exists to enhance our learning from the personal philosophies and lived experiences of a select group of adult educators.

*Philosophical Assumptions*

The philosophical assumptions I bring to this study are shaped by life experiences, and reflect and affect my understanding of the world. Personal biases, values and beliefs contribute to and influence the way that I work and live, and are integrated into my philosophy of practice as an adult educator.

*Personal biases.*

As a citizen of my community and as an adult educator, I begin this research with many questions about the current and future directions of adult education practice and philosophy. These questions arise from my experiences as an adult educator and as a learner. My values and beliefs about adult education and my perceptions of educators' responsibilities to learners and to the community have been informed and influenced by work and life experiences. A personal and professional involvement in the Community Living movement has strengthened my beliefs about the role adult education must play in preparing people to actively participate in and contribute to the community. The

Community Living movement, founded in a philosophy of social justice, advocates for the meaningful inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in our society. It strives to promote the rights of people with disabilities to enjoy both the privileges and the duties of full citizenship (Roehrer Institute, 1996a). Adult education can be the means by which people gain an awareness of the needs, abilities, gifts and talents of themselves and others, as well as an understanding of personal responsibility to the community and to society. Adult learners who recognize the value and importance of active citizenship are more likely and able to advocate on behalf of those whose full rights of citizenship are denied.

*Personal values and beliefs.*

Each of us has personal values and philosophies that shape, inform, guide, and influence our beliefs and actions. Individual experiences are meaningful in themselves and it is from these experiences that we create and establish our own reality. Qualitative research methodology complements my view that reality is a social construct, and that much can be learned by exploring individual experiences and perceptions about the world.

As an adult educator who presently works at the post-secondary institution that is the focus of this study, I am in the privileged position of being both an 'inside' observer and a participant in this research. The adult educators who have aided me in the exploration of this topic are colleagues whom I respect, and with whom I have had successful working relationships. I recognize that in my desire to learn about the values and beliefs of adult educators, personal and privileged information has been disclosed. At

each stage in this inquiry therefore, every effort has been made to accord all personal recollections and accounts the respect and dignity they deserve.

*Ideological perspectives and influences.*

The philosophical assumptions, values, beliefs and biases I express reflect the perspectives that I bring to this research. It is with some reluctance however, that I label my ideological perspectives. A commitment to equality and social justice, and an understanding of the effects of marginalization and disenfranchisement on those who experience inequity, cause me to resist the practice of labeling others or myself. Labels seldom match the words we would use to describe ourselves, and can be powerful tools for exclusion from meaningful and respected participation in public discourse. Classifications used to describe people that are based upon appearance, behavior, diagnoses, or beliefs can generate stereotypes, perpetuate myths, and lead to unfair social practices (Roehrer Institute, 1996b). As such, I prefer not to label myself as an adherent to any one ideological perspective, and instead rely on my commitment to honor and respect diversity as a philosophical foundation for this work. I recognize however, that others may better understand my approach to, and interpretation of this study within the frameworks outlined below.

Those aspects of feminism concerned with collaboration and the recognition of the value and significance of relationships have influenced my understanding, exploration and interpretation of this case study. According to Young (2000), a distinctive feature of feminist qualitative research is its emphasis on collaborative relationships. A collaborative approach promotes greater depth and understanding of the issues and can enhance the willingness of participants to share thoughts and recollections.

A feminist perspective also helps in understanding the way in which gender influences experience, perception, values, and beliefs. Women have different ways of knowing and growing, where identity is linked to relationships and connections with others (Gilligan as cited in Young, 2000). Wolfinger and Rabow (1997) note that gender differences in conversation are evident not only in speech, but also in listening. The collaborative nature of the research, and the way in which I “hear” the voices of the women who have participated in this study, affect the way in which the narratives are understood and interpreted.

Finally, my view of the world is shaped, molded, and at times dismissed because I am female. Past and present cultural, political, social structures and constraints imposed upon women affect my personal and professional relationships and experiences. These structures can act as barriers and obstacles and thus their influence ought not to be ignored; their presence colors my perception and understanding of the world.

A feminist perspective provides one viewpoint and one philosophical framework for this inquiry. It is augmented by a second perspective, one which views social, economic, and political constraints through the lens of social justice and equality (Brodie, 1996; Hart, 1992, 2002).

A belief that all citizens have a responsibility to contribute meaningfully to a just and equal society drives and motivates my interest in this topic. It strengthens and informs my view that the exploration of the social action and citizenship imperatives of adult education is valid and meaningful. The purposes of the study, the manner in which the research question is approached, the chosen methodology, and my relationship with the participants are all flavored by a philosophy of social justice. This perspective

provides the framework which most accurately describes the way that I view and participate in the world, and that best reflects my commitment to equality, justice and fairness. I view a philosophy of social justice as a vehicle for social transformation and a means for ensuring that the rights of those who are marginalized and devalued in our society are protected and defended.

### *Theoretical Framework*

Theory about the development and implementation of organizational values, climate and culture, and personal values theory, provide the conceptual frameworks that contribute to the analysis and interpretation of the data generated in this study.

Organizational values theory offers insight into how values and beliefs are evidenced in organizational culture and practice. Personal values theory provides a means of understanding the way in which individual values and beliefs evolve and are expressed.

#### *Organizational values, culture and climate.*

Theories about the development and evolution of organizational climate, culture, and values provide a conceptual guide to understanding the shared and conflicting values and beliefs that have emerged between individuals and the organization, and individual perceptions of organizational effectiveness. Morgan's (1997) metaphor of the mosaic of organizational realities considers the influence of individual diversity on organizational culture. In discussions of organizational values, Schein (1985, 1992) suggests that it is essential to identify both the stated and implicit values of an organization, as both contribute equally to its culture. If these values can be identified, then the impact of the culture on the organization as a whole and upon individual members can be better understood. Ayer's (2002) description of organizational climates that promote renewal

and innovation in turbulent and highly unstable environments, offers an alternative, positive perspective on the effects and influence of change in an organization. Management styles and administrative structures also influence the culture of organizations, and as Gallagher and Dennison (1986) note, the management practices of many community colleges evolved from the corporate world. Organizational culture therefore, is created and defined by individual and management practices and values, and each member understands and experiences it in his or her own way. As Greenfield explains “we live in separate realities...and we need to engage in...a process aimed at understanding social reality and its artefacts, which we call organizations” (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993, p.88).

#### *Values theory.*

Values theory that addresses the way in which personal values, beliefs and social identity are developed and enacted is useful in the exploration of this inquiry. The work of Ricks and Griffin (1995) assists in understanding how values and beliefs, or those tenets that we hold to be important and true, evolve and are reflected in practice. Hodgkinson’s (1995) values theory offers a framework for understanding the connection between values, beliefs, ethics and action, and how these are evidenced in our personal and professional lives. It also helps to explain those conflicts or contradictions between the values and beliefs expressed by adult educators and those reflected in organizational culture and practice. An understanding of the transformative nature of education, and of the way in which adults develop a social identity, aids in identifying and recognizing the developmental changes and stages that are experienced by adult learners. Adult education can be a catalyst for personal growth and development, and for the redefinition of one’s

social identity. Hardiman and Jackson (1997) describe the developmental process that occurs when adults are exposed to new experiences and circumstances, and the ways in which they integrate this new information and experiences into thoughts and behavior. The works of Heaney (1996), Hart (2002), Scott (1998) and Thompson (1997) on education's role in promoting personal and social transformation allow for a critical analysis of the aims of education for social change. These writings reflect contrasting perspectives on the role of educators in maintaining, preserving, and challenging the dominant status quo.

### *Methodology*

A qualitative research methodology is best suited to my goal of exploring adult educators' values and beliefs of the imperatives of education, and of the supports and barriers that they experience in enacting their aims. It allows individual experiences to be described and interpreted, and supports my desire to learn about both individual ideals and organizational values. This methodology also provides the means of examining an issue that can be best understood through descriptions of lived experiences. As Creswell (1998) writes, qualitative research is "an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem" (p. 15). I have chosen this approach as it recognizes the worth and credence of personal stories and lived experiences, and because it allows me to explore patterns and theories about individual values and beliefs. In qualitative methodology "categories emerge from informants, rather than are identified *a priori* by the researcher" (Creswell, 1994, p. 7). A qualitative study also emphasizes "the researcher's role as an active learner" (Creswell 1998, p. 38), reinforcing the value I attach to lifelong learning.

*A case study approach.*

Just as a qualitative methodology can facilitate the understanding of social and human issues, a case study approach offers the means by which the values, beliefs and experiences of adult educators can be explored and described in detail. Qualitative research allows for inquiry into issues in the natural world, and case study provides a framework for situating those issues in a particular time and place. A case study structure of the problem, context, and issues forms the basis from which interpretations evolve and meanings emerge. Multiple sources of data, including participant interviews, institutional documents and public records contribute to an in-depth description and interpretation of experiences and events. Place and time provide boundaries for this study in that it is situated in one particular post-secondary institution, and takes place over a nine-month period. A case study design also allows me to interpret, learn, and draw conclusions from the inquiry (Creswell, 1998). Finally, this approach to qualitative research has given me the opportunity to expand my knowledge and understanding of lived experiences and personal values and beliefs.

*The participants and the setting.*

The selection of participants for this study was purposeful. The five women are all volunteers whose practice indicated to me, an interest in adult education, its aims and purposes. They demonstrated through involvement in professional organizations or workplace committees, or through dialogue, an interest in discussing and contemplating adult education practice. A perceived willingness to take part in a research project and in an interview process guided me in determining whom I would invite to participate in this study. It was also important that potential participants vary in age and experience,

representative of the workplace. The adult educators were drawn from several disciplines and work areas in one post-secondary institution, although all of them could be considered to be from the humanities. Finally, my selection of participants depended completely upon each individual's willingness to contribute to and participate in the study.

Participants were informed in writing about the purpose of the inquiry, and assured of anonymity. Pseudonyms have been used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Certain details pertaining to life experiences have been fictionalized to honor a commitment to protect individual privacy, and to avoid possible identification of participants based on cultural, geographical or experiential details.

Details about the post-secondary institution where this study takes place have also been fictionalized. A pseudonym, Legare College, has been chosen to represent the workplace of these adult educators. This name was selected because the word 'college', with its origins in the Latin word *collega*, means 'colleague', or "one chosen to work with another" (Ayto, 1990, p. 123). The root word of *collega* is *legare*, meaning 'to choose'. The adult educators in this study describe the role of their colleagues in providing support, and the deliberate manner in which they choose these supports. Although not a central question of the inquiry, the collegial aspects of work in a large organization are considered. It is important to note that prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the word 'college' referred to a consortium of partnerships or to a corporate group (Ayto, 1990; Sykes, 1984). As described in the following chapter, the literature warns of the influence of the corporate world on contemporary adult education institutions and practice.

### *The structure of the thesis.*

This inquiry is presented in six chapters. Chapter one introduces the reader to the purposes, methodology, philosophical and theoretical frameworks that guide and inform the study. A review of the literature in Chapter two begins with a brief overview of the history, traditions, initiatives and leaders associated with the adult education movement in Canada and internationally. A survey of the literature pertaining to contemporary adult education practice, philosophy, and personal and organizational values and culture follows. Chapter three presents the methodological framework for this qualitative study, describing the case study design, and the methods used to accumulate, interpret and analyze multiple sources of data. Issues pertaining to the quality, ethics, significance and limitations of the study are also addressed. The findings of the study are presented in Chapters four and five. Chapter four represents the participants' thoughts and recollections related to the first question of the study, that is, "what do adult educators believe to be the purposes of adult education?" Perspectives on the second question of the inquiry, "what barriers and supports do adult educators experiencing in enacting their aims?", are described in the subsequent chapter. Participant narratives provide the foundation from which themes and patterns, and similarities and differences are interpreted and emerge in both chapters. The study concludes with a discussion of the lessons learned during and as a consequence of, the research process, and with suggestions for future inquiries into the research topic.

### *Summary*

A personal philosophy that recognizes the meaning and inherent value of lived experiences, along with a commitment to the principles of equity, tolerance and respect

for others, informs and guides my values and beliefs about the purposes of adult education. Concerns expressed by leaders in the adult education movement about the apparent erosion of a social ethos in education and of 'new era' policies on organizational behavior have sparked my interest in exploring adult educators' values, beliefs and perspectives. A qualitative, case study approach provides a solid framework for describing and interpreting the philosophies and experiences of a select group of women who work as adult educators. This inquiry has increased my understanding of the aims of adult education and will, I hope, contribute to an awareness of the worth and value of the social imperatives of adult education in contemporary practice.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter explores three perspectives pertaining to the values and beliefs of adult educators on the imperatives of adult education. First, the historical roots of adult education as a means to enhancing civic commitment and social democracy are discussed. This view from our past is followed by an overview of current thinking about adult education, and implications for the future of adult education. Finally, the focus shifts from a description of external circumstances influencing adult education, to a discussion of organizational values and culture and their link to personal values and beliefs.

### *Looking Back*

The necessity for thinking and adult education is evident from a consideration of the fact that individuals, communities and nations have ... lost many golden opportunities. They had eyes and saw not, ears and heard not. It was said of old that without vision the people perish. But there is no vision without enlightenment. (Coady, 1939, p. 33)

### *The Canadian experience.*

Adult education was originally oriented towards preparing "citizens to play an engaged and committed role in civic life" (Welton, 1998, p. 371). Pioneering adult educators sought to provide Canadians with citizenship education, described as the way in which citizens play a role in determining the nature of the society to which they belong (Selman, Selman, Cooke, & Dampier, 1998). Adult education in Canada has had a deep commitment to building a developmental democracy, where situations and associations were created to enable people to develop to their full potential by being learner-centered and emancipatory (Welton, 1995a).

The Antigonish movement in Nova Scotia, for example, supported men and women to acquire a set of critical competencies through participation in various cooperative and community building ventures. Officially commencing in 1928, this project enabled citizens to find and manage solutions for significant economic and social problems in their community (Selman et al., 1998). This model of adult education united the citizens of the community, generated economic rehabilitation through co-operative action, and promoted a participatory civic consciousness among the participants. Genuine social and political learning was created through educational intervention. Participation in decision making helped individuals accept responsibility for the decisions of the collective group. Under the leadership of Rev. Moses Coady and Rev. James Tompkins, the Antigonish movement succeeded in achieving real improvement in peoples' lives, and has been credited with empowering the participants to take control over their personal, economic and social destinies (Welton, 1995a).

Another Nova Scotian, Dr. Elizabeth Murray, can best be described as an educator who recognized education as a means of community building. Through a diversity of formal and informal educational efforts, this teacher of children and adults, and lover of music, helped to forge links between individual interests and social interactions (Harris, 1998). Her leadership abilities, her interest in the people of her community, and her love of the arts combined to make her a powerful community connector. From her early years as a teacher, through her years as an adult educator and a writer and organizer of history plays, Dr. Murray made significant contributions to community development in rural Nova Scotia. By initiating community projects and forging connections between learners

of all ages and abilities around a common purpose, this educator demonstrated many of the original ideals of the adult education movement.

Other Canadian adult education initiatives used the technology of the times to empower people both individually and collectively, transforming learners into autonomous, reflective, and active citizens (Faris, 1975). Citizenship education was the primary focus of both the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the National Film Board of Canada. Created in the 1930s, these organizations sought to “educate Canadians about their country, their fellow citizens and the issues facing Canadian society” (Selman et al., 1998, p. 46). Under the auspices of the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE), radio programs and documentary films were produced in an effort to create an awareness of important issues of the time, and to provide a forum for study and discussion groups (Faris, 1975). It was thought that by bringing Canadians together to deliberate and converse about topics related to citizenship, a sense of community would evolve, both informing and propelling individuals to act collectively and responsibly.

Similarly, the National Farm Radio Forum began broadcasting in 1941. It broadcast topics of interest that generated discussion about agricultural issues and enhanced possibilities for social and political learning (Welton, 1998). Another national discussion program designed to promote citizenship education was the Citizen's Forum, a joint venture of the CAAE and the CBC (Faris, 1975). Printed study materials, developed to accompany a weekly radio broadcast, were intended to “help Canadians form their opinions and conclusions on matters of general concern” (Selman et. al, 1998, p. 197). From its inception in 1941 through to the final broadcast in 1965, the Citizen's Forum

provided Canadians with the opportunity to discuss and contemplate important issues of the day that affected their lives and the welfare of their communities.

According to Welton (1998) "historical understanding can play a role in shaping our identity as adult educators" (p. 36, 37). An awareness of the democratic-oriented traditions of adult education in Canada serves to remind educators of the value and importance of education as a means of "mobilizing citizen action to create a more democratic society" (p. 37).

*An American perspective.*

Adult education movements in other countries have achieved similar successes in citizenship development. The work of Paulo Freire in Latin America demonstrated that through education, adults could be empowered to take political action. Freire's adult literacy programs simultaneously raised the level of students' political awareness with theories of liberating education, creating connections between educational reform and social criticism. Freire saw education as a form of political activity, and demonstrated that through education, society could be transformed (Selman et al., 1998).

Lindeman, an American adult educator writing in the 1920s and 1930s, described adult education as a social process, the aim of which was to teach people how to live rather than how to make a living. He, like Moses Coady and John Dewey, saw adult education as an instrument of social change, where a learner could achieve freedom and put meaning into the whole of life (Briton, 1996). Both Coady and Dewey emphasized the active role of the learner in a social context, and in creating and defining the value of what is learned. Dewey made great efforts to establish a philosophical system that would provide a rationale for people to control the institutions that affected their lives. He

viewed the purpose of education as one of nurturing the ability to self-reflect and to contribute to the common good. Individual development, productivity and creativity were seen as the means to a social goal. Education could be the means by which individuals would become engaged directly in the democratic decision-making process (Selman et al., 1998). Lindeman, too, emphasized that the purpose of adult education was learning associated with social purposes, rather than solely the pursuit of knowledge. In a portent of what was to come, he cautioned in the 1940s that the “conceptions of adult education that fail to recognize its irremediably social nature are intrinsically flawed ... [and] ... proponents of mechanistic adult education are courting disaster” (Lindeman as cited in Briton, 1996, p.5).

### *Looking Forward*

Today some adult educators argue that disaster has struck as political and economic issues seem to overshadow the ideals and visions of adult education institutions in Canada (Doherty-Delorme, 2001; Welton, 1998). National and provincial debts, globalization of markets, rising unemployment and neo-liberal politics drive policy, program, and funding decisions related to adult education institutions (Brodie, 1996; Hart, 2002).

#### *The global marketplace and a skilled workforce.*

The role and function of adult education seems to be undergoing a dramatic change in response to the view that Canadian competitiveness in a global marketplace relies upon a highly skilled workforce. The means to a skilled workforce is deemed to be appropriate education, that is, education for employment. Smyth and Dow (1998) describe a shift in balance from education for the betterment of society, to education that

emphasizes vocationalism where students equal customers, teachers equal producers and learning equals outcomes. Adult education is no longer based upon a unifying theme of improving society but rather, on the ideal of competing in technological and information societies, where economic achievement is the measure of success. Education is delivered in keeping with the perceived needs of the global market, accountability is measured in terms of rational and technical outcomes, and individual well being takes precedence over social responsibility (Lakeland, 1994; Welton, 1998). Massive public relations campaigns by large corporations connecting government debt and liberal social policies are doing much to convince the public that education should provide a means to an end. According to Menzies (1996), the public is persuaded that reducing our national debt is a priority, and cost-cutting in health and education are necessary evils if Canadians are to maintain a national competitiveness in the global market. Brodie (1996) notes that by linking rising social welfare rolls with a skill deficit in the workforce, the federal government creates a belief that welfare costs can be reduced through better and more relevant training of the workforce. She points out that many Canadians, and women in particular, have been excluded from the workforce. For them, the greatest disincentive to employment resides in the absence of jobs, not in a lack of employability skills. This, in concert with a belief that globalization requires technological skills in order for Canadians to compete in a world market, serves to affirm in the minds of many that funding for adult education must be directly related to measurable, instrumental outcomes and employability statistics.

Habermas (2000) also reflects on the influence of neo-liberalism on employment and the global marketplace. He describes a contemporary society that is "unified by the [globalized] market" (p. 54), and which focuses on supplying people with "the

entrepreneurial skills of 'achievers', capable of looking after themselves" (p. 54). According to Habermas, an emphasis on individual achievement in a competitive marketplace contributes to the notion that those who cannot hold their own in the marketplace "end up as the kind of 'failure' who ha[ve] to turn to the state for help" (p. 54).

Welton, influenced by Habermas, writes that adult education is "under intense pressure to abandon critical social theorizing in favour of short-term training programs for whatever need panic-stricken governments deem salient" (1995b, p. 3). He adds that the fostering of democratic social action through adult education has been discarded in favour of an instrumental rationality that serves the interests of industry, business and large-scale corporations. Where adult education at one time worked to the advantage of the poor, oppressed and marginalized, it now seems to work to the benefit of public authorities whose primary focus is to achieve a nationally competitive economy by providing a competent workforce. The social liberalism fought for by pioneers in adult education is falling by the wayside as globalization and political neo-liberalism impacts public attitudes, support, and funding for adult education (Menzies, 1996). Public support for education in Canada can no longer be taken for granted (Brodie, 1996).

#### *Organizational mandates and missions.*

Traditionally, the mandates and missions of federal, provincial and local political institutions have affected Canada's post-secondary institutions and funding bodies (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986). Governments and funding bodies influence the direction that public post-secondary institutions follow, and inform and shape public perceptions about the purpose and role of adult education in our communities. The values and beliefs,

both explicit and inherent in mission statements and strategic plans, seem to speak to a technical, rational approach to adult education, one that is oriented towards results with a strong emphasis on learners acquiring skills for employment (Provincial Government Website, 2001). Federal and provincial government mandates and mission statements, for example, appear to support a vision for adult education that emphasizes individual skill attainment over social responsibility and preparation for active citizenship. Many government publications identify the creation of a highly skilled workforce as the means to individual and national health and global competitiveness. One report on post-secondary education in Canada prepared by the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education (CCME, 1999), highlights the functions and expectations of this level of education in Canadian society. This report offers readers some insight into both public and government perceptions of the purpose and role of adult education in this country. The need for lifelong learning for both the individual and the collective good of Canadians as a result of globalization, social and economic change is recognized. Revolutions in information technology are identified as forces driving economic restructuring, globalization, and political and social change. A 'premium' on people with high levels of education and training, and their capacity to generate, access and adapt knowledge is linked to a need to invest in educating people in order that they can "thrive in this reality. This investment will benefit individuals, communities and the country as a whole" (CCME, p. 3).

At a provincial level, the Ministry of Advanced Education is the primary funding source for adult education institutions in the province. This government body provides institutions with operating capital, and its mandate and mission shape and influence adult

education practice in the province. The Ministry's mission statement declares that it "provides leadership and support for a top-notch advanced education and training system" and "opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge need[ed] to live productive and fulfilling lives, and to contribute to the changing economic, social, and cultural life of the province" (Ministry of Advanced Education Website, 2002). Although the mission statement expresses a need for citizens to contribute to the social and cultural life of the province and to have abundant lives, the strategic goals focus on accessibility, affordability, relevance and accountability of post-secondary education. These reflect an ideology that seems to be most concerned with sustaining a system that can meet the economic goals of the province and provide a skilled workforce. Those aspects of the mission statement that speak of contributions to the social and cultural life of the province are not reflected in the goals. These statements subscribe to a view of adult education as education for citizenship and social participation. Yet, it appears that the quality of life and work aspects of post-secondary education are measured in relation to the learners' access to programs that are relevant to labour market requirements and preparation for employment. There are no specific strategies outlined to address community or social responsibilities. Instead, an outcomes oriented curriculum, learning opportunities aligned with market needs and linked to occupational standards are identified in part, as the vision for the future of the post-secondary system (Post-secondary Strategy Website, 2002).

The goals and strategies as expressed by this arm of the provincial government suggest that the purpose of education and training is to achieve fulfillment through employment, and that one's quality of life can be determined by economic achievement.

This is a vision of learning that focuses on the consumer-oriented concerns of individuals and families, and that works to the advantage of business and industry.

Lakeland (1994) takes the position that the pathologies of our world are reflected in the pathologies of our educational system, and that this cycle becomes a 'catch 22' of educational ills reinforcing social ills. According to Lakeland, educational institutions have forsaken social responsibility in favour of a consumer model of education, where goals and values are modeled on organizational structures and systems. Organizational mandates that replace educational visions with corporate values and cultures shift the moral compass that has, in the past, guided adult education practice. Contemporary practice seems to emphasize the needs of the individual over the needs of the society to which the individual belongs, and students have difficulty making the connection between personal fulfillment and their quality of life as citizens in a participatory democracy. The deteriorating role of educational institutions in nurturing an ability to reflect on personal experience and contribute to the common good is evidenced by operational practices and policies that measure outcomes and productivity. These features of many post-secondary institutions are couched in the guise of a learner-centered andragogy. By focusing on being 'learner-centered', institutions can market their products in a consumer oriented, individualistic society. Governments, funding bodies and the public are supportive of an approach that links learner-centered, measurable, task-oriented outcomes to accountability (Smyth & Dow, 1998). It seems that those visions of education for social change and democracy are being replaced with corporate values and ideologies of productivity and efficiency.

### *From teaching to learning?*

The deteriorating role of educational institutions in nurturing people's ability to reflect on personal experience and contribute to the common good is particularly evident in those practices and policies that measure outcomes and productivity. These features of many post-secondary institutions are presented as a learner-centered andragogy, one that emphasizes the institution's role in promoting and facilitating 'lifelong learning'. The concept of lifelong learning suggests that education and significant learning move beyond the walls of an educational institution, and continues throughout life. Learning is a process that occurs from "cradle to grave" (Collins, 1998, p. 52) and is not confined to formal learning environments. However, the increasing emphasis in many post-secondary institutions on learning-for-earning, rather than for the sake of knowledge (Smyth & Dow, 1998), makes it difficult for learners to understand lifelong learning as more than the ongoing updating of work-related skills. The rhetoric of lifelong learning is often interpreted, by both learners and educators, as the maintenance and improvement of employability skills, as career or professional development.

The emancipatory and democratic foundations of adult education are being further diluted by the view of some educators that all skills, abilities, and values can be quantified, assessed and accredited. In this approach to teaching and learning, there is a heavy reliance upon behavioral theory. Competencies, including values and attitudes, are described in relation to a role, task or duty, and suggest a set of expectations about the kinds of evidence that will be recognized as learning. Educators are encouraged to set objectives in terms of anticipated learning outcomes and measurable behavior change (Peruniak, 1998). Learning outcomes are determined by an analysis of the skills, values or

competencies required by a specific task and by an assessment of those skills already acquired by the learner. The skills in which the learner is found to be deficient are taught, and the learner is assisted in the acquisition of the skills relevant to the successful completion of the task (Lakeland, 1994).

This methodology of teaching and learning supposes that empirical methods of natural science are equally applicable to the study of humans, and that inner states of being can be recognized only when they can be operationalized (Peruniak, 1998). The danger in this approach to adult education is its appeal to institutions, funding bodies and governments who are under constant pressure from the public to demonstrate economic accountability in education. Because instrumental learning is observable and measurable, it can be easily linked to employment skills and productivity. However, Lakeland (1994) warns that adult learning that focuses on instrumental learning risks making the person an instrument of society. The human activities of caring, thinking and creating become marginalized, and skills, tasks and competencies become the currency by which learning is measured.

Peruniak (1998) notes that measurable and observable outcomes have become the means by which learner-centeredness is measured. Skills and competencies are identified and catalogued, demonstrating for employers and governments the production of graduates who possess skills for employment. In an effort to give students marketable skills, competency based learning dilutes the notion of adult education as preparation for active participation in community life (Welton, 1998). Learners and educators become intent on achieving results related to doing, to the measurement and assessment of outcomes. As educators, our worth seems to be defined by the numbers of students who

achieve these outcomes, not by the contributions students and graduates make to their community (Provincial Government Website, 2002). The measure of learner success is determined by students' ability to demonstrate skills and competencies; their understanding and appreciation of their role as active and contributing citizens of the community is largely ignored.

*Preserving and maintaining the status quo.*

Cunningham (1993) contends that there are many myths pertaining to the goals of contemporary adult education as an empowering, equitable and humanistic venture. According to this author, most adult education has little to do with "empowering learners, ...making society more equal, ...or building a better society" (pp. 1, 2). Instead it serves to socialize adults into the mainstream of society, and as Kerka (1996) suggests, enables adults to fit into existing social structures. There has been a shift from adult education's original role in "building a new nation to homogenizing and socializing [people] to support efficiency in business and industry" (p.2).

Education for social change has lost its original intent, becoming a means by which adults can be domesticated, adapting to the norms of the dominant society and culture, according to these authors. In Heaney's (1996) view, adult education reinforces the privilege of the majority world, perpetuating and sustaining the status quo. Individuals become more able to conform to the roles and expectations of mainstream society, unintentionally reproducing the "social order with all its inequities intact" (p. 15).

Lakeland's (1994) premise that adult education contributes to social ills by stressing individual economic attainment over the needs of society, and that adult educators must be critical and aware of their collusion in these aims, is echoed by Kerka

(1996), Heaney (1996) and Hart (2002). These writers argue that adult educators must be critical of their role in promoting the individualistic imperatives of education and in fostering education for social change that does little to challenge or disrupt the status quo. Without this, adult education becomes little more than the means by which people learn to adapt and conform to the norms and standards of the majority world, rather than the means by which they can be provoked to explore and question their role in contributing to the dominant status quo.

A feminist perspective on education for empowerment and social change considers the influence of dominant class, gender, and power structures on those who have traditionally been devalued and marginalized in our society. Education is considered to be a primary source of empowerment for women and a “force that can bring vital results” (Perry, 2000, p. 38). Hart (2002) and Thompson (1997) identify the importance of validating individual experiences and of incorporating these into teaching knowledge, skills and abilities. In order for people to be empowered to act for personal transformation or social change, they need “useful knowledge ” that not only validates the experiences of the disenfranchised, but which “challenge[s] the imposition of ideas and conditions which work to oppress” (Thompson, 1997, p. 115). A feminist perspective of education for social action acknowledges that women have “different definitions of experience and reality from men” and that “when women generate their own knowledge ... the consequences can be challenging to men’s view of the world” (Thompson, 1997, p. 81). As such, the world view of women adult educators is one which is shaped by experiences of gender oppression and inequity of social, political and economic circumstances (Hart, 2002). Feminist educators will “seek to transform women by including their daily reality

and experiences into the process of learning” (Clover, 1995, ¶17). Clover notes that a gender approach to education incorporates a social construction of reality that addresses the roles and expectations of both men and women in society, and which is “essential to an integrated and more transformative way of learning” (¶18). This viewpoint acknowledges the forces that shape society, and recognizes that women typically experience disadvantages that limit or prohibit them from full and meaningful participation in social, political and economic life. In the educational realm, feminist perspectives on education can contribute to learner awareness and understanding of the dominant social and political structures that exert power over disenfranchised members of society. Learners are supported and encouraged not only to question and challenge the culture of the mainstream, but also to consider possibilities for action.

*A conceptual framework for practice.*

Another contemporary issue in adult education is the lack of a conceptual framework for practice. Welton (1995b) observes that this is one of the greatest concerns for adult educators today. As Hart (1992) contends, the rationale underlying much adult education practice is instrumental reasoning, where experiences are structured in terms of means-end relationships. A learner’s ability to gain reflective insight into her world is difficult to measure and assess in an approach that equates adult learning with instrumental learning. An emphasis on skills and training, competencies and outcomes, suggests to the learner that life is separate from work. This focus on proficiency, efficiency and productivity is consistent with institutional goals of marketing education, producing employable graduates and acquiring government funding for programs. Barr and Tagg (1995) argue that a shift to a learning paradigm will make possible a continuous

improvement in productivity for institutions. They suggest that the complexity of the knowledge age, a global economy and turbulent change require that the competencies, standards and results produced in two year institutions be clearly stated, and articulated as learning outcomes achieved by a learner through a learning experience. The “expected or promised learning outcomes are what the educational institution is contracting for ... [learning outcomes] are central to the design, funding, operation and accountability of educational institutions” (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 9).

The lack of a unifying conceptual framework for practice further contributes to this dilemma, in that when instrumental learning is emphasized, learning for the 'lifeworld' is hindered, according to Welton (1995c). The 'lifeworld' refers to those assumptions and understandings of the world that provide us with guidance and meaning in our everyday actions and interactions. Communicative action or, the ideal speech situation, requires "freedom to reach agreement on the basis of the better argument ... and justice based on mutual respect. This discourse is both rational and emancipatory" (Murphy & Fleming, 2000, p. 89). According to Lakeland (1994), a focus on skill acquisition, measurable outcomes and assessment does not address the most significant adult learning that occurs in the communicative learning domain. Communicative learning refers to the identification of ideas, values, beliefs, and feelings, and the use of rational discourse to examine and evaluate these critically, resulting in decision-making based upon the resulting consensus (Habermas in Welton, 1995c). The essential skills for this kind of learning are related to the skills needed for a greater degree of full participation in critical reflection, discourse and action. The problem then arises of how adult educators can support learners in acquiring the knowledge necessary for self-

reflection, meaningful communication and action. According to Thompson (1997), liberal or radical adult education practice fosters an environment where learners are supported to participate in meaningful discourse, or communication that is "free from domination, ... respectful, critical and collaborative" (Murphy & Fleming, 2000, p. 90). The process of engaging in discourse that validates individual experiences and awarenesses of the power structures and inequities inherent in society is a "well established ... core principle of transformative and radical adult education .... The re-creation of the lifeworld, the development of civil society [and] the emergence of a truly democratic system and society" (p. 90) are possible in a vision for adult education that links "process and content, ... subjective and objective knowledge, [and] experience and ideas" (p. 91). Adult education, particularly that which occurs in liberal formats, recognizes the importance and value of knowledge and experience acquired in the lifeworld, and enhances learners' ability to gain insight into their world.

### *Looking Inward*

Adult education literature often describes the impact of external factors on the focus and direction of adult education. It is equally important to consider the personal values and beliefs of adult educators and to examine the ways in which these interact with organizational values, culture and climate.

#### *Organizational values, culture and climate.*

Organizational values are communicated to the members of the organization and to the public through a variety of means. Mission statements, mandates, management styles, administrative policy, and practices inform us of the values and beliefs held by the governing members of an organization. In some instances, these values and beliefs are

stated explicitly and publicly. At other times, they are expressed indirectly, and are only evident to members of the organization. Often these informal or implicit values and beliefs may be at odds, or in direct conflict with the organization's stated values and beliefs (Hodgkinson, 1995; Schein, 1985).

As we learn from theories of organizational culture and leadership, the values and beliefs evidenced by organizations are influenced by and intertwined with the personal values of the members of organizations (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993). The existence of different, and at times competing, values can "create a mosaic of organizational realities rather than a uniform corporate culture" (Morgan, 1997, p. 137). Diversity in individual experience, race, gender, culture, ethnicity, and professional disciplines has the potential to influence organizational culture and values. Although espoused organizational values may make it possible to predict what people will say in a variety of situations, they cannot ensure that people will act in accordance with these values, particularly in situations where those values should be operating (Schein, 1985). Schein also suggests that if we can identify not only the espoused values of an organization, but also the members' assumptions (beliefs), we are more likely to be able to describe and understand the organization's culture. He further points out that organizational culture must be better understood because it has a tremendous impact on the organization as a whole, on the groups within an organization, and upon the individual members of the organization. The culture of an organization also affects individual performance and can determine the overall effectiveness of the institution. Morgan adds credence to the importance of understanding organizational culture in his description of organizations as mini-societies, with their "own distinctive patterns of culture and subculture" (Morgan, 1997, p. 129).

These patterns of belief or shared meaning can greatly affect the organization's ability to cope with, and respond to challenges.

An organization's climate can be described as its "attributes and internal characteristics" (Ayers, 2002, p. 170) measured through the perspectives of its members. In organizations that are experiencing environmental turbulence and uncertainty, the climate can affect the ability of individuals and the group to adapt and react effectively to change. Ayers identifies four characteristics of post-secondary institutions that have responded effectively to highly unstable and turbulent conditions in the environment. These features include a decentralized organizational structure that allows for open discussion of the emerging issues, the empowerment of employees to pursue individual interests and to take initiative, an informal communication network that encourages information sharing and collaboration, and a shared vision, purpose, and core values for the organization.

Similar to other organizations, community colleges have hierarchical and bureaucratic structures, climates, and cultures that can impede or enhance their ability to respond effectively and productively to change. Unlike many traditional organizations, colleges as relatively new institutions have relied on corporate, school and university models of management and organization to guide their development. A brief examination of the history of colleges in Canada provides some insight into the organizational nature of these educational institutions. In the 1970s colleges were "legislated into being with very modest philosophical or directional underpinnings" (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986, p. 143). Organizational structures and management styles resembled those practiced by the corporate world, universities and schools. Leadership and administrative models were

borrowed from the business and education worlds, and management styles often shifted to accommodate the political and economic climate of the time. Management styles ranged from hierarchical, bureaucratic models where direction was provided from the top down, to collegial models embracing equal participation in decision-making by involving board members, students, instructors, and administrators. Most colleges displayed elements of both management styles, with some leaning more in one direction than the other (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986).

Dennison and Gallagher (1986) describe colleges of the early 1970s as “discrete, independent domains of their own, responding to their own unique pulls and pushes, largely oblivious to what was going on ... in the larger world outside their walls” (p. 199). At that time, the corporate world was focusing on the study of management to improve the functioning and productivity of businesses, but new developments in management theory seemed to bypass the college system unnoticed. Community colleges were charting new directions for post-secondary education in Canada, and without any traditions or mores of their own, they borrowed and modeled administrative structures and practices from the education and the business sector. Senior administrators were recruited from a host of disciplines and backgrounds according to the criteria set by the governing body of the institution (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986).

As in the 1970s, contemporary colleges attract and hire people who contribute a variety of experiences and knowledge from a multitude of disciplines to the organization. Traditionally, adult educators have been recruited to community colleges because of their expertise in a specific discipline (Selman et al., 1998). As a consequence, adult educators bring a diversity of professional values, beliefs, ideologies and philosophical perspectives

to their work. The culture of the organization is then influenced by individuals who may or may not share common beliefs about the purposes, function, or role of adult education, or about the intended purpose of the organization. Those responsible for the management and administration of a college system (often from the world of business and bureaucracy) contribute additional ingredients to this mix of values and beliefs (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986). The perceived lack of a unifying philosophy of adult education is not surprising given that adult educators operate in institutions that represent such an array of disciplines, educational backgrounds and management styles.

Hodgkinson (1995) articulates a value theory that describes a hierarchy of values and a conceptual model for determining the source, nature and function of values in an organization. His classification of values, and identification of value conflicts between administrative staff and individuals, requires that both organizational and personal values and ideologies be examined. In an effort to illuminate leadership behavior, Hodgkinson offers an analysis of values orientations as they are represented in organizations. He presents five fields of action where people, organizations and societies meet.

Organizational life is viewed as the interplay between personal value orientation, work group value orientation, organizational values, the values of the environment in which the organization operates and finally, the values of the larger culture or society to which the organization belongs. According to Hodgkinson, a leader's primary responsibility is to meet organizational values as articulated in goals and policies. The leader's personal values will not always be compatible with organizational values and as a consequence, leaders must often reconcile personal and organizational interests. This analysis of values orientations and the focus of administrators on meeting organizational values ends is

helpful in understanding the difficulty that adult educators can experience when a conflict or inconsistency between an organization's stated or implied values and personal values and beliefs arises. Greenfield (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993) writes that organizations are:

Nothing other than people doing and acting for whatever reasons seem adequate or desirable to them. Organizations are possible because people do, in the course of a day's work, simple acts that fulfil the will and intention of others whose vision of what should be – terrible or beautiful though that vision be – is thus made reality. (pp. 85, 86)

*Developing personal values and beliefs.*

Each member of an organization holds personal values and beliefs that serve to inform and guide behavior. Shaped and molded by life experience and circumstance, values and beliefs develop over the lifespan, and act to motivate, justify and govern our thoughts and behavior. Values and beliefs contribute to a personal ideology, and are evidenced and reflected in practice. Wolfensberger (1972), in describing the role of ideology in human management models writes:

Man's behavior is in good part determined by what I want to call his ideologies. By ideology, I mean a combination of beliefs, attitudes and interpretations of reality that are derived from one's experiences, one's knowledge of what are presumed to be facts, and above all, one's values. (Wolfensberger, 1972, p. 7)

Simply stated, values are those tenets that we hold to be important. They reflect the worth that an individual assigns to a thought, object, event or activity. Values are subjective, and as such, are composed of individual perceptions and constructions of reality. Beliefs refer to those tenets that a person holds to be true. They represent the

information a person has about a phenomenon or an object and are true because the person holds them to be true. Again, because each person's reality is subjective, a belief is true because that person perceives it as the truth. Values and beliefs are, therefore, socially constructed realities, and, unlike facts, cannot be empirically proven or disputed (Ricks, 1989). In order to gain some insight into how we develop individual values and beliefs, it is helpful to identify some of the factors that influence values and beliefs.

Ricks and Griffin (1995) identify the following as influences on our personal values and belief systems: family, geography, ethnicity, gender, religion, cultural background, and significant life events. Any or all of these can contribute to and impact those things that we hold to be important and true. For example, a child who is raised in a nuclear family where one parent decides to be at home with the children, might place tremendous value on the importance of a 'stay at home' parent. This in turn is translated into the belief that children of stay at home parents are better adjusted emotionally. Similarly, a child of parents who value education as a means to economic and social success may come to believe that education is the avenue to a full and complete life, and that knowledge is power. Our values and beliefs are formed and shaped by all of our life experiences. They shift and change over time based upon our experiences and interactions with others, on our knowledge and interpretation of events, and on the meaning we derive from these experiences. Our values and beliefs are reflected in our behavior and attitudes, in our personal and professional lives. They form the basis of our ethics or the rules by which we live (Ricks, 1989).

Theory about the development of social identity also acknowledges the influence of new information and experiences in shaping and altering individual values and beliefs.

The experiences and events that contribute to the development and redefinition of social identity development are complex, and are comprised of several developmental and learning stages. The process of examining and learning about one's social identity rarely occurs sequentially, or without considerable personal discomfort and discord. According to Hardiman and Jackson (1997), our social identity develops beginning with childhood socialization into the norms of the dominant society. In this stage, there is an acceptance of the values and beliefs of the dominant culture, and an integration of these into consciousness and behavior. In adulthood, individuals may encounter events or circumstances that conflict with previously held values and beliefs. This can prompt a transition to a stage of resistance, with new ideas and information challenging, and at times threatening, the person's existing world view. Established patterns of thoughts and behavior are examined and questioned in light of these new experiences. There is an increasing awareness of the contradictions that exist between previously held values and beliefs and new ideologies and perspectives. A final stage in the redefinition of social identity occurs when the individual is able to integrate new values and beliefs into her thoughts, feeling and actions. This process of internalization enables the person to include newly formed values and beliefs in everyday behavior, and with time, the integration will occur naturally and spontaneously (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997).

Hodgkinson's (1995) perspective of the development of values and identity stresses the relationship between values and lived experience. Values, according to Hodgkinson, are synonymous with meaning. He conceptualizes values, beliefs and ethics into three different typologies, each with distinctive characteristics. Type I values are transrational or absolute and cannot be verified or justified by logic or science. Type II are

rational values that rely on reason and are supported by social structures, and the laws, customs or traditions of a particular culture. Type III values are described as being sub-rational, as they are emotional in nature and self-justifying, and are grounded in emotion and personal preference. Like Ricks and Griffin (1995), Hodgkinson identifies the connections between values, beliefs, ethics, and behavior, while recognizing that these have meaning in our lives because our life experiences inform us that they are true and important.

*Understanding and responding to change.*

As has been previously described, each of us understands and interprets our world through a personal lens composed of experience, values and beliefs (Hodgkinson, 1995; Ricks and Griffin, 1995). We hold assumptions and understandings of the world that provide us with guidance and meaning in our every day actions and interactions. This is our 'lifeworld', or the perspective through which we interpret day-to-day events and activities (Welton, 1995c). In a climate of change, turbulence, and uncertainty, our ability to make sense of what is taking place requires that we view and understand our circumstances beyond the realm of the personal (Mills, 1959). Our capacity to participate in critical reflection and meaningful and honest dialogue about events and situations can be challenged by our ability to "connect the 'system' and the 'lifeworld'" (Habermas in Welton, 1995c, p. 141). In a climate of change, our ability to reflect critically upon events and decisions, and to look beyond the scope of our immediate environment is influenced by individual constructions of reality (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993). We filter our understanding of the world through our experiences, values and beliefs, all of which contribute to our ability to cope with and respond to changes in the structures in which we

operate. The complexity of the conditions and connections that exist between the individual and the system, particularly in turbulent and unstable environments, requires that we think beyond the personal and imagine the way in which these circumstances are experienced in the larger structures of the world (Mills, 1959).

We live, work, and socialize within organizations and systems where it can be difficult to sustain a "public space in which people discuss, in an ethical manner, matters of communal interest" (Harris, 2002, p. 38). As Habermas through Welton (1995c) reminds us, true communicative discourse requires open and honest debate, where all participants are presumed to have equal power and status. In organizations and systems, where power is not equitably distributed amongst all the members (Schein, 1992), cooperative and collaborative communication can be difficult to achieve and sustain. Organizations that are undergoing transition may face the additional challenge of members who are resistant to change, and who find comfort and stability in the patterns and practices of the past. Parker (2000), in his study of a company involved in technological and organizational restructuring, found that individual interpretations of an organization's history differ, and have a profound impact on employee response to change. The "divergent understanding about the organization's future [is] intimately related to the value [employees] place ... on its past" (p. 183). Our understanding of and response to change is influenced by our lifeworld and the lifeworld of the systems and structures in which we live and work. Personal vantage points incorporate past experience, values and beliefs, and influence our efforts to make 'sense' of change, and to incorporate new events and circumstances into our social constructions of reality (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997).

### *Summary*

In this chapter, connections between the original ideals of the adult education movement and the status of contemporary adult education have been forged. An exploration of the aims of the early adult education movement in Canada suggests that there was once a unity of purpose with respect to the imperatives of adult education. A review of Canadian and international contributions to the movement broadens our understanding of adult education as a means of promoting responsible citizenship, social action, and political participation. Concerns and issues related to contemporary practice and their implications for the future of adult education are summarized, offering insight into the ways in which the purposes of adult education have shifted and evolved. Lastly, an overview of organizational culture and values theory provides a framework for exploring the development of personal values and beliefs and the many factors that influence what adult educators hold to be true and important.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter is divided into four sections; the methodological framework for the study, the context in which it took place, methods utilized, and finally, issues relating to the quality of the inquiry. Philosophical, theoretical, and contextual parameters that shape and inform the study are identified and described.

### *Methodological Framework*

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Qualitative research is an interpretive and naturalistic approach to describing “moments and meaning in individual’s lives” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). As such, qualitative inquiry has been useful in the exploration of human and social issues, allowing researchers to build complex, holistic and compelling pictures of particular phenomena. A multitude of qualitative approaches exist, ranging from those containing distinct positivist features, to those narrative inquiries that seek to derive meaning from the experiences of a sole individual (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research encourages and supports inquiry in a natural setting and stories and personal accounts are viewed as legitimate sources of data.

For the purposes of this inquiry, a qualitative methodology using a case study approach is both appealing and appropriate. A case study approach allows for a detailed perspective on a topic, inductive data analysis, and the researcher’s own experiences and perceptions. The recognition of and tolerance for the researcher’s values, beliefs, experiences and biases in qualitative studies provides an opportunity for partial participation in the inquiry, and the researcher can focus on individual experiences and the meaning of those experiences. A case study approach in a qualitative research

framework allows the researcher to view and understand the process through her own lens.

*A case study approach.*

Many disciplines have used case study as a means of expanding knowledge about social issues and problems. Case study as a form of inquiry has been marked by “periods of intense use and periods of disuse” (Tellis, 1997a, p.2). In North America the methodology has been most closely associated with the field of sociology, where it is used to generate solutions, evaluate programs and enhance understanding of social issues. In addition to sociology, the disciplines of law and medicine employ case study approaches to illustrate and illuminate particular events and situations. The field of education is increasingly turning to case studies to describe, explore, or explain phenomena that can be best understood through the careful examination of events or experiences (Merriam, 1988). Because the researcher is “called upon to work with the situation that presents itself in each case” (Tellis, 1997b, p. 4), a case study approach can be applied or adapted to address an array of questions and issues that may be present in educational settings.

Criticisms of this approach include concerns about its dependence on a single case and on the inductive characteristics of data analysis. It has been counter-argued that in research, the relative size of the sample is not of primary importance. Rather, the parameters of the study and its ability to meet an established objective are of significance (Tellis, 1997a). In the literature, these parameters are referred to as ‘boundaries’, and Creswell (1994, 1998) describes those of case study as being time, activity or place. The bounded systems of this approach are also described as “those in which the boundaries

have a common sense obviousness” (Merriam, 1988, p. 9). This study is bound by time, activity, and place. In the nine-month period of the inquiry, data from a select group of adult educators at one post-secondary institution, Legare College, was collected, analyzed and interpreted. Specific phenomena were explored at a particular period in time and in a real life context.

*Features of this case study.*

The case study approach is particularly well-suited to the central research questions under consideration here, namely, “what do adult educators believe to be the purposes of adult education?” and “what barriers and supports do they experience in enacting their aims?” A significant portion of this research revolves around the spoken expression of values and beliefs; human perceptions which cannot be measured, observed or quantified. The case study design of the inquiry provides a means of presenting a detailed perspective on the topic, and allows for an in-depth exploration of individual experiences and perceptions. Through these processes and procedures, I was able to seek out and gain an understanding of perceptions and perspectives about a particular issue (Merriam, 1988). A case study approach also provides a framework for understanding and distilling the essence of a phenomenon, using data culled from personal stories and accounts. This subjective data is then analyzed, interpreted, compared and contrasted with archival documents.

This case study also has descriptive and instrumental characteristics (Creswell, 1998). Through the exploration of life experiences it attempts to expand knowledge and enhance understanding of the beliefs, values and actions of a select group of adult educators. The diverse and complex events and experiences that contribute to personal

values and beliefs are described, and the influence of researcher biases and the participants' personalities are taken into account (Merriam, 1988).

The subjective characteristics of the case study allow for the interpretation and exploration of the phenomenon in a way that honors and recognizes personal expressions as a legitimate form of investigation. There is no requirement that events or environments be controlled or manipulated in order to acquire valid, credible data as would be expected in a quantitative inquiry. Knowledge is enhanced in a manner that, more often than not, is viewed as lacking credibility in traditional, positivistic forms of research.

The heuristic nature of this approach, that is, the opportunity it offers for an enhanced understanding of the topic, also allows for new meanings to emerge from the examination of the data. There is the chance to learn, discover, and uncover new, as well as familiar, themes and concepts. Case study research acknowledges that the world is a "function of personal interaction and perception" (Merriam, 1988, p. 17) and that there is no single, objective reality. Each person generates an understanding of the world from a mixture of diverse experiences and circumstances, and as such, reality is individually constructed (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993).

Another feature of a case study approach is its use of multiple sources of data. Data is gleaned from participant interviews and, in combination with archival and living documents, are examined and interpreted in the hopes of creating a thick description that will enable readers to explore and understand a complex issue. Thick description is explained as the act of "interpreting the meaning of ... demographic and descriptive data in terms of cultural norms and mores, community values, deep-seated attitudes and notions" (Guba & Lincoln as cited in Merriam, 1988, p.11). As Tellis (1997b) notes, the

researcher must consider in her data, not only the voice and perspective of the participants, but also that of other actors and actions that are relevant to the case.

*Analyzing and interpreting data in case studies.*

The analysis of case study evidence is the least developed and therefore the most difficult aspect for researchers, according to Tellis (1997a). Case studies do not lend themselves to statistical analysis, and instead rely on techniques such as organizing evidence in a matrix of categories, creating data display or flowcharts, and pattern matching to examine relationships between variables. Tellis (1997b) describes four principles of quality analysis. First, one must show that the analysis relied upon all the relevant evidence. Second, all major rival interpretations should be included in the analysis. Third, the most significant aspect of the case study must be addressed, and lastly, the researcher's prior, expert knowledge is used to further the analysis.

Consideration has been given to these principles of quality research throughout the analysis and interpretation of this case study, beginning with triangulation of the data as a means of using all the relevant evidence. Triangulation is a term commonly associated with quantitative methods of data analysis. However, it can also be used to describe the way in which evidence in qualitative research is analyzed and understood (Tellis, 1997b). For the purpose of this inquiry, triangulation refers to a means of understanding the possible connections and links between the relevant evidence. It also evokes an image or metaphor that is useful in my understanding of how the multiple sources of data connect with one another. In qualitative research, case study has been referred to as a triangulated research strategy that uses specific protocols to ensure consistency and to provide alternative explanations (Tellis, 1997b). The "circular process

of comparing and contrasting what [is] known of the phenomenon from field, literature and personal experience becomes the triangulatory engine of qualitative inquiry” (Chenail, 1997, p.1).

The term ‘triangulation’ originates from the procedures used by sailors and surveyors to determine location by studying the intersection of three points (Chenail, 1997). Accurate measures and proper equipment allow people to navigate the world and erect complex structures with mathematical precision. In research terms, triangulation allows for the effective and meaningful-use-of-different-sets-of-data to study a particular phenomenon. The different meanings gleaned from a variety of data are studied so as to “situate the phenomenon and locate it for the researcher and reader alike” (p.1). In this study, the object of triangulation is to locate meanings, search for themes and patterns, contrasts and comparisons. Mathematical precision is not the goal of triangulation in this case. Rather, the purpose is to forge connections and link multiple sources of data in uncharted and, at times, choppy waters.

During the initial stages of the triangulation of the data accumulated in this inquiry, key words and phrases from interview transcripts and written documents were identified in an effort to create categories of similarity. Once identified, these categories were re-organized according to common themes. Next, participant responses to key questions were collated according to topic and issue, and similarities and differences were catalogued and identified. Metaphors and distinctive quotes from interviews were extracted from the data and organized into categories and themes, and were used to create temporary headings for the re-arrangement and placement of data. Three sets of categories were created; one evolved from key words in interviews and documents, a

second came from responses to key questions, and a third emerged from metaphors and distinctive quotes located in the narratives. The content of the categories was compared, and connections and similarities between the groupings became clear. Drawings, or mind maps were created to aid in the demonstration and analysis of those links. As Creswell (1998) notes, a visual picture of the categories can help to display interconnectedness.

The themes and the patterns that emerged in the data analysis, and the use of participants' own words to describe these, allowed for an interpretation of the data that would recognize and honor the contributions of the participants. It was important that the language that the women used to describe and convey their experiences was not lost in the analysis or interpretation of the data, and that individual differences and nuances were valued and recognized.

### *The Context*

The adult educators who practice at Legare College were chosen as the focus of this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, I am familiar with this environment and bring a particular knowledge and understanding of the institution and its people to this study. I have worked at this community college as a sessional, part time and continuing faculty member over the past six years and have had the opportunity to interact with adult educators from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds.

Secondly, as an adult educator with an employment status similar to that of some of the participants, I am considered an 'insider' (Anderson and Jones, 2000). This perception may have contributed to the willingness of the participants to speak openly and candidly with me, and to trust that the information provided during the interview portion of the study would be treated with the utmost respect.

Finally, particularly because the participants were invited to share life stories and to describe personal values and beliefs, it was important that a climate of respect and reciprocity be developed and maintained through the interview process. Therefore, another goal of the interview process, in addition to the collection of data, was to establish a collaborative and conversational atmosphere. It has been suggested that “relationships with the researched that stress relationships of collaboration...increase the participants’ willingness to share [and] may reduce the exploitative nature of research” (Young, 2000, Collaboration section, ¶ 2). In a discussion of feminist qualitative research, Reason explains that a collaborative approach provides for a deeper and clearer understanding and represents a “worldview that sees human beings as co-creating their reality through participation” (Reason as cited in Young, 2000, Collaboration section, ¶3). Young also identifies dialogue as a critical element in collaborative work, essential for generating a process of reflection and understanding when researcher and participants explore a phenomenon. This view of collaboration is consistent with a feminist perspective incorporated into a philosophy of social justice. It requires that I, as a researcher, treat all participants respectfully, value individual contributions equally, and promote and encourage dialogue and participation in the process.

### *The setting.*

Legare College is located in a coastal community and has been in existence for several decades. It began as an institution dedicated to adult studies, where academic programs in commerce and the liberal arts, and non-academic courses in effective communication, practical psychology, problem solving skills and community services were offered. In the 1970s, a provincial initiative known as the ‘meld’ resulted in the

merging of colleges with provincial vocational schools (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986). Legare College was the union of two well-established community schools. The early vision of community colleges as comprehensive, flexible and community responsive institutions was evident at this institution in its early years. However, a downturn in the local economy, combined with neo-liberal approaches to wiping out federal deficit (McQuaig, 1995) resulted in the college emphasizing programs that would provide marketable skills to graduates (College Website, 2002). Health related programming increased, as did technical and trade offerings. Several years later, the community's economic profile changed again as a consequence of a decline in manufacturing and secondary industries, resulting in the elimination of several college programs. Technological change as well, rendered some of the programs obsolete. Public funding was limited, and the number and variety of programs offered at the college were reduced and students were turned away, despite heavy demands for enrolment and extensive wait lists for many programs (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986).

Legare College responded to further regional economic shifts in the 1980s and 1990s by developing technical and career programs aimed at meeting the perceived needs of the local workforce. In the past years, few, if any, liberal arts or humanities programs have been created or expanded; development seems to occur in areas that government sponsors deem to be critical to enhancing the local economy. An emphasis on measurable and observable outcomes-based education favors those programs that focus on skill acquisition and development. Like many other publicly funded institutions, this college is undergoing a period of intense scrutiny, both internally and externally. Fiscal accountability and rationalization of resources are the indicators by which success is

measured, both by the administration and funding bodies (Provincial Government Website, 2001). In the weeks during which the data collection phase of this inquiry took place, significant budget cuts to programs and faculty were announced by the Legare College administration, and the work of some of the participants was directly affected. Changes in the provincial economic, social and political climate are challenging this college in its efforts to meet the diverse needs of a community whose demographic and economic status is shifting.

At Legare College, technical, applied, career and liberal arts programs are offered on different campuses. One campus supports students who are pursuing studies in the arts and sciences, and health and human services. The second campus focuses on offerings related to trades and technology. Each campus has a distinct culture. The trades and technology campus is situated on the outskirts of the small city, in a rural area. The buildings are purposefully built glass and concrete structures that house classrooms, technology and equipment. The second campus is located several miles from the first. It is apart from the downtown core of the city, in a well-established residential area. Set on several acres of parkland, this campus features a heritage building, the original structure of the college, around which an assortment of lecture halls, libraries, classroom buildings and offices have been erected. A mansion and other smaller homes have been refurbished and house a variety of campus and student services. These buildings are in various states of repair and disrepair. Paths, stairs, walkways and sidewalks connect the buildings, but there is no evident center or core to this mix of shapes and forms. Like the physical structure of the campus, college employees are scattered across the landscape, without obvious physical connection. Over 400 full-time-equivalent faculty positions are filled by

adult educators who work on a sessional, part-time or full-time basis (College Website, 2002).

The student population mirrors the physical environment of this campus, in that it is diverse and spread amongst various locations. Over 17,800 full time and continuing education students whose average age is 25 are enrolled at Legare College (College Website, 2002). Students attend classes during the day, evenings or on weekends; many others take advantage of distance learning opportunities.

*The participants.*

Several factors were taken into consideration when invitations were issued to potential participants. Initially I approached adult educators I believed would be interested in discussing values and beliefs about the purposes of adult education. My assessment of individual interest was based upon experiences I had with these adult educators in formal and informal meetings, on committees or through contributions they had made to specific projects or initiatives within the college. In selecting participants, I also gave consideration to the individual's discipline, and decided to invite those who had at some point in their careers, been involved in the humanities. This decision was based on the likelihood that the language of the study, for example that of values and beliefs, might be more familiar to those accustomed to the rhetoric of the humanities. Finally, I made an effort to secure a group of participants which was representative of the range of adult educators employed at Legare College. Participants therefore ranged in age, educational and experiential credentials, and cultural backgrounds. The five people who participated in this study are women. I had originally intended to include male adult educators and persons of diverse ethnic heritages in the inquiry. However, at the same

time that invitations were to be issued, difficult personal circumstances arose for the potential male participants, and I decided not to request their involvement in the study.

### *Interviews.*

A letter describing the study and its purposes was sent to five adult educators, inviting them to participate in a one-hour interview at a mutually convenient time and location (Appendix A). Mention was also made of the possibility of a second, follow-up interview. Participants were asked to initiate contact if they wished to be part of the study. All of the individuals I approached agreed enthusiastically to an interview. Meeting times were scheduled and first interviews took place over a period of two months.

Interviews can be a source of rich, descriptive data for the qualitative researcher. Tellis (1997a) notes that interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information. Strong interpersonal skills and effective communication strategies are critical to a positive and comfortable interview atmosphere (Creswell, 1998). For the purpose of this inquiry, interview questions that would elicit substantial information about individual values, beliefs and experiences were designed, and every effort was made to ensure that the participants were comfortable and at ease during the meetings.

Although I entered the interviews with pre-determined questions, these were modified or adjusted in response to the women's comments. Interviews followed a common format, and similar questions were posed in each session to ensure that all participants had the opportunity to offer their perspectives and insights about the key topics. 'How?', 'what?', and 'why?' questions were used to elicit broad responses, and to encourage participants to explore the topic as fully as possible (Tellis, 1997b).

My previous experience and knowledge of effective interviewing techniques and strategies were helpful in this phase of the data collection. I have conducted numerous interviews with professionals, employees and colleagues as a community consultant, facilitator, employer and adult educator, and was able therefore, to avoid many of the difficulties often experienced by novice interviewers (Creswell, 1998). Interviews, audio-taped with the agreement of the participants, were transcribed for further reference and analysis.

#### *Researcher participation.*

In this research, I assumed the roles of questioner, listener and observer. Following each interview, I recorded thoughts and reflections of what I had learned from the interview process. These notes served several purposes. They provided a means of reflecting on and evaluating the clarity and effectiveness of the questions I posed. They also aided me in preparing and revising the structure of the questions as the interviews progressed. By reflecting on the questions and on my ability to listen and respond to participants during the interviews, I was able to clarify and simplify questions. As well, in the process of recording my thoughts about my participation in the interview, I recognized and identified links and connections to theory that I had not previously considered. Audiotapes of the interviews documented the spoken word; the reflective notes chronicled my learning.

I also considered the complexities and challenges associated with site-based research (Anderson & Jones, 2000). My role in this inquiry is best described as that of an "insider" (p. 439), as this study takes place at a post-secondary institution where I have been employed as an adult educator. I hold an insider's knowledge of the organization,

and I wanted to gain an understanding of the participants' perspectives from an objective, outsider's point of view (p. 440). I was conscious of the need to separate my own actions and shifting perceptions about the topic I had chosen to explore from the experiences reported by the women who participated in the study. It was important to maintain a perspective of the site and of the participants that enabled me to go beyond those "taken-for-granted aspects of ... practice [that are possible] from an outsider's perspective" (Anderson in Anderson & Jones, 2000, p. 440).

While one must recognize that a conflict exists between the role of the researcher and the role of the insider, "valid and useful knowledge can be generated by insider ... research" (Anderson & Jones, 2000, p. 444). Although these authors recognize that there are methodological and ethical issues inherent in site-based research, they also acknowledge that practitioners have a "wealth of tacit knowledge" (p. 444), and those who conduct site-based research are "seldom rewarded for creating and disseminating knowledge that challenges the legitimization of institutional arrangements" (p. 446). Insider status in site-based research can be costly to the individual who wants to be true to her research, while maintaining a keen awareness that the final report will become part of the public record.

#### *Documents and reports.*

Documents are used in case study to corroborate evidence from other sources and to assist in making inferences about events (Tellis, 1997a). In this study, a review of the literature, and documents and reports relating to post-secondary education and the organization, available to the public, were collected and analyzed in an effort to substantiate and support the data provided by the participants. The source of the

documentation was varied, ranging from information available on the World Wide Web, to published reports and other public documentation. All contributed to the database for this study.

### *Judging the Quality of the Study*

“All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (Merriam, 1988, p. 163). Qualitative researchers have described the difficulties inherent in assessing validity and reliability in a case study inquiry (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Tellis, 1997a). All agree that a standard of quality must be achieved in qualitative research however, the means of accomplishing and ensuring quality varies according to the source. Further complicating matters, the terminology used to define quality is inconsistent among the various traditions of qualitative inquiry. In the following section, I describe the measures and standards used to gauge the quality of this case study.

#### *Measures of quality.*

Measures of quality must be defined in order to determine the worth of a qualitative case study. Creswell (1998) asks the question “how do we know that the qualitative study is believable, accurate and ‘right’?” (p. 193). This question poses some challenges for a researcher intent on exploring and discovering lived experiences. It is neither possible nor appropriate to determine accuracy in research data of this type, as the very nature of the research encourages participants to reflect upon and describe past experiences and events. As each of us constructs her reality out of lived experiences, there cannot be an expectation that an absolute and accurate truth about an experience exists.

Instead, this inquiry will use the standards of *credibility*, *confirmability* and *transferability* of the process, the data, findings and interpretation as means of evaluating and judging quality. *Credibility* refers to “confluence of evidence that...allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations and conclusions” (Eisner, 1998, p. 110). *Confirmability* refers to the ability of the researcher to show neutrality in the presentation of research findings, and *transferability* describes the usefulness or the value of the research in similar situations. As a researcher, I believe that the findings of this study can be applied to, and have meaning for other adult educators in post-secondary institutions, but it is the prerogative of the reader to make those connections, see those similarities and draw comparisons and conclusions about the *transferability* and value of the research.

This study relies upon triangulation of data as a means of analyzing and interpreting the data, but triangulation also serves a secondary purpose as a means of ensuring the credibility and confirmability of the evidence. Multiple sources of data have been analyzed, and the consistency of meanings and information have been compared and contrasted. One method of demonstrating neutrality, and thus the confirmability of the work, according to Merriam (1988), is to conduct an audit tracking raw data, researcher notes, analysis notes and interpretive data. However, neutrality can not be guaranteed, as qualitative research also recognizes the influence of researcher biases and experience on the interpretation of the inquiry.

The participant’s review of interview transcripts and the resulting revisions offer another means of assessing credibility and confirmability. Participants were invited to review and edit their transcripts. This provided an opportunity for the women to ensure that the contents of the interview were consistent with what they intended to convey. It

not only assisted in establishing authenticity of participants' thoughts and views, but it also ensured that I made every effort to be true to the voices of the women. However, these revisions may have also served to dilute the credibility, as each participant could choose to edit the words and the ideas conveyed, somewhat altering the portrayal of their views and perceptions. Four participants made changes to their transcripts. Words were changed or added in an effort to clarify or strengthen meaning in two of the transcripts. The others were edited for grammatical and place name errors.

Finally, the quality of this research will be judged by peer review. The women had the opportunity to review the final report, and their responses to the document were important factors in judging whether I have achieved the goals of credibility and confirmability. The availability of the final report to a broader audience of those involved in adult education is another mechanism by which the quality of the final report may be judged.

#### *Ethical considerations.*

In the process of designing this study, several ethical issues arose. All required careful and thoughtful consideration, and every effort was made to anticipate and avoid possible violations of ethical practice and standards in this research.

At the beginning stages of this inquiry, an ethical review of the research was conducted by the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Committee. This Committee is charged with reviewing and approving all research conducted by University faculty, students or staff involving human participants (Guidelines for Applications for Ethical Review of Human Research, 2001). As such, the proposal for this inquiry was examined, as were sample letters requesting participant involvement (Appendix A),

sample letters of consent for participants (Appendix B), sample interview questions (Appendix C), and a letter requesting permission to conduct the study at Legare College (Appendix D).

The Committee approved the study, as did the administrator responsible for research at Legare College, and with that I embarked upon the interview or field portion of the study. Several ethical considerations were raised in the planning and preparation for the interview process; the informed consent of the participants, confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy of the participants and the data.

Informed consent was sought and gained from all the participants. A written invitation to participate in the research was sent to each person. This letter stated the purpose and objectives of the research, and described the interview process, including the time commitment and location of the interview. The benefits and possible risks to participation were described, as were the safeguards designed to protect the confidentiality, privacy and anonymity of participation and data. The women were also informed that they could withdraw from the research or refrain from answering any of the interview questions at any time without explanation, and of the potential uses of the data. A second document, similar in nature and articulating the same issues of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity, was provided to each woman at the beginning of the interview meetings. The participants were asked to sign this document as a formal indicator of consent, and each received a copy for her records. The consent form was orally reviewed at the onset of each interview, and participants were given an opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification about issues related to the study, confidentiality or privacy.

The informed consent of the women was critical in this inquiry. Firstly, there were no obvious benefits to withholding information about the purpose or process of the inquiry to either the researcher or the participant. Indeed, it seemed that by informing the women as fully as possible about the research, comfort about participating in this research, and confidence in the project and in the researcher, would be enhanced. The use of interviews to elicit and generate information about personal values and beliefs requires that the participant have confidence in both the process and the person conducting the inquiry. As well, a personal philosophy about treating people respectfully and with dignity precludes me from engaging in any form of research that has elements of deception, or where full disclosure is not a key component. It is important that I demonstrate and evidence these values and beliefs in all aspects of my work, and that my stated beliefs are consistent with my actions.

Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of the participants and the data were protected during the data analysis phase of the research. Pseudonyms were used in transcripts to protect individual privacy, and quotes from participant narratives have been cited using pseudonyms. Information revealed about personal experiences has been edited to prevent identification of the individual. Audiotapes, transcripts and computer discs were stored in a secure location. The only person, other than me, who had access to the raw data was the thesis supervisor. The audiotapes, transcripts, computer discs and data on the computer hard drive were magnetically or electronically erased and deleted, shredded or destroyed following the successful defense of the thesis.

A final ethical consideration in this research was the possibility of a perceived conflict of interest. As an employee of Legare College, I have established professional

relationships with many adult educators and administrators who work at this institution. This has caused me to be careful and deliberate in my actions during all aspects of this study in order to reduce the likelihood that a conflict of interest would be perceived by either the participants or the organization. I made every effort to separate my dual roles of researcher and employee in consideration of the conflicts that can arise in insider researcher activities (Anderson & Jones, 2000). I did not want any person or group to think or expect that I would gain an unfair advantage in the workplace as a result of this research. As described previously in this chapter, those who conduct site-based research are unlikely to benefit personally or professionally when established organizational practice is probed or challenged.

Participation in this research was voluntary, and no risks were associated with involvement in the study. A full disclosure of the purposes and objectives of the study was made to those who participated, and no power relationships existed between the participants and the researcher. The women who participated were not selected for their ability to illustrate or advance a particular point of view (Merriam, 1988). As described previously, adult educators from the humanities were invited to be part of this study because of my perception that people from these disciplines might be more accustomed and familiar with the language of the study.

The ethical considerations described above have addressed the issues of informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, the voluntary nature of this research, and a personal commitment to ethical practice. These elements are representative of a broader and more encompassing personal philosophy; one that recognizes the inherent value of each

individual, and that is tolerant and accepting of individual diversity and difference. This forms the ethical framework within which I have designed and conducted this research.

#### *Difficulties and limitations of the research.*

A salient feature of case study methodology is its ability to generate rich, thick descriptions and analysis of a phenomenon (Merriam, 1988). I have attempted to achieve this ideal in this study however, time constraints have imposed some limitations on the depth of analysis and the scope of data collection achieved.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) point out that case studies have a tendency to oversimplify or exaggerate a phenomenon, and that this can lead readers to inaccurate conclusions. Although this is important to consider, it is equally important to recognize that in qualitative research, a conclusion is unlikely to be inaccurate. Any judgment reached by the reader can be viewed as that person's interpretation and construction of reality, no less valid than the reality that is understood and articulated by the researcher.

There is a suggestion in the literature that case study research is limited in its generalizability (Merriam, 1988; Tellis, 1997a). In this instance, generalizability will be the purview of the reader; he or she will understand and interpret the study in a way that is meaningful and relevant to his or her own lived experiences.

#### *Summary*

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the methodological framework for this qualitative study, along with a discussion of the ethical issues that I have encountered and considered throughout the research process. The findings of the inquiry are presented in the following chapters, with participant narratives providing the framework from which the research topic is analyzed and interpreted.

## Chapter 4 Original Ideals Translated for Today's World

The findings of this inquiry are presented in two chapters. Chapter four introduces the participants to the reader, and focuses on the first of two central questions addressed in the study, namely, “what do adult educators believe to be the purposes of adult education?” The women's personal stories and accounts provide the framework for exploring differences and similarities between participants' views, and offer some insight into the way in which experience influences practice, values and beliefs. Direct quotes inform and provide insight into the women's perspectives on the imperatives of adult education, and on the role of contemporary adult educators in a post-secondary institution.

The reliance on the women's words and the inclusion of quotations in both this chapter and the next is meaningful for two reasons. Firstly, the understanding that we attach to words and dialogue is filtered through our lived experiences, biases, values and beliefs. One of my tasks is to interpret the women's words and stories, but it is also important that the reader have an opportunity to read and derive meaning from the dialogue. Secondly, if the quality of the study is to be judged in part by its *credibility*, the evidence that allows the researcher to “feel confident about [her] observations, interpretations and conclusions” should be transparent to the reader (Eisner, 1991, p. 110).

The headings that separate and organize both this chapter and the next represent the essence of the questions asked in the interview portion of the study. Titles given the sub-headings reflect the themes and patterns that emerge from the data, and come in many instances, directly from the women's narratives.

### *Introducing the Participants*

Without exception, the five women who contributed to this study were generous in sharing their time, their thoughts, and the accumulated wisdom of over one hundred and ten years of experience in adult education. As a means of introducing the study and in an effort to set the tone for a conversation rather than an interview, each person was invited to talk about how she came to be at the college. The women traced the journey from their original disciplines through to their current positions at this post-secondary institution.

#### *Iris.*

When asked how long she had been at the college, Iris announced, “I’ve been there forever!” As an employee of 25 years, Iris has experienced the joys and challenges of a variety of positions within the college, some more satisfying than others. “I went into administration ... and was in there for five miserable years. I wasn’t cut out for it, so I headed back into the classroom real fast.” When she worked in an administrative position Iris “saw the other side, the other side of faculty, and the other side of administration too. It was disappointing for me.” She noted that after five years she “was so burned out ... and so upset that I just had to get out of there.”

Iris credits her passion for learning and teaching to a family heritage that valued and promoted formal education for its members. Several women of her mother’s generation attained Master’s Degrees in the 1920s and were recipients of prestigious national academic awards. Her mother, father, sisters, brothers, and extended family attended University, and her own children have received numerous academic honours and

scholarships. As a young girl in the 1950s, Iris was enthralled with the stories a friend's mother told about her summer studies in pursuit of a Master's Degree.

Iris attributes her love of teaching and education to a high school teacher and coach. He taught her many lessons, but the most valuable one involved learning how to connect with students. This teacher supported and mentored students, guiding them in their growth and development. Iris's philosophy of teaching and learning mirrors much of what her high school teacher modeled for her. Indeed, one of Iris's many gifts as an adult educator is her ability and desire to connect with students, offering them the support and guidance they need and seek. Our conversation was peppered with anecdotes about learners whom Iris had mentored over the years. As she describes it, she allows one student a year "to really need" her.

There is always some student who just needs a bit of support, encouragement, adult talk time. They just need to know that they can make it in the big pond....

They need someone to vent with, somebody that's not family, somebody that doesn't make any claims on them.

Iris has taught children and adults throughout her professional working life. She has held administrative positions, but clearly expresses a preference for classroom teaching. As an adult educator she has been instrumental in the development, implementation, and delivery of new and alternative programs, and has also taught in established and traditional disciplines. Her overriding concern and interest however, is for the student, and this is exemplified in her description of the ideal retirement party. As she explained, it would be a student-only affair.

*Opal.*

Opal describes herself as a “lifer” when speaking about the number of years she has worked at the college. Since arriving at this institution more than 20 years ago, she has been instrumental in the development and evolution of practices and programs promoting the welfare of children and adult learners. Opal has had many administrative experiences and opportunities throughout her career, but has chosen to focus her talents and energies in the areas of curriculum development, team leadership, and classroom instruction. Like Iris, Opal has made a deliberate decision to remain in the classroom.

That’s where I come alive, where I feel that I can really make a difference in terms of empowering learners .... [The classroom] is the grassroots arena of what this place is about. That’s what the college is about for me, it’s about the wonderful teaching-learning process.

Opal is passionate about her work, and speaks with great emotion when describing her interactions with students. She says that she is “truly blessed” to have work that she loves, and speaks with ease and confidence about her philosophy and values.

I want to wear my values on my sleeve - have them out there and remind me about how I want to live my life ... everything I do within my teaching should be my vision of how I want humankind to be.

Opal describes how deeply affected she was by her experiences as a novice teacher. She talks of challenges she encountered, and of dilemmas that altered and shaped her understanding of the teaching and learning process. “Teaching is all about connecting with your group of learners, where are they at, what interests them, what do they bring to this process? Because nobody comes as a blank slate.” This perspective was strengthened

for Opal during her own experience as an adult learner. As a graduate student in a program with a social justice perspective, she found the anti-bias approach to the courses to be a major catalyst for personal growth.

[The program] gave me the strength, it empowered me to be able to be out, to have that direct my life in a more evident way and to be manifested in my teachings. To be really up front about who I am in the world .... It's like being driven. Driven, driven, driven. I see it everywhere, I bring it in.

Opal's desire to live and act by a distinct set of principles and values is founded in a commitment to social justice, and a philosophy that encompasses respect, dignity, and tolerance for diversity. Living and acting by a set of principles and values is paramount to her personal and professional integrity.

*Rose.*

Rose, too, began her post-secondary career at the college more than 20 years ago, developing a new program to meet the changing needs of a traditional health care discipline. She has been involved in the design and evaluation of several provincial curricula, instructional activities and, over the years, she has assumed several administrative roles. Rose has also functioned as a consultant and a facilitator both within the organization and externally. The scope of her work reflects her interests in education and writing. She has continued with her own learning as an adult, completing two masters' degrees. As Rose said, "I felt the need to expand myself .... [After] every developmental crisis, I go back to school." She notes that she did well in school, and she views education as a positive experience, one that facilitates personal development. Her earliest post-secondary experience as a student was in a traditional discipline where she

wasn't "allowed to question anything" and "that's probably why" she wanted to "go to University." Rose recalls an elderly family friend who "wasn't sure that [she] should go to University, because he heard that when you get there you start questioning religious beliefs and things." As Rose explains, those are the "very reasons" that one should go on to post-secondary education.

*Ruby.*

Ruby's career in adult education, like that of Iris and Rose, spans more than two decades and she too, refers to herself as a "lifer." Her career in adult education has been diverse, from working with students in the classroom and the community, through to various administrative and consultative roles within the institution. She is active in regional and provincial initiatives related to adult learners and the education of adults, and is immersed in her own postgraduate work.

Ruby recalls that her early family experiences were based on strong core values that were further solidified during girlhood activities in the community. As a teenager, she was a camp counselor and was involved with several youth groups and voluntary associations. Weaving core values that highlight respect for individuals and diversity into her work as an adult educator seems to be very natural for Ruby, and she describes herself as someone who functions "intuitively." In her early years of teaching, those core values of respect for individuals and diversity provided a firm grounding for her work. The philosophy embedded in the curricula of the program where Ruby first taught also had a strongly articulated base in humanitarian values, and she recalls that this curricula was considered to be progressive and innovative for its time. These values guided the teaching and assessment strategies, and although she hadn't "internalized a lot of [the philosophy]"

when she first began teaching in the program, over the years and with increased experience, Ruby began to "reflect more, experience more, read more. I began to fine tune those [values]. As I experienced and as I practiced ... over the next couple of years, I began to see how it meshed with what I believed."

Ruby reports that she had "excellent, excellent mentors and role models." These people, she maintains, provided her with "a jumpstart in terms of my educational practice, no question." All of the educational programs in which Ruby has worked have had strong philosophies and values that guided curriculum and program development.

*Violet.*

Like Ruby, most of Violet's work at the college has been in programs where core values of humanitarianism are explicitly articulated and imbedded in the curricula. Violet's career path has taken many twists and turns, but at the center of her work has been her concern for social justice. From her beginnings as a teacher working primarily with children, through her years designing and evaluating curricula, teaching adults, and involvement in community development initiatives, Violet consistently strives to achieve inclusion for all in education. The concept of 'community' is a constant theme in her conversation, and her recollections are filled with examples of individual and collective advocacy efforts in which she has participated. When asked to describe people or events that influence her practice, she responded:

I've thought about what influences me, and how that comes to be. It [community action] just seemed to be a strong part of my personality from early on ... as a kid. And I really can't explain that because my family really liked to keep their heads

down and not draw attention to themselves, and they were always worried that I was going to.

Violet described her early teaching experiences, and her first exposure to community advocacy initiatives. She became involved with a political party that had a strong social justice perspective, and was present for the birth of a community college. All of these experiences led her “to believe that you could accomplish just about anything if you worked together.”

As a long-time employee, Violet has contributed to college life in many ways, both as an instructor, and as an active member of the college community, locally and provincially. Although she has assumed many roles at this post-secondary institution, Violet emphasizes that she is a teacher first and foremost, and that the word ‘teacher’ has a particular meaning for her. She feels strongly that it not only describes her professional identity, but that it also defines her role as an adult educator.

Facilitator is such a weasel word! Teaching implies participation between the teacher and the learner ... I see facilitating as part of a teacher role, but not the major role .... I think as a teacher you take on more responsibility for your student learning, you take on more caring and more accountability.

Violet has continued her own personal and professional development through a variety of formal and informal learning experiences, including the completion of a Master’s degree. Despite the implications of budget cuts to the department where she works, Violet is optimistic about the future. “I feel challenged to do [things] still ... I’m feeling optimistic that maybe this college, after 31 years can realize its potential.”

A breadth of family, educational, and work experiences influence and inform these adult educators' work at Legare College. The array of life experience and events described by the women in this study mirror those identified by Ricks and Griffin (1995) as potential influences on the women's values and beliefs. As these authors explain, and as evidenced in participant narratives in this study, values and beliefs, shifting and changing over time, form the basis upon which we establish our rules and ethics. The women's stories illustrate the values and beliefs they hold about learners, social justice, and lifelong learning, and contain elements of the Social Gospel that were hallmarks of many of the adult education movements of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. That is, the values reflect those features of humanity that encourage social responsibility and caring for others (Faris, 1975; Kidd, 1973).

### *The Imperatives of Adult Education*

The literature pertaining to adult education is replete with philosophical arguments and empirical evidence about its many functions and purposes. Many have contributed to the debate about a seeming erosion in contemporary practice of the original values of the movement (Heaney, 1996; Kerka, 1996; Welton, 1998). In keeping with these authors, the women in this case study discuss and debate the multiple purposes of adult education through the lenses of very personal and profound experiences. Three dominant themes emerge from their narratives. The first stresses the value of education in improving life chances in employment and career opportunities through the attainment of credentials and the acquisition of targeted skills. The second views adult education as preparation for citizenship and participation in a civil society, and the third theme, which

merges the individualistic and social imperatives of adult education, is conceptualized as thought and empowerment, leading to social action.

*Education for a better life.*

The ideal of adult education as a means to a better and more abundant life is evident throughout the adult education literature (Coady, 1938; Kidd, 1975). Like the pioneers of the adult education movement in Canada, the women in this study express the belief that education, defined in this case as a stepping stone to employment and to individual economic viability, can be the means to a better life.

All but one of the women have spent the majority of their time at Legare College working within departments where the emphasis is on preparing learners for specific careers in the humanities. The goals and outcomes of the programs in these departments reflect the skills, knowledge, and abilities that are needed for employment in particular disciplines. It is not surprising then, that four of the women identify the improvement of life chances and individual economic circumstances as an aim of education.

Iris teaches a first year University course in a non-traditional manner. She embraces a new curriculum that exposes students to contemporary works reflecting cultural, sexual, racial and religious diversity. She describes what she does as teaching “nitty, gritty thinking” that emphasizes to students the relationship between critical thinking skills and the work that they will be doing when they graduate. Iris tells students why the knowledge and skills they are studying are important to their future work. She makes a clear connection between theory and practice, and stresses the utility of the skills the students are learning. As Iris explained:

that's what I'm teaching them for - life, for earning their living .... I teach in the context of you're one of the most important people in our society. You have to be going in front of other professionals with specific language and precise thoughts.

Learning for life, and the application of specific skills and knowledge to a discipline also factor heavily in Ruby's view of the purpose of adult education. For her, job and career preparation are key elements of adult education, and educators should assist "people to prepare themselves [to] contribute in some way, to a discipline or field of study." Learners enjoy a better life, according to Ruby, as they have acquired skills and knowledge that increase their likelihood of engaging in and in contributing to meaningful work.

The link between education and increased personal and employment opportunities is also evident for Rose. Like many Canadians of her generation, a post-secondary education provided her with the means to better life than that of her parents. Rose also identifies the importance of credentialing in enhancing career and salary levels.

I had a better life than my mother in terms of the kind of work I've been able to do and even the level of pay that I've gotten for it because I have credentials. It's still pretty strongly associated with any sort of post-secondary education, degrees, people tend to do better.

In high school, Rose's experience was that further education was "very much pushed on [her] as a way to a better life, and it was." She believes that in addition to improving employment opportunities, education enhances personal "evolution and development." Education can be the means to a better 'internal' life when learners are exposed to and acquire new knowledge. Rose also recognizes that the purpose of post-

secondary education can change through the lifespan. In early adulthood, the purpose is to “find a role for yourself in society.” Reflecting on her post-secondary experience, Rose explains that going to University was “partly to increase my knowledge but it was also to prepare myself for a life, to prepare myself to enter the work world. To find a place where I could have a life.” In later life, according to Rose, the purpose of education changes. It can be “more just to open up your horizons ... be broader in your view of things and maybe even open your horizons around job opportunities.” She believes that “you can be a broader learner when you’re developmentally farther along than maybe when you’re younger” and notes the important role that education has in preparing adults of all ages to “find work, find a role.” Rose observes that as her own child approaches graduation from University, her daughter is becoming more concerned with “what [she] is going to do with this [degree].” As an instructor, Rose has worked with many students who are “changing careers in their 40s and 50s”, and for whom education provides an avenue for finding work and a role in society.

For Iris and Ruby, education as a means to a better life is comprised of two elements: improved economic or career status, and an increased ability to contribute to or participate in society. In Rose’s view, education not only enhances employment options, but it also provides people with an identity, a way of expressing and defining who they are in society, based on a profession or a career. All of these adult educators appear to recognize a developmental passage from learning-for-earning, to learning-for-life; a journey that provides learners with the opportunity to enjoy and partake in what Coady (1939) referred to as an abundant life.

*Education for citizenship and a civil society.*

Another imperative of adult education, as described by several of the participants, is education for citizenship and a civil society. This theme links the classroom learning experience with a person's ability to participate in society as an informed citizen. Ruby, Violet and Opal believe that preparation for citizenship and meaningful participation in society evolve, in part, from the diversity of experiences learners are exposed to during the formal educational process. From these experiences, learners acquire an awareness and an understanding of their responsibilities as citizens. This view of education for citizenship also shares some of the features of the Antigonish movement. That is, the development of skills and the acquisition of knowledge are viewed as strategies or tools to promote civic consciousness. The people of Antigonish created and implemented initiatives that improved both the economic and the social well being of the community (Faris, 1975; Kidd, 1973). For the women in this study, the values, skills and knowledge that students acquire during the learning process offer a foundation for meaningful participation in and contribution to a civil society.

Ruby, for example, observes that the acquisition of effective interpersonal and communication skills in the classroom, applied to practice situations, enables learners to become more aware of their responsibilities as citizens. Skills and knowledge provide learners with the information and confidence they need to become contributing members of society. She saw “the learning happen, come alive [in clinical settings]. Certainly in the classroom, knowledge and abilities were exchanged and developed, but I saw the learning happen in practice.” Ruby noticed that through this process, students were “becoming more responsible, becoming more informed, becoming more confident, that burgeoning

awareness that they were making important contributions to society.” For this adult educator, the responsibilities associated with informed citizenship are critical components of the educational process.

Not only do Ruby and all the other adult educators view education as preparation for a career and citizenship, they also recognize that it offers a means by which learners can better situate themselves in the world. Violet, for instance, states that adult education should enable people to be “economically viable whether that’s through career training or enough education, [gaining] enough personal ability to participate in society.” For Violet, such participation is of paramount importance. She views the creation of a civil society as a primary purpose of adult education. In her vision, such a “society is one where everybody is not just included, but also participating.” As an adult educator concerned with issues of social justice, Violet advocates for the ‘meaningful’ participation of all in the community, and supports the rights of all persons to engage in the duties and the privileges of citizenship.

Opal, too, ensures that her students are aware of the significance of their work in contributing to a civil society. She believes that by virtue of their profession, they will do much more than participate in society; they will perform a critical function.

I say to students, ‘what *would* you be doing?’ There is no better work than to be working with [youth]. That’s the most important job in society, never mind what anybody says, or how they devalue it. You have to know that it’s *the* most important work. And what you are going to do is going to make a difference, just in the same way that working toward social justice makes a difference.

Opal embraces a global view of citizenship, and communicates the impact of cultural and societal values on education to her students. She prompts them to question the values of their profession, and to examine them in light of their experiences in the Canadian educational system. She asks students what it is that those values “say about what we want Canadian citizens to look like? What do you want those values to be in terms of shaping human potential?” For Opal, the “system needs to reflect how I want the world to be, my vision of humankind, not me, Opal Owens, but myself and all my colleagues, this generation, this grouping. How do we want the world to be?”

Opal’s philosophy reflects a global perspective, one that views education in its broadest form. According to Greene (1995), educators need to acknowledge “the worth and power of different cultures and civilizations” (p. 11) and to deconstruct and examine the past in order to better understand the world in which we live. It seems that by challenging students to reflect on the ‘system’, Opal is prompting them to search for meaning and value in life, to look at the world with a critical eye, and to think about what the world *should* look like.

The development of both personal and work skills is crucial to an individual's ability to participate in, and contribute to, society as understood by these participants. Exposing students to diverse experiences, linking theory to practice, and creating an awareness of the world beyond the classroom, combine to give learners the knowledge and the ability to participate actively in society. Not only does the acquisition of skills and competencies contribute to participation in a civil society, but it also increases learners’ understanding and appreciation of their role as active and informed citizens. This perspective reflects Welton’s (1998) view that adult education should prepare people for

active participation in civil life. As both Welton and Lakeland (1994) note, learners must be prepared to participate in critical reflection, discourse, and action in order to critically examine the world in which they live.

In the following discussion, the adult educators who participated in this study offer their views on the linkages between learning, thought, and action. They describe the way in which adult education fosters both self and critical reflection, and consider whether adult education should be concerned with producing change agents.

*Education for empowerment, thought, and action.*

The theme of education as a means to personal empowerment, thought, and action is evident in the narratives of each of the participants. The women describe the link that exists between adult education for the dual purposes of personal betterment and meaningful participation in society. For these adult educators, learner confidence, a confirmation of personal values and beliefs, and the development of critical thinking skills are the means by which students can take action, either for personal gain or for social action. For some participants, the outcome is a graduate who will “make a difference in the world.” Others view the end result of adult education as personal development.

According to Scott (1998), two types of transformation, namely, personal and social, can occur in adult education. If the nature of the change is such that it “causes a fundamental shift in people’s beliefs and values and ... include[s] a social vision about the future” (p. 178), then it can be considered to be transformational. The women in this study identify personal and social transformation as both aims and by-products of education, and for some, the purpose of the change is social action. For those who view

social action as a primary aim, a shift in learner values and beliefs and an increased knowledge base can be the catalyst for action.

For Opal, such personal transformation is a critical imperative of adult education. She links thinking, knowledge, and action to personal transformation, and clearly defines her role as a facilitator in this process. She recognizes that each student has values and beliefs that must be honoured, and believes that her role is to encourage and support students to be confident about their beliefs. Empowerment comes from learning and from the validation and strengthening of already existing values and beliefs. In her experience, in order for students to move from thinking to acting, they must experience personal empowerment. She “facilitate[s] their ability to be independent, to be independent thinkers and feelers” by challenging them to question assumptions about their world and its culture. Opal does not believe that she bears the sole responsibility for promoting independence in students, or that students will become independent because of a “connection” to her or to any other teacher. Rather, “it’s about their empowerment to recognize that they came into this situation with thoughts, feelings, knowledge, the ability to act and they’re going to leave it somehow changed.” Empowering students will enable them to take action and “it’s the action bit that’s going to make a difference when they’re out in the world.” This is akin to Hardiman & Jackson’s (1997) description of the formation of social identity and of the internalization process associated with personal transformation. Change in one dimension of life affects other arenas, and the integration and application of values and belief systems into every day behavior becomes natural and spontaneous. This transformation occurs through a series of stages, beginning with a child’s socialization to the norms of the dominant society. In adulthood, events and

circumstances are encountered that may prompt the transition to a stage of 'resistance' for the individual (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). During this period, information or experiences that conflict with previously held views may cause existing beliefs to be challenged and at times, threatened. An individual will redefine her social identity to include values and beliefs that may be contradictory to those established in childhood. In the final stage of the transformation process, the newly discovered values are internalized, integrated into natural behavior, and the person is able to act "without having to think about what they are doing" (p. 28). The development of a social identity is not an easy or effortless journey. It can be an arduous and painful period of personal development, and seldom progresses in tidy, sequential steps.

Ruby has a different perspective on the transformation from thinking to acting. She suggests that exposure to a diverse college environment and access to new ideas readies people for social change. Learners acquire the ability to think critically about issues, integrate new experiences into their thinking, and are thus open to the possibility of social participation and action. Meeting people "of different races and abilities and cultures ... [will] expose and enrich them, and prepare them to move in the direction of...social change in a positive way."

Ruby describes the way in which her perspective on the purposes of adult education has evolved over time and with experience. Initially, she identified preparation for a job or a career as a key element of education. After several years as an adult educator, she saw "how much students grew through the process of learning and accelerating their abilities and their knowledge capabilities and their skills." She recognized that they were in the process of self-development through their careers, and

that they were also developing personally. She “felt very strongly that [she] could influence, support, facilitate ... students critically looking at their assumptions and their values and their place in life.”

Like the other participants, Ruby stresses the role of adult educators in facilitating personal growth and development. For both Opal and Ruby, the educator guides the transformative function of adult education. Other participants suggest that it is the student who views education as transformative. Iris maintains that “kids think education’s transformative. They think they’ve changed, ‘Can’t you see the changes? Oh, man. I’m a different person!’”

Knowledge and skills can transform and empower and, as Rose remarks, these abilities can enable students to “go out into the world and do things, speak about things in ways that they couldn’t when they came in.” She observes that people’s self-perceptions change during the educational process, and that “they’re different people when they have a skill or a trade or the ability to do something they didn’t have before.” Rose also observes that adult education can “open up your horizons, [allowing you to] be broader in your view of things .... It really opens you up to thinking about ... and seeing things differently.”

This participant, who also understands empowerment as a positive, developmental process, does not view social action as an essential outcome of adult education. She does note, however, that social change can be an incidental consequence of increased personal knowledge.

I don’t think that’s absolutely critical to us, producing graduates that are going to be change agents out there or something. It would be different, it would be good if

we could also see people that are thinkers, and better decision makers .... I'm not a social action kind of person, but I think educated people make better citizens.

Rose notes that although the focus of education is not necessarily on social change, it does have a bearing on it. "We've started creating a populace that's more thoughtful, makes better decisions, questions, thinks on its own." Rose is confident that, in the long run, "it's going to make a difference in the community and the whole social structure." Rose further explains that preparing students for citizenship or social change is "very important, and ... it happens even when we don't consciously try to do it. If we're just teaching students to think and to question and to be confident members of the society, then we are making a change."

Education's role in empowering learners also emerges in Iris's perspective of the purposes of adult education. She expresses empowerment as a student's confidence and ability to think about the world in a broader way. The notion that adult educators can empower students, confirming for them the importance of thinking and acting beyond the walls of the institution, is captured in Iris's description of her teaching style.

It's to confirm for them that the world of ideas is an important world. I don't lecture, I don't do the telling because I want them to go away feeling like they know how to be able to be a thinker.

The concept of empowerment as expressed by the participants suggests an enhanced capacity to take control of one's life, make informed decisions, and move toward participation and action in society. It is a positive and enabling outcome of the learning experience. The meaning that the women attach to the word 'empowerment' is similar to Usher's (1987) definition, where empowerment is described as "feeling better

about oneself, more competent, more in control in an individual or collective sense” (p. 187).

The relationship between personal transformation and social change as described by the participants, reflects one of the core tensions identified in contemporary adult education literature. Some male writers, including Lakeland (1994) and Heaney (1996), argue that the individualistic and social aims of adult education are detrimental to a social consciousness, and that they serve to maintain the status quo and dominant power structures. Heaney (1996) suggests that even when social change is an identified imperative of adult education, it works to preserve the status quo and to perpetuate existing social and power systems. Education for the purpose of enhancing social responsibility is viewed with distrust, as a means of “reinforcing the privilege of the dominant classes” (p. 11). Heaney also criticizes the notion of education for empowerment, and submits that “the ‘power’ in empowerment is a euphemism for adaptation and conformity, an ability to speak in harmony with a normative grammar and to act in a manner consistent with dominant mores” (p. 13).

This view of power and empowerment is contradicted by those who, like the adult educators in this study, are concerned with issues of inclusion and the marginalization of women, minorities and vulnerable persons in our society (Hart, 2002; Thompson, 1997). Opal and Violet in particular, seem to recognize a perspective of empowerment that is reflective of a feminist approach to adult education, teaching and learning (Hart, 2002). These women incorporate the tenets of a radical tradition of adult education into their practice, an approach which “judges ‘the usefulness’ of knowledge in relation to its contribution to assisting social and political change” (Thompson, 1997, p. 143). Useful

knowledge, according to Thompson, is that which “assists ... [us] to confront the everyday experiences of inequality and power relations which help sustain the logic and the authority of the status quo” (p. 120). The “construction of more complete, truthful knowledge” (Hart, 2002, p. 125) is possible when individual experiences are validated, and existing “social-economic hierarchies and divisions” (p. 124) are challenged. The worth of women’s lived experiences and day-to-day realities needs to be acknowledged, as these are integral to the transformative learning process (Clover, 1995). Both Opal and Violet recognize the importance of validating learner experience, and of raising awarenesses of the power structures and inequities inherent in our society. These educators seem to understand empowerment and power as a “process in which people transform themselves personally and collectively, ... linking the personal domain with the public domain” (Albrecht & Brewer, 1990, p. 5). Their perspective on education for empowerment, thought and action, suggests that learners are empowered when they are able to recognize the discrepancies that exist between the social, political and economic lives of disenfranchised citizens and members of the dominant culture. As Perry (2000) notes, education can be a source of empowerment for women, a means of gaining the confidence needed to realize goals and to challenge the dominant culture. By integrating knowledge, skills and abilities with an understanding of the unequal distribution of power and authority in our society, learners can be empowered to take control of their own lives and to act for social change.

The educators in this study believe that education for thought, action and empowerment propels learners to ‘make a difference’ or, at the least, view the world through different eyes. There seems to be a difference however, in the women’s

perception of the purpose of social change. For some, social justice and advocacy on behalf of vulnerable or marginalized citizens is the goal. Learners develop an understanding of self and others in local and global contexts, and can then act to effect change. Education, then, becomes an instrument for social action. In contrast, Rose, Ruby and Iris suggest that although education can play a role in facilitating social change, that is not its primary function. As learners become more informed and aware, they are better able to act in concert with the norms of the majority world, and to contribute to society.

### *The Adult Educator's Role in Preparing Learners for Life*

All of the women involved in this study believe that they have a role in preparing learners for life, and that many of the skills for life are the same skills that are necessary for work. The differences in participants' views of their role and responsibility in this arena become apparent when they describe the way in which learning for life occurs. For some, the two take place concurrently, with students applying the knowledge they acquire to life outside the classroom. Others describe the active role they assume in encouraging students to make the connection between skills for work and skills for life.

#### *Coaching beyond the institution.*

Iris understands her role in clear and defined terms. She readies learners for participation in social and intellectual realms, and identifies a specific objective for students who complete her course. Although the goal may appear to be simple, it requires that students integrate and apply sophisticated cognitive and expressive skills to a particular activity. Iris explains that she has a role in preparing students for "little life", for "coaching beyond the institution." She tells students that her "goal for them is ... that they [will be able to] run the best book club on the block, ... they [will be able to] read a

book independently, and ... [be able to] discuss it with their friends in a worthwhile way.”

Rose describes other practical applications of the learning that occurs in the classroom. She observes that students merge and integrate skills for work with skills for life, and often comment on how they will use the knowledge acquired in the classroom in their home life. For Rose “it’s never been a problem ... to see how they overlap, how preparation to become a good caregiver teaches you skills and awarenesses that are really useful anywhere.”

Violet explores her role in readying students for the world beyond the college and, like Rose, links the skills needed for life with those needed for work. In Violet’s experience, a student who is successful in life will succeed at work. She believes that “skills for life are skills for work, and the skills necessary for a particular job are more easily learned if those other skills of life are well in place, a student is confident and capable.”

For these adult educators, skills for life and work are not distinct or separate entities. Their role is to establish and teach these skills in the classroom environment. The learner will then apply them to life beyond the institution. The demonstration of acquired skills and competencies may be the measurement of learning in the classroom however, the integration and application of this knowledge to life outside the college environment becomes the true indicator of learning. Although the curricula in the programs where these women work is, for the most part, competency-based, these educators recognize that students must be able to function effectively not only in the work world, but also in the social world. Peruniak (1998) warns of competency-based education, noting that

competence “without heart is an empty vessel” (p. 327). Educators must ensure that subjective and qualitative measures of learning are not ignored or dismissed in competency-based curricula, for the absence of those dimensions will make it difficult for students to function adequately beyond the institution.

*Bridging and connecting.*

Opal too, sees life and work skills as intertwined, and understands her role as one of deliberately facilitating and supporting learners to connect learning to life. She is an active participant in the process. In this discussion of her role, Opal highlights the collaborative nature of her interaction with students, and explains that bridging lived experiences with the content of the program promotes the learner’s awareness of self and others. Reflective thought and action lead students to a deeper understanding of their values and beliefs, and of the community in which they live and work. As Opal explains:

For me [this means facilitating] someone’s examination of their thoughts and actions. That’s the process, the facilitation of their thoughts and actions. And for them to uncover, ... as part of this collaborative process between teacher and learner, ... who they are in terms of how they’ve been shaped by all the different contexts of their development.

Opal emphasizes that her priority is to assist students to “connect who they are in their culture, their language, their spirituality, to their community, to living their life. It’s about connections!” She recognizes that all lived experiences are mediated through the self in interaction with others, and that lived experiences influence all subsequent thought and action (Ricks & Griffin, 1995). Adult education is viewed as more than a simple transfer of knowledge to the learner. The integration of specific knowledge with lived

experiences generates an awareness of the powerful connections that can be made between learning and life.

*Playing well together.*

The role of adult educators in preparing learners for both life and work is reflected in Violet's narrative. She identifies the ingredients of "skills for life" and stresses that interpersonal and communication skills are a necessary prerequisite for working and living well with others. "I think a lot of what we do as adult educators in our class is really preparing people to develop good communication skills for life, to play well together, to work in teams." Students must learn to "be tolerant of diversity, to appreciate, to recognize skills and areas where their fellow students would benefit." For Violet, "these are the first order of things for work - to communicate, to work together."

Similarly, Ruby sees the importance of aiding students in the development of skills that promote effective relationships with others in the classroom and the work environment. This prepares learners for supportive roles in work and life, and for active and informed citizenship. According to Ruby, encouraging students to share resources and ideas, to work together and to learn about each other, will help them to develop the skills necessary to work as a team. Adult educators accomplish this goal by "promot[ing] and facilitat[ing] active learning amongst our student groups and ... co-operative and collaborative activities and strategies."

All of the participants recognize that they have a role in, and a responsibility for, preparing learners for life. Adult educators create the atmosphere and environment for learning, and the individual student then decides how to use the knowledge he or she has acquired. Regardless of the department or discipline where these women work,

preparation for life beyond the institution is viewed as a key responsibility. For all, the integration of knowledge about a particular field of study, incorporated with an understanding of self and others, are vital elements in the preparation of learners for life. This reflects a philosophy of adult education that stresses the active role of the learner in the learning process, and in creating and defining the worth of what is learned (Lindeman as cited in Briton, 1996). Adults who engage in active learning, and who can make connections between learning and life, are more likely to be empowered in the “economic, social, cultural, and political spheres of life” (Usher, 1987, p. 188).

Individual perceptions of what it is that the learner does with acquired knowledge offer additional insight into previously described beliefs about the purposes of adult education. When the adult educator leaves the learner to decide the way in which knowledge is used, it seems that the individual imperatives of adult education prevail. For those educators who actively forge links between skills learned in the classroom and lived experiences, the focus appears to shift to the social imperatives of adult education.

#### *Values and Beliefs, Important and True*

Personal philosophies about the purposes of adult education and the role of the educator are reflected throughout the women’s narratives. The women also describe those things that they hold to be *important* (values) or *true* (beliefs) about adult education. The perspectives vary, ranging from those that stress the value of education to the individual, to those that describe the way in which the institutional system should operate to benefit students. The scope and influence of personal and professional experiences on the women’s stated values and beliefs are revealed in the narratives, and reflect a diversity of individual philosophies. As Ricks and Griffin (1995) explain, our thoughts and actions

are influenced by life experiences, mediated through the 'self', shaping values, beliefs, morals, and ethics. As socially constructed realities, values and beliefs are subjective in nature, and cannot be measured or observed (Ricks, 1989). Insight into these participants' values and beliefs can be gained, however, through the stories and examples that they choose to relate, and through their descriptions of those things that they hold to be important and true.

*Personal growth and development.*

The belief that adult education plays a role in enhancing individual growth and development is expressed by all of the participants. The women describe beliefs similar to those inherent in the concept of 'lifelong learning'. This refers to the view that education and significant learning move beyond the walls of an educational institution. Learning is not confined to time spent in formal learning environments rather, it is a process that occurs throughout life (Collins, 1998). Rose relates the following story to illustrate her belief about education's role in individual growth and development.

I remember one old guy, he came to look at a sick tree we had and he was just into so many things. [He] was so excited about them and just learning and learning and learning. And he was 70 something. But still growing, and that's what I think adult education is about. Growing, we need to learn and grow throughout our lifetime.

Ruby articulates a wide spectrum of values and beliefs about education. She opens the discussion by describing her beliefs about the institution's responsibility to students. "I believe that access to adult education ... is an imperative." Open access "invites diversity, and that also invites quality" and adult education can be "enriching" if diversity

and inclusive opportunities are present. This leads to a second dimension of values and beliefs for Ruby. She shifts her focus from her beliefs about the institution to beliefs about the learner and the learning process. She expresses personal values about the self-determination of learners and the dynamic and interpersonal components of adult education, and explains that she “believe[s] in ... active, collaborative and co-operative learning [as] a principle, or a belief about adult education.” Ruby maintains that “adults very clearly can define their own learning needs and decide how, and where, and what would be the best learning experiences for them.” The principles that Ruby embraces reflect a lifelong learning approach to the educational process, one that recognizes a learner’s ability to contribute to and make decisions about “the development, design and evaluation of their course of study, or whatever they choose to do.” Long involved in projects with innovative approaches to learner assessment and program delivery, it seems that Ruby has consistently demonstrated these principles in practice. Her comments also illustrate Ruby’s view of education’s role in the empowerment of students. When learners are empowered to choose and decide their educational programs and future, they have power and some degree of control over their environment (Usher, 1987).

*A place for everybody.*

Similar to the other women, Violet’s beliefs about adult education center on the learner. The view that everyone can learn and that all can be included in the educational process reflects the importance that Violet places on “community.”

I think a quote that I’ve always held from Marc Gold ... was that ‘everybody can learn something’ .... The other thing that I really believe is that there is a place for everyone. And I believe those things to be true of a community college.

Violet believes that “a community college has to get very intimately connected to their community and not just for purposes of preparing people for work, but also as a two way, mutual participant in the community.” Firm values about individual capacity and a belief that the college should offer learning opportunities to meet the needs of all are evident in Violet’s narrative. She shares Ruby’s vision of the college as an inclusive community, open to all learners, and responsive to individual needs.

Dennison and Gallagher (1986), in their historical overview of the development of community colleges in Canada, note that the first colleges were formed to meet the needs of the local community and employers. In the last decade, neo-liberal economic and social policies (McQuaig, 1995) have withered economic and public support for post-secondary education that addresses learning beyond the acquisition of skills for employment. From Violet’s perspective, post-secondary institutions today are more concerned with serving the needs of governments and funding bodies and the college “as a whole doesn’t have any kind of community heart.”

*The intrinsic worth of every individual.*

Opal, in describing her values and beliefs about adult education, also emphasizes the learner. She expresses her convictions about the inherent value of every person, and the obligation she feels to reinforce and strengthen that belief for her students.

“Something I hold to be true is the belief in the intrinsic worth of every individual and I feel that the adult education environment, any educational environment has to support that.” She believes that students must be:

validated individually and that they need someone to believe in them. I say out loud to students ‘I believe that you are going to be successful! I believe that you

are going to make a difference in the lives of [others]! I believe you're going to make a difference in this community, in this world! It's the instilling of the belief and the creation of the trust that to me is imperative about this process of allowing them to emerge as leaders.

This adult educator holds powerful beliefs about confirming, respecting and honouring individual worth and value. The validation of the inherent value of each person does not occur in a vacuum and, as Opal points out, it must be reinforced in the broader context of the educational system and the organization. Only when students achieve confidence and believe in their own worth will they be able to become leaders at work, and in the world. A supportive environment enables learners to discover their own and others' beliefs and experiences, immersing them in new ideas and encouraging them to explore new territory (Bell & Griffin, 1997).

#### *Original Ideals Translated into Today's World*

Ideals of education for social action and participatory citizenship governed adult education movements of the 1920s and 1930s. Many of those early initiatives embraced an ethos of social democracy and the Social Gospel, stressing virtues of respect for the individual, concern for the welfare of society, and equity of participation (Faris, 1975; Kidd, 1975). According to the women in this study, the passage of time has not diminished the relevance of those ideals. Although all agree that the original aims are germane to adult education today, each participant has a different perspective on the way in which the ideals are enacted, supported, or hindered in contemporary practice. These principles, as articulated by the participants in this study, are expressed as advocacy, diversity and social justice.

*Advocacy.*

Iris understands and interprets the ideal of education for social action as the ability to advocate. She believes students “have to learn to be advocates. Everybody has to learn how to be an advocate now.” In her classes, she ensures that students are exposed to the works of people who in the past have not had a majority world audience. The lives and works of people who are marginalized by society are presented to the students in an effort to enlighten them about voices that have been silenced. Students gain an awareness of issues of sexuality, disability, illness, poverty, and race through the curriculum. Iris structures the experience by first choosing the readings and then directing and guiding the related discussions. She prompts students to focus their reflections on the experience of debating alternate points of view. This is similar to an approach to social justice education that recognizes that experiential education is most effective when paired with opportunities for self-reflection about the experience (Adams, 1997). Iris believes that it is important to teach students that every one has a voice, and that advocacy comes from understanding that all voices are entitled to be heard.

*The fight for social justice.*

For Opal, at the heart of her work as an adult educator is a concern for community development and social action. As she explains:

to me that's become my whole focus .... You know, it's about 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you' ... for me that's certainly the reason I am here and why I keep going and why I say to you 'I love my job' because I can't think of a better thing to be doing with my time and my strengths and abilities. What else is there to do in the world except fight for social justice?

Opal suggests that these imperatives of adult education are not “valued as part of the adult learning environment in ... the bigger college atmosphere.” She models values and ideals of social justice to students through her own behavior. For example, in order to demonstrate a commitment to community action and advocacy, Opal will “tell students that today is elimination of racism day, [and] ... mak[e] sure that they know about the activities, [and] actually go to the activities” herself. She invites students to meet with and join her and her friends when they attend marches and rallies. Opal models principles of experiential learning in social justice education by promoting the transfer of formal learning to very concrete experiences in the world (Adams, 1997).

Violet is another participant who does not question the relevance of the early ideals of education for community development and social action, however she does question Legare College’s commitment to those ideals. She recalls occasions of overt administrative opposition to faculty participation in social action initiatives. From her perspective, social ideals are more likely to be enacted by students who participate in political action on and off campus. Violet describes her efforts to inform and activate students to participate in issues of social concern. She creates assignments that require students to attend and speak at public meetings, helps them to write letters to newspapers and politicians about social issues that affect the community, and encourages them to advocate on behalf of fellow classmates. It is important to Violet that she create a sense of community amongst the students in her classes. For her, there is strength in community and when “people do things collectively together.” In recent years she has found:

a bit more resistance to that [collective action], or maybe impatience with anything that’s outside of program learning. I feel that it’s very difficult to get

support within a college for that. It almost always just comes from the student population.

Both Opal and Violet demonstrate a commitment to the original ideals of the adult education movement through their actions in the classroom and in the community. Each woman expresses that from her perspective, those ideals are not represented at a college-wide level. However, for Opal and Violet, the ideals of education for social and community development are more than theory and concepts to be taught, they should be real and lived principles of every day practice.

*Diversity.*

Two participants chose the word 'diversity' to describe the presence of social and community ideals in contemporary adult education. According to Rose and Ruby, diversity is demonstrated both in the classroom and in the larger educational environment at Legare. Rose observes that the social and citizenship ideals of education are evidenced in "the whole movement across the college towards internationalization." She further explains that the inclusion and participation of international students, and of students who have diverse abilities, has changed the complexion of the college. "They're not just white bread students sitting in front of us any more, and they're coming with all different kinds of backgrounds and cultural experiences." Not only are students prepared to work with people of other cultures, but they also learn to appreciate diversity in the classroom. Rose adds that she believes a focus on preparing students for citizenship or social change is very important and that "it happens even when we don't consciously try to do it. If we're just teaching students to think and to question and to be confident members of the society, then we are making a change."

For Ruby, contemporary practice must encompass ideals of social responsibility, community development, and participatory citizenship. She argues that the social ethos that formed the backbone of many early adult education movements is as relevant today as it was during the early part of the century, perhaps even more so. “Political shifts” and a “huge knowledge expansion” are cited by Ruby as two of the reasons why social imperatives are pertinent to contemporary adult education. She explains that these ideals are realized in the classroom and beyond when learners are exposed to people of different races, abilities and cultures. Students’ lives are enriched when they experience diversity in the college environment, and they become more prepared and able to participate in social change or action. While the women concurred that all of the original aims of the adult education movement have contemporary relevance, some believe that the students will, simply as a consequence of their participation in adult education, enact the original ideals. Others take a more directive and active role with students to ensure that acquired knowledge will be used for social change. The language used to describe education for social change and participatory citizenship may have changed in the last six decades however, the commitment of adult educators to individualistic and social imperatives remains strong.

Early adult education initiatives demonstrated that the individualistic purposes of adult education could be achieved without diminishing its social and citizenship imperatives (Faris, 1975; Selman et al., 1998). The adult educators in this study have demonstrated that they, too, are able to blend the aims of education for individual and social imperatives into their practice. Each woman understands, interprets, and enacts the ideals according to her own philosophy of education. The meaning and weight that is

attached to the imperatives varies, and for those who view education as a means to a 'better life', individualistic imperatives seem to take precedence over social aims. The women who adhere to a philosophy of social justice appear to emphasize the social imperatives of education, teaching and modeling those ideals to their students.

### *Summary*

In this chapter, participant narratives provide the framework within which the varied and complex dimensions of contemporary adult education practice are explored. The women's perspectives of the individual and social aims of adult education and of their roles as educators reveal some shared and some divergent points of view with respect to the primary purpose of adult education. In the following chapter, the women describe those external and internal influences that affect the way in which they experience their work at Legare College, and share their visions and concerns for the future of adult education.

## Chapter 5 The Hard Times

In this chapter, the focus shifts from the women's personal beliefs about adult education to their ideas about the organization where they work. Perceptions of the fit between the stated organizational values of Legare College and the actual culture of the workplace are explored, and the barriers and supports that the women experience in enacting their aims are described. The strategies the participants have developed to overcome obstacles and to achieve their goals are revealed as is their ability to transform obstacles into opportunities. They acknowledge the successes they have achieved as adult educators in a large and complex organization, and share their views on the past, the present, and the future of adult education in an uncertain and changing social, economic and political climate.

### *Organizational Values and Beliefs: Harmony and Conflict*

Two questions -- "what stated values and beliefs concerning the purposes of adult education are in organizational mission and value statements?" and "are the organizational values statements congruent, or in conflict, with your values and beliefs about the purposes of adult education?" -- evoked the strongest responses from the participants. To characterize the women's responses as 'strong' does not adequately convey the impact these questions had on participants. Their expressive language, including body gestures, tone of voice, and pace of speech, combined with carefully (and at times cautiously) chosen words, alerted me to the critical nature of these particular questions.

The mission statement, values and beliefs statements of Legare College are published and available to the college community and to the public. All participants were

familiar with the mission and the statements, and several were able to offer a history of the evolution of this document. It is important to note that the mission statement had recently been revised, and that a new version was published the same week that the interview process began.

The mission statement of this college describes it as a “comprehensive” post-secondary institution whose primary purpose is to provide the region with access to skills and knowledge to meet the economic and social needs of the community. Accompanying the mission statement is a list of statements about core values - declarations of the commitment of the college to various aspects of the learning environment, to students, and to conditions of dignity and respect for all. As “representatives and entrepreneurs for values” (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993, p. 222), educators and administrators should be the torchbearers for the enactment of these values. As the women describe their experiences however, that does not always happen.

*This is what we say we do.*

All participants agreed that the publicly stated values of the organization were consistent and compatible with their own values and beliefs. The personal philosophies expressed by each of the women during this inquiry also reflect, in my opinion, attitudes and behaviors in harmony with the stated values of the organization. A commitment to, and respect for learners, diversity, individual differences, and a quality learning experience are evident throughout the women’s dialogues. However, the women identified differences they perceived or observed between the organizational values as written, and as implemented. Rose expresses the contradiction this way:

This is what we say we do, and there are people in our administration who ... I don't see that their decisions always reflect those values .... I think the vast majority of faculty ... try [to reflect those values] of a commitment to learning and a focus on our learners.

Ruby, too, perceives that within the college organization, there are differences in the way values are demonstrated. From her perspective, there are some inconsistencies in the enactment of these values although she emphasizes that the values reflected in the documents are sound and worthwhile. "Certainly our mission statement talks about community and preparing various areas for people to grow in community, and [it expresses] our values as well." The values are "written and advertised" but Ruby does not "believe they're actualized throughout the organization as a whole .... I think there are pockets [where they are not] .... That's my perception and my understanding about what the mission and values mean." This participant underscores the point that she alone is extracting and attaching a particular meaning to her experience. As Hodgkinson (1995) reminds us, we construct our realities through individual perceptions of events. It is through our own experiences and interests that we interpret and make sense of what we are feeling, thinking, and seeing.

For Violet, as the others, the value statements are worthwhile and sound. She too, questions whether they are evident in action throughout all levels of the organization. Individuals within the college, according to Violet, are dedicated to these values but she distinguishes between the behavior of faculty and that of the administrators. "No one could argue" with these values, maintains Violet, but she is concerned that the values "may be running counter to what the subtext is here [at the college]." Optimistically, she

believes that the enactment of the values will “re-emerge in some ways just because teachers and other people that work here are committed to these values anyway, regardless of what else happens.” The values exist within “our classes .... But in terms of the organization of the college and the priorities of the college, I don’t know that they do.”

Violet’s extensive experience at Legare and another community college, in both teaching and administrative roles, seems to offer her a distinct perspective of two arenas of the institution. On one hand, she sees a dedication to the core values on the part of faculty. On the other, Violet suggests that there are “undercurrents” in the organization that result in behaviors that are incompatible with the stated values. She describes a “sub-text”, with an underlying message, suggesting that there are layers of values in the organization, some of which are unspoken, and which are not publicly acknowledged. For example, she describes her perception that the organization no longer places the needs of students first “because we’re losing a lot of the access programs and student support programs that really do contribute greatly to the success of students.” Violet also remarks that employees’ contributions to the organization are not valued as they once were, and that “the valuing of faculty and staff ... takes a back seat in the effort to be efficient and financially stable.” Violet may be encountering and experiencing differences in values dimensions similar to those defined by Hodgkinson (1995). That is, individuals, groups within an organization, and the organization's administration, hold differing sets of values. The formal values of the organization are not always overt or explicit, and it is possible that Violet is recognizing these in the “sub-text” she has identified.

Another participant, Opal, states that her values about adult education reconcile with those espoused by the organization. However, she believes that there are unspoken values that are not “on paper” and which do not reflect the stated values of an holistic view of learners and learning. In Opal’s view, these values are not reflected in institutional policies and practices, although at one time they were. In the past decade, several key decisions made by administrative and management staff have affected Opal’s perception of the commitment of the role-incumbent leaders of the organization to the stated values. These decisions affected the well being of both faculty and students, and seemed to communicate that the people of the college were not valued, nor were their concerns valid or worthwhile. As a consequence of these experiences, Opal began to:

recognize that the values within this institution were only words on paper ....

There’s a wonderful written mission statement, but I don’t see myself or what we do here reflected there in reality. It is not lived out in behavior or practices of the college systems.

The congruence of stated organizational values with the women’s personal philosophies is not in doubt. Internal conflict and dissonance are experienced, however, when the written statements are compared with participants’ perceptions of how those values are enacted. Violet and Opal have both experienced decisions made by administrative and management staff that have affected students and the areas where they work. For them, the contradictions are not only perceived to be present, they are experienced in some very concrete ways with the cancellation of student services, supports and programs.

According to Hodgkinson (1995), the formal or stated values of the organization are seldom in perfect alignment with individual values, and difficulty arises when the interests of the individual are different from those of the organization. Greenfield writes that organizations are “manifestations of people doing what they want to do or what they think they must do” (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993, p. 104). For these adult educators, the organization seems to be ‘doing what it wants to do,’ and the differing interests and values of the individual and of the organization have not yet been officially recognized or acknowledged.

*Six months ago, I would have said yes.*

Several of the participants identify a particular point in time when their perception of the congruence between the organization’s stated values and its enactment of those values changed. Reasons for this shift are attributed to budget decisions that had recently been announced and the potential and actual effect of these decisions on the quality of education at Legare College. As Rose remarked:

Six months ago I would have said yes, ... I’m less sure now. But so far there’s been nothing that has said ‘don’t’ or ‘you aren’t’ or ‘can’t’, but with the kind of decisions that our Board is making, and the kind of cuts that are happening, I don’t know if we still have a commitment any more to the same degree -- or is it just getting to the bottom line?

Rose expresses an uncertainty about the future direction of the college, and about the impact of economic restraints and restructuring on programs and practices, and offers the opinion that “it does kind of feel like that [getting to the bottom line].” She clarifies the statement, saying:

When I talk about areas in the college that are not in line with these values, I haven't specifically been talking about our management or our Board. Our Board changes yearly, and I think the Board we have now is fairly Liberal [political party] oriented.

Another participant, Ruby, also notices that her experiences of the decision-making practices within the organization have changed in the last year. "Until six months or a year ago, I think decision-making ... was quite collaborative. I haven't found that in the last six months to the last year." Ruby feels that "prior to that ... we made decisions as a team with the administration, ... I felt less this year or so." In a subsequent section of this chapter, Ruby identifies the support she garners from the team as one of the primary factors that enables her to enact her objectives. As Morgan notes, the best teams are those that are "organized through core meanings that people own and share" (Morgan, 1997, p.143). Diminishing opportunities for collaborative decision-making would likely affect one's sense of team, and of shared values and beliefs.

Asked to identify the organizational or structural changes that occurred in the past six months that affected her perceptions of collaborative and team decision-making, Ruby explains that it may only be her "perception" that there is a shift. She adds, "it could be partly the external factors of the Board situation in terms of budget crunches and the political climate and things that are happening. It could be the way particular administrators are reacting to those external factors, I'm not sure." She emphasizes that she is uncertain of what transpired to cause the shift, but offers the suggestion that "the resource base [is] shrinking" and that there is a "reaction to all of that."

When the espoused values of an organization are “inconsistent with observed behavior...large areas of behavior are often left unexplained” (Schein, 1992, p. 21). In organizations that are facing new problems, individuals and groups lack a shared knowledge or understanding of the issues. Until joint action is taken in response to the problem, and the action has been successful, people and groups within the organization can experience discomfort, and uncertainty (Schein, 1992). At the time that these interviews occurred, the College’s response to economic restraints had not yet been fully determined for all departments, and although budget cuts were anticipated and expected, there was a lack of certainty about the process and the outcome.

Other participants acknowledged that their perceptions of a shift away from the stated values of the organization were affected by decisions made by the Board of Governors of Legare College. As described previously, the mission statement of the college was revised and the proposed changes approved by the Board during the time that this study occurred. One participant remarked that the new mission statement no longer included a commitment to lifelong learning. Other values statements endorsed by the Board were, according to Violet, “slashed by quite a bit in a week or two [following Board approval].” Violet refers to the changes that have occurred at the college as “the hard times.” She is concerned about the impact of budget decisions on both students and faculty, and suggests that the stated values of the organization are no longer reflective of current practices. “In hard times I think that the valuing of faculty and staff, like the valuing of students, takes a back seat in the effort to be efficient and financially stable.” She wishes that “the Board could have asked students and faculty and staff in a more

personal way than just in their representatives, how we could all participate in this [budget cuts] together. So I feel that those are somewhat empty values.”

Violet is also concerned that in the current political and economic climate the college is not able “to reflect our community needs ... we’re not able to do that because things are decided without consulting with community.” For this adult educator, a spirit of community and community partnerships are exceedingly important; she would consider any reduction in community involvement to be a great loss and detriment to the college and its people. Although Violet recognizes that “this college is going through hard economic times ... I think that we *all* have a contribution to make that would be useful and helpful.” She observes that “we would have been more able to maybe withstand some of this if we were treated, if we all treated each other in a spirit of respect.” In summarizing her view of the stated values of the organization, Violet says that “these values I think are worthy values, but I think we’re having a really hard time with it. [It’s] what we should be doing.”

Worthy, but empty values. This perception of the organization’s commitment to and enactment of stated values is expressed openly by each of these participants. Through their many years of service, each has experienced changes in the structure of the organization, its administration, priorities, and initiatives. The real and potential impact of the decisions that were made or proposed during the time of this study seems to be of such significance that the participants can mark the point in time when their perceptions were altered. Schein (1992) describes the anxiety and discomfort that can arise for members of an organization when they first become aware of the presence of differing assumptions, values and beliefs. We become “very uncomfortable and vulnerable in

situations where different assumptions operate ... because we will not understand what is going on” (p. 22). It is critical, as Schein suggests, that members of the organization be able to decipher the ways in which the organization is operating in order to understand and deal effectively with its underlying assumptions.

*People in, product out.*

The participants identify an institutional focus on productivity and efficiency as another indicator of inconsistency between the organization’s stated values and its actions. Concerns about budget cuts, restructuring and economic restraints on students, faculty, and the quality of education are reflected in the following narratives. As the women review the value statements, they speak of the impact of the proposed changes, and of how they will conflict with the espoused values of the organization.

For Violet, the commitment of the administrative and management staff to learning still “remains a value although in hard times it might appear to be taking a back seat.” She describes feeling “really disturbed” during budget discussions because several important projects “got shelved ...we’re losing a lot of the access programs and student support programs that really do contribute greatly to the success of students.” Violet points out the inefficiencies inherent in canceling supports and programs that will likely result in “students ... repeating programs if they don’t have supports the first time around.”

Opal also perceives that economic restraints have implications for the enactment of the stated organizational values. For her, the values are compromised by increases in tuition fees and class size, affecting both access and student success. “[P]eople in, product out. It’s the whole thing about fill them up with chunks of information that can be

evaluated or valued in somebody's set of criteria ... To me it doesn't address the whole person." She notes that "if you read the mission statement for this college, [the values] are there in black and white" but adds that the college is not meeting the needs of the community because it is "getting to the point where we're only going to meet the needs of those who can afford to come here and those who are able enough to get through the system as quickly as they can in classes of forty." A conversation about the quality of services offered by the college prompted Opal to reminisce about previous administrations that encouraged "dialogue" around quality, whereas "lately all the discussion college-wide has been about quantitative data, not qualitative." An holistic view of students and learning is no longer evident at Legare College according to this adult educator, and current practice "doesn't address the wonderful potential that we have in terms of all those realms of being." She laments the lack of a "spirit of respect" and although "it's here on paper, it looks lovely, [but] it's not a living breathing feeling for me about this college...I don't see those values on paper being lived out at this institution." Once again, a participant perceives an incongruency between stated values of the organization and the ways in which they are evidenced; an incompatibility that is attributed to the implementation of economic restraints and restructuring.

Violet too, believes "that financial considerations kind of took over the mission of the college." She suggests that there are undercurrents of unstated values reflected in the language of the organization that imply a shift away from learning-for-life, to learning-for-earning. "I think the sub-text is to operate an institution, a post-secondary education institution, which I believe is reflected in the new mission statement." Violet adds that:

part of that sub-text [is of a] post-secondary education institution ... that will be efficient, will not be dependent on public funding beyond the basics, that we will ... exclusively be a career oriented institution whose purpose will be not broad, adult education.

She further explains that the “unstated values are that we’re trying to make this college very efficient, very career oriented, very results oriented, productivity and products.”

Like Opal, Violet uses the words ‘productivity’ and ‘products’ to describe the direction in which the administration and Board are moving, a path that is not viewed with much enthusiasm by either of the participants. These women allude to a shift in the role and function of adult education in post-secondary institutions that has been attributed to the influence of “corporate interest and insistence” (Shaker & Doherty-Delorme, 2001, p. 2). Reduced public funding and the financial involvement of the private sector in educational initiatives contribute to an environment that resembles the world of business and industry. Subject areas that emphasize ‘training’ are supported, and accountability, efficiency and relevance become the indicators by which post-secondary effectiveness is measured (Shaker & Doherty-Delorme, 2001).

It seems doubtful that adult educators who have a commitment to the social imperatives of adult education as do these women, would be comfortable with organizational discourse that couples learning and learners with productivity and efficiency. The very human qualities of valuing, respecting and honoring individual gifts and talents, conflict with instrumental goals of productivity and efficiency. Smyth and Dow (1998) describe this shift in the ideology and the discourse of education as a response to economic imperatives that affect the role and function of education. For these

women, the rhetoric of business and industry is incompatible with a philosophy of education that views learners holistically, and which emphasizes the virtues of diversity and equity. However, the women in this study have developed strong personal and professional strategies that aid them dealing with these inconsistencies.

### *Strategies for Support*

The adult educators in this sample have diverse professional and educational backgrounds, and have come to the college from different disciplines and traditions. The qualifications that these women hold are typical of adult educators in Canadian colleges. That is, most are hired because of a perceived expertise in a subject area (Selman et al., 1998). Some may be members of professional associations affiliated with a specialized discipline but for the most part, like many adult educators in Canada, they do not have a unifying professional entity or discipline that acts to guide or inform practice. They are members of an employee association whose primary purpose is to manage and monitor conditions of employment. Aside from that affiliation, they do not have common membership in any professional body related to adult education, teaching, or a particular discipline. Perhaps the absence of a formal support structure has prompted some of them to seek out informal networks of support. In this section of the study, the women's descriptions of the tangible and intangible supports upon which they rely to achieve their aims are explored. As will become evident, the women find guidance, encouragement, and sustenance in different ways, places, and people.

#### *We pulled in.*

Opal describes the way in which she responded to administrative changes that occurred at the College several years ago. At that time, she had strong ties to, and gained

support from, administrators who seemed to share values similar to her own. As a consequence of a change in leadership, Opal no longer felt a connection with the administrative arm of the college. She and her colleagues turned to each other for support, finding resources within the group that served to reinforce, validate, and challenge their values and practice. In this excerpt, Opal talks about the circumstances that caused her and her colleagues to “pull in”, to rely upon each other for a quality and level of support that was no longer available from, or provided by, administrative staff.

It felt like nobody really wanted to hear what you were doing, how you felt, what your issues were in the same way that [the previous administration] did. And so we gradually lost this feeling of being connected into anything .... That’s why I feel that we’ve kind of pulled in.

In describing the evolution of this team, Opal talks of “pulling away” from other areas of the college, in an effort to “keep all this wonderful values based stuff going ... we stimulate and challenge each other around issues in the classroom and with students .... We challenge each other to continue to [enact our values].” She catalogues the virtues of working with a team. “It’s a support for people that come through with creative innovative solutions, and risk taking in the classroom .... You can’t have education for thought and action and life if you don’t take risks and if you’re not willing to model for students.” The team, according to Opal, supports its members to take risks and to reflect critically on classroom practice. The benefits of a collegial team are borne out in “personal and professional development” and she would “never go back to anything else.”

Team members aid Opal in achieving her goal of education for thought, action, and empowerment. A critical ingredient of support for this adult educator seems to be the sharing of mutual values that enable her to enact her aims. This is similar to Morgan's (1997) description of the "best" teams which are "organized through core meanings that people own and share" (p.143). For Opal and her colleagues, the team provides the means to action through critical thought and reflection. Team members act to "realize a common purpose [that] is shared among all members" (Hall, 2001, p. 330). In this case, the collective purpose is to meet the needs of students in a particular field of study.

Violet, too, sees other faculty as a primary source of support for the achievement of her goals. She does not name this support as coming from a 'team', but does describe several situations where she seeks guidance and encouragement from colleagues. A shared belief system seems to be important to Violet when she decides who can offer her needed support. "I feel that my beliefs are quite congruent with the other faculty here and that would be what I would consider my first support." Her position at the college is such that she is at times privy to sensitive or confidential information, and Violet feels that she must exercise caution and be selective about who forms her support network. Violet's team fluctuates depending upon the circumstances in which she finds herself.

Ruby works across departments throughout the college system and relies on her team for support. She considers both colleagues and administrators in her department to be valuable sources of help and encouragement. She explains that her work places her in the position of being a leader and a teacher, and that she finds collegial support from others who have roles similar to hers. "I work with a team member, a colleague who we work very well together and certainly that is a support for me .... I also have

administrative support certainly with the person ... I report through.” Ruby describes having “a lot of administrative commitment” to her work including “verbal support, monetary support, anytime I’m requesting feedback it’s given in a constructive support.”

The team as a source of personal and a professional support is important to these adult educators. As Scott, Chovanec and Young (1994) point out, post-secondary educators often “voice frustration about the lack of feedback” (p. 23) and experience feelings of isolation from their colleagues. Opal and Violet have found or created teams that enhance their sense of shared or common purposes and a feeling of collegiality.

Collaboration also seems to be an important dimension of Ruby’s work. Her role at the college requires and demands significant independence and, as described previously, she has had fewer opportunities for collaborative decision-making with administrative personnel in the past six months. As Ayers (2002) notes, when organizational renewal or restructuring is implemented, group members need to have a communication network that enables them to be in harmony with the organization, and to have an affinity with the emerging changes. Although individuals and work groups may “struggle to process environmental turbulence” (p. 179), they can experience renewal and positive outcomes when there are opportunities for communication between different levels of the organization.

#### *The energy of the students.*

The relationship that exists between faculty and students is viewed as a vital source of support for two of the women. One participant, Violet, elaborates on the importance of her relationship with students, both within and outside of the classroom.

Oh, I'm really dependent on the energy of the students! I just need that, I need a relationship with the students that I teach and hopefully it's a happy one ... just their energy and their curiosity, it just sustains me ... to be able to help students.

Violet, even after more than two decades as an adult educator, "still feel[s] quite gratified to have the opportunity to [help students] because almost always [she] see[s] them later and they say 'thanks'" [or] tell her "what they're doing." Students provide support to these adult educators in many ways. In the classroom the learner's energy motivates and sustains, and Violet and Iris describe the pleasure they experience when they encounter graduates. Iris is delighted when graduates maintain contact with her. For this adult educator, the connection she makes and maintains with students is the most meaningful part of her work. "There's someone in my office all the time, and they just come by ... sometimes there's more than one, but I can only manage one." Iris explains that is "because once I connect to them ... once I start allowing them to email me, phone me at work, drop in, it takes up time." In our conversation, she recounted numerous stories of students who seek her counsel, or who contact her years after graduation to tell her of their personal and professional achievements. One theme prevails in all of Iris' stories, and that is her genuine interest and care for the well being and accomplishments of her students. Unlike the adult educators identified by Scott, Chovanec, and Young (1994) who were frustrated by a lack of feedback in the classroom environment and who felt isolated in their work, Iris receives substantive and valuable feedback and support from her "connections" to students.

It seems that for these adult educators the support derived from students, and their relationships with them are as meaningful as the support that is garnered from colleagues

and the work team. It is a powerful force that sustains and nourishes them in the realization of their aims.

*The homefront.*

Two of the participants spoke of personal supports that come from beyond the walls of the institution. Violet gains support at home from “family where you can just be yourself.” She also described reading for pleasure as a support strategy. As she explains, novels are “a great escape. It’s about personal wellness.” Another source of personal and professional support for Violet comes from researching topics related to adult education. Exploring the websites of other colleges “sustains” her, and encourages her to think about new initiatives and directions for the college and faculty.

Opal also finds personal and professional support away from the college environment. She experiences a confirmation of the value of her work as an adult educator by ‘being’ in the world. An awareness of the local and global environment in which she lives motivates and supports Opal to enact her aims. She describes her supports in this way: “Life! The paper. Open up the paper and every day I see in my own world, my community, constant reminders of why it is that we do what we are doing.” Accounts of child abuse, assaults against women, and discrimination against those who are disenfranchised are “constant reminders” to Opal of “why we’re doing this ... because hopefully the world can be a better place if people can be empowered in their thoughts and actions.” As evidenced throughout Opal’s interview, a drive and commitment to social justice not only inspires and motivates her at work and in her personal life, it also acts as a critical source of support for enacting her aims. The strategies for support she has devised for herself are similar to those described by Bell and Griffin (1997). Locating

information and nurturing relationships that support action against social injustice are essential in helping people to “feel optimistic about social change rather than overwhelmed by the enormity of social oppression” (p. 53).

All of the women were able to identify sources of support that aid them in enacting their aims. As their narratives have revealed, these supports are diverse, ranging from those provided by family, colleagues, team members, and students, through to activities and events. Each participant felt supported to enact her objectives, and found or created her own network of support, depending upon individual need and circumstance. These women do not consistently rely on the traditional supports that can be accessed in typical work environments, for example, work groups and supervisors. This may be due to the lack of a common discipline, or to the absence of a shared professional affiliation amongst the participants. As adult educators “tend to work independently and in isolation from one another ... [they] ... often lack shared experiences and a common identity” (May, 1998, p. 93). Or, with their many years of experience, these women may have acquired the confidence and experience needed to seek out less formal and non-traditional sources of support.

### *Barriers to Action*

The conversations that evolved in response to the question “what barriers do you experience in enacting your aims?” describe both internal and external obstacles. Some of the women view the structure and practices of the organization as impediments to achieving their aims. Others find the limitations of the institutional environment to be empowering. One participant described in very moving and personal terms the real and potential barriers that she experiences because of homophobia. For all of these women

however, there is a belief that obstacles can be turned into opportunities, and that barriers exist to be removed.

*The glory and the curse.*

Iris identifies the lack of “community” at the college as a potential barrier to attaining one’s goals. She recognizes that this shortcoming need not be restrictive or limiting. It can mean independence for faculty, and an opportunity to determine and set individual goals.

It’s the glory and the curse. There’s no community at the college which means you can get huge autonomy, because there’s no boss, I’m my own boss. I mean that’s the hard thing about teaching, is that you have to initiate, you have to set your own standards, you’ve got to be, you’ve got to decide your level of curriculum work. Nobody creates that for you as a teacher .... [Teachers] have no bosses and they perform to a very high level.

In Iris’ experience, adult educators are “self-initiating .... They just keep on doing it [performing well] because of their values!” It seems that for Iris, adult educators maintain and sustain a high level of performance because they are intrinsically motivated to do so. Their values drive their actions, and they act in a particular manner because it is the ‘right’ thing to do. Iris’s view of adult educators’ motivation to do ‘good’ work can be likened to Hodgkinson’s (1995) description of Type II values. These values are based on reasoning and are founded in a “social context and a given scheme of social norms, expectations and standards” (p. 98). They affect our attitudes and ultimately, our behavior. As Iris suggests, the environment of a post-secondary institution can offer great opportunity for independence and for her, the “glory” prevails over the “curse.”

*We're just too busy.*

Violet describes barriers presented by the physical geography of the college, where the environment places limitations on the community and collegial dimensions of work. She also identifies time constraints as impediments to a supportive atmosphere. "There are structural as well as architectural, environmental kinds of barriers that are here to really enacting good adult education through dialogue with one another across different faculties." Dialogue, according to Violet "can't be accomplished in a faculty meeting that's dealing with business. It has to be more of a scholar's forum or something like that...that we don't get to do very much of. We're just too busy and the place for gathering is just not here." Similar to Ayers (2002), Violet recognizes that effective and interdependent communication between all levels of an organization is imperative during times of turbulence and change.

Although Ruby experiences a different type of barrier in her work, she, like Iris, perceives obstacles as potential opportunities. She is deliberate in her reactions to possible barriers and explains that in the two decades she has worked at the college, she has been flexible and has adapted to many challenges.

Certainly, there's always barriers ... I think it's how you perceive them and how you work with them - whether you look at them as a definite barrier and you work around them, or whether you look at them as an opportunity and engage them in different ways.

The largest barrier for Ruby would be if she were unable to continue in her present position and she notes that that would happen only if "resource allocations in different areas ... would have a priority." Should that happen, she "would work in

different ways" and she is "sure [she would] still meet" her goals. Ruby explains that even if "the position was chopped ... [she] would get [her] beliefs and values and goals met by doing something else." She has met numerous "fiscal changes, and political and climate changes" in her 20 year history at the college, and is confident that any potential barriers to her enactment of her aims could be surpassed.

In spite of the barriers they have encountered in their years at Legare College, or perhaps because of them, Iris and Ruby have learned to find virtue in, and create opportunity from, adversity. Optimism and confidence in a personal ability to overcome obstacles are apparent in the narratives of these participants. Again, this is likely due to the years of experience they have accumulated, and to their ability to adapt to and cope with the administrative and organizational changes they have weathered in the past. Perceptions of the obstacles they have encountered reflect their social realities, and the meaning they attach to their experiences (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993).

*I go in the back door.*

Ruby perceives barriers as opportunities, and is proactive and practical in her efforts to deal with obstacles that hinder her effectiveness and ability to achieve her aims.

I guess philosophically, I always try to fight the fires that I think I can be successful with. And I tend to just move away from the conflagrations that I know that I would be either wasting or burning myself out on.

Her view is that there are "huge barriers in post-secondary education particularly with our bureaucratic systems that we have in place, [that] haven't budged since the '70s, that certainly have placed barriers, rules, obstacles in front of us." Her response to these barriers is to "work through the informal organization." In describing the strategies she

employs, Ruby says that she “tend[s] to not always knock on the front door, I knock on the side door or go through the back door.” Again, Ruby relies on her years of experience working in this organization to guide her.

I ... learned the last 22 years with working within this organization who can I talk to about what, and how can I make this happen, and who has made it happen before and what’s worked and what hasn’t and what would be my best ... strategic approach.

It has not always been a smooth or easy road for Ruby, and she remarks that although she knows “when to back off”, she has “walked into, dove into some abysses from time to time, black holes and ... scrambled ... out again, learned from that and moved on.” She attributes her success at navigating the system to “getting to know people and developing relationships with people that [she] value[s] really highly.” Ruby is able to work effectively within the constraints of this post-secondary institution, and she recognizes the value of interpersonal relationships in aiding her in achieving her goals. Encouragement from administrators and colleagues can empower employees to pursue their interests and goals, and to view this pursuit as a key responsibility. As Ayers (2002) notes, faculty who follow their individual interests “transition from one position to another ... throughout their tenure” (p. 177).

Ruby is not the only participant who “goes in through the back door.” Violet relates a story about a colleague to illustrate her belief that people who work in a particular area of the college excel at circumventing or maneuvering around barriers. As she tells the story, there was once a manager who “never understood [this department], ... and could not get along with us.” This manager learned from Violet “that

... if you want to get something done, you go in through the attic, the basement, through the back door or just anyway you can to get it done.” In Violet’s words, that behavior “can make people crazy” but she believes that “barriers are there to take down. Either up front or by stepping around [them].”

Communication barriers present another obstacle to Violet in the enactment of her objectives, and she believes that the economic restraints and emphasis on efficiencies are not the real obstructions. Rather, she sees a lack of involvement in the decision-making process as the predominant barrier. Violet believes that the barriers imposed by fiscal restraints would be minimized had they been developed in concert with faculty and staff. “The efficiencies I think could have come about more collaboratively. And although they were discussed ... they were always put before us, rather than emerged from us.” Had there been open discussion and opportunity for collaborative problem-solving between various levels of the organization when budget cuts were discussed, it would have been “a totally different conversation and could have the same fiscal results. But it’s a whole different conversation .... [Collaboration] is not the style of this group of people.” In a discussion of an empowering organizational climate, Ayers (2002) describes the importance of communication and interdependence amongst faculty and staff. This occurs primarily through an informal communication network that encourages information sharing and collaboration. When not limited or constrained to formal lines and channels of communication, “barriers are minimized” (p. 179). In Violet’s experience, the communication network broke down, or was ineffective, and as a result she perceives a lack of collaboration to be a barrier.

*Sometimes there is fear.*

One of the participants identifies fear as an obstacle that surfaces at times in the course of her work. The experience of being frank about her sexuality has opened some doors and closed others. However, like the other women she seeks ways to turn barriers into opportunities for learning.

Sometimes there's a fear. It's hard work, some of this stuff you know, particularly for myself as a lesbian, I have to really feel safe. I want them to see me as someone who they can trust and respect, and I very often have to hide that part of who I am until I feel that I have that respect just as a person and as a teacher and then later ...I can talk about how it feels to be seen as different in society.

This participant names "that fear as the internal oppression of homophobia." She feels that she is "getting a lot better about not being afraid, a lot better, and that's [her] own personal growth." However, she admits that overcoming her fear has been difficult because she is "labeled or seen in a certain way by students who say you shouldn't be teaching these new, radical ideas." Students want to "talk about a Walt Disney world and not talk about issues of abuse and poverty and discrimination and those hard realities of life that [people] ... face every day." But, she also thinks that "if the world is ever going to change you have to push the envelope ... we have to question assumptions." Challenging beliefs about the status quo "is scary place to be sometimes ... because [we] question the whole piece around mothering and women staying at home, male domination, huge pieces that very often young women don't want to look at. They'd rather everything be nice." For this adult educator, it seems that the importance of pressing students to challenge assumptions takes precedence over her personal security

and privacy. At times she comes "under some sort of attack or scrutiny, people, or sometimes students actually will even turn their back on [her] ... or discredit" what she says. "It's like ... okay she's a lesbian, and of course she thinks that." Consistent with her beliefs about the intrinsic worth of every individual as described previously, she explains that "it is all about being who you are in the end .... I try to be who I am." There would likely be some tension for adult educators who, like this woman, teach students about the inherent value of each person, yet may feel devalued when they express their personal identity. Bell (1997) describes the way in which people can find meaning and sustenance in their group identity at the same time that they experience victimization and oppression from the dominant group. It seems that this participant has deliberately chosen a hard, and at times, painful path in order to be 'true' to herself, and to model her teachings of social justice to her students. She is demonstrating philosophy in action, taking risks even though confronted with resistance from others (Scott, Chovanec & Young, 1994).

The women in this study experience barriers in diverse, complex and personal ways. They dissect and dismantle obstacles and when necessary, find alternate routes to reach their goals. Obstacles are transformed into opportunities, and limitations are perceived as benefits.

### *Experiencing Success*

Without exception, the participants described feeling some degree of success in the achievement of their aims and objectives. Each woman interprets success differently, and each has her own set of indicators and measures of achievement. For some of the women, success is linked to learner transformation and the ability of both learners and educators to enact their values. Success can be difficult to measure in these instances

because it is intangible, and cannot be measured or observed. Other participants define success through markers of career and professional accomplishments.

Ruby describes her experiences of success through her professional achievements. Although she has never deliberately established career goals, she has been able to do work that inspires and challenges her. Without hesitation, she stated that she felt that she had been successful, although “it is amazing that I have been successful when I have not had a goal orientation with my career.” Ruby attributes her success to an ability to “function with an intuitive basis for practice ... and then I scramble around and get the empirical evidence and data afterwards in order to support myself.” Reflecting on the progression of her career, Ruby explains that she has asked these questions of herself: “What do I need now? What’s best for me? What are the positives? Who do I need to be with, and what do I need to be doing ... in my next venture?” She also says that choosing the “right time to go back to school, ... to leave an initiative, or leave a department, or move into something else” as an “intuitive gush.” Ruby’s determination of success, as expressed in this interview, seems to be related to the progressive steps she has taken in her career, and to the initiatives with which she has been associated.

For Opal, measuring and acknowledging success is more difficult. She defines success as both her effort and her ability to be “honest and true with students.” She is concerned with learner development, and wants to know that students have acquired the knowledge and the will to enact their values and beliefs. “To say that I was successful would be to say that I’ve completed a task or that it’s all done, so I cannot say yes.” Opal is reluctant to assume any credit for empowering students to think and act, or for enhancing their personal growth and development, although she has identified those as

priorities in her role as an adult educator. “I feel true to myself and that’s all I can do, is to model my beliefs to the students.” In some students she sees “huge leaps and bounds in personal growth”, in others a “ tiny, tiny, tiny little willingness to maybe open up about something or look at something.” But Opal is quick to clarify that those individual transformations would not cause her to say that she has been successful, but that:

there has been some success [for students] in terms of their time here .... [I]f I’ve been part of that facilitation, part of that empowerment to move out, to be able to express values or change mindsets or the paradigm shift around certain issues, then great.

Rose also relates success to learner achievement. As described previously, she has held many non-instructional positions at the college, however when Rose thinks of success, she tends to think of her experiences as a teacher. “Successful? ... No, I mean yes and no. I think when you work with students directly you are more or less successful.” Part of being a teacher, in Rose’s view, means that “you can be tremendously successful [with some students] ... they take off and they are different people and they see themselves differently” but with others “for whatever reason, you’re less [successful].” As an adult educator, she wants “to help people to have success so they can see [formal education] it as a positive thing. [It] becomes life altering for some.” There is a reluctance on Rose’s part to unequivocally proclaim success, the most she will say is that “sometimes” she has been successful in her work with students.

Gauging success is also a challenge for Violet. For her it is an internal process, with few tangible indicators or measurements. When asked if she feels successful, Violet says “I do. Maybe I could be a little more analytical about that. But you know, at the time

I usually do.” She describes herself as “quite a reflective person” who “usually reflects on things and usually wouldn’t do the same things twice ... because I think I’m a learner.”

The capacity and willingness to reflect on practice, to make changes, and to adapt accordingly, is one hallmark of Violet’s philosophy of teaching and learning. It also mirrors her belief that one must create opportunity from obstacles, and that “everyone can learn”, including Violet.

Each woman determines for herself what constitutes success. None relies on the judgment of others as a means of assessing personal or professional accomplishments; acknowledgement and recognition from external sources is not sought. Rather, success is determined internally, filtered through the lens of personal experience and as such, is a socially constructed reality (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993). The independence that adult educators have in determining their work, the lack of a formal feedback system (Scott, Chovanec & Young, 1994) and autonomy in the classroom, may all contribute to the development of individual points of reference in measuring success.

### *Changing Values, Changing Visions*

Throughout our conversations the women reminisced about past years at Legare College and speculated about what the future would hold. They expressed hope, sorrow, concern, and optimism about the impact of organizational, political, and economic changes on their work as adult educators. To aid in understanding their commitment to, and faith in, the social ethos of adult education, their recollections from the past and visions for the future are shared in this section.

*Clarifying values.*

In her 23 year history at the college, Opal has witnessed many administrative changes. At one time, according to Opal, the college administration demonstrated a “strong vision” that empowered and enabled both faculty and learners, and support and guidance for values-based practice was provided by administrators. “Within the college itself, I felt there was a strong vision for clarification of values, to live by a set of principles and values. And that came directly from the [administration].” Those values “clarified how I wanted to be in this institution, and how I wanted to be in the world.” She attributes the “visionary leadership” of previous administrators with allowing her to “become the instructor that I am now.” Changes in leadership and a “falling off of that whole values piece ... [have] saddened” Opal, but have also made her “more adamant” about taking “a stand in terms of fighting for keeping some of those, particularly the softer values in place.” Opal defines ‘soft’ values as those of “nurturance and support, empowering people to fulfill their potential and recognizing what people bring. [These] are lost in this process currently, and now we’re into these harder values, ... economy and efficiency.” The values expressed through the actions of administrators have changed over time, and Opal feels that the values demonstrated by current administrators are not ones to which she can be committed.

Another participant who has worked in both administrative and faculty positions for over two decades reflects on her experiences working with different administrators. Iris describes some people as having ‘process skills’ which she understands to be a commitment to, and a belief in, the enactment of sound and worthy organizational values. One administrator with whom she worked closely, taught her about the importance of

process, and Iris states that this knowledge has affected her “whole life.” Iris describes this administrator as having “moral courage” for demonstrating a commitment to values and process in contrast to another administrator who:

doesn't have a clue about [values] ... Because she doesn't have these same process skills. She's a boss, she's a boss lady. 'I'm going to have you do this today'. She'd never think to say 'and what do you think about what I'm going to have you do?' Never! She doesn't have a clue about being student centered. In terms of real, lived values. It's hard ... with that kind of hierarchy, leadership.

Iris has had the opportunity to work as an administrator, and as noted in the previous chapter, she found it to be a difficult task. She “saw the other side” of both administration and faculty, and left her administrative post because she was “burned out” and “miserable.” Experiencing two very different styles and philosophies of leadership seems to have had a significant impact on Iris' own perceptions of the present and future directions of the college.

Both Iris and Opal describe the effects of various leadership styles and methods upon their work. Visionary leadership, as experienced by these women, seems to include those aspects of moral leadership that are “achieved when the administration maintains a productive tension between philosophy and action” (Hodgkinson, 1995, p. 85). That is, even though a tension exists between individual and organizational values, the ‘art’ and the ‘craft’ of the leader allows for the creation of a positive organizational culture.

*We've carried on.*

Several of the women emphasized that in spite of their perceptions of changes in organizational values and visions, their personal commitment to learners and to quality

adult education practice has not diminished. Opal recounts what she must do to be authentic and effective.

So all I can do for my part is be clear about what my vision is for human kind and keep working towards it and trying to create that in my very small way, whether it's in my office whether its in my classroom, whether it's somehow in a wider area in my community in terms of the boards that I work on or the committees that I join. That's all that I can do.

Opal describes the impact of prior leadership on her values and beliefs about adult education. She and her team have made deliberate efforts to maintain the vision of a past administrator who so motivated them. "And that's that period where I felt there was vision, there was leadership in this institution that filtered down and that we all felt and we all responded to." When that administrator left the college, some of the faculty felt that they "had been changed dramatically by [that person's] vision. We've carried on, but it's been a real struggle because the next administration has been very different."

Rose notices that faculty whom she encounters continue to work hard to meet the needs of students while coping with economic restraints. "But right now ... it's a hard time and some of the stuff that's going on and some of the decisions being made." She feels "heartened" when she works with people who are "struggling and having to cut back and find ways to meet the bottom line ... are still ... really committed or they're trying to be committed to these kind of values, to their students ... and the learning of their students."

Rose expresses a cautious optimism that the stated values of the organization will continue to be enacted in spite of the economic restraints that have affected the delivery

of several college programs and services. The efforts and dedication of faculty and administrative staff to meeting the needs of the students, in her eyes, will override the challenges presented by budget cuts and restructuring.

*If I were Queen of the college.*

In these times of uncertainty and change, and within existing limitations, the women describe how they might thrive if given the power and the freedom to make decisions and to take action. Violet, for example, has experienced fluctuating periods of calm and upheaval during her many years at the college. In the hard times, as she calls this period in the college's history, Violet manages to maintain an optimism about the future, and suggests that out of chaos will come creativity and rebuilding. She is "hopeful now" and thinks that "this college may have the potential to transform into more than what we are right now." She explains that "when you become so minimalist people can't stand that! People will burst out with creativity and ... I think that will come from the frustration ... I think a lot of that will burst out...from the people that work here." The college may be able to "transform to something more desirable [and] vibrant" by "going through this awful time." Similar to her response to perceived barriers, Violet expresses a desire and wish that "a combination of faculty, staff and administration" will work together to create opportunity out of adversity. Failing that, Violet offers a strategy that she would employ if the college were a monarchy, and she wore the crown. "[If] I was the Queen of [Legare] College, I would be on the phone already to the region, and say ... I heard that announcement [about training needs] what could we do?" She believes that the community education arm of the college should be "more proactive ... in terms of community development .... I think that we've shrunk, and I think all colleges have to

some extent to become basically vocational institutes.” As has been evident throughout her interview, Violet has a desire for and a commitment to community partnerships and community involvement in adult education.

The women’s nostalgia for the past is apparent in these narratives. There is a guarded optimism for the future and for a renewed commitment of Legare College to those values that the women hold to be important and true. Personal experiences have affected each woman’s perceptions and beliefs about the present and future status of the workplace, and they have a common belief that the staff of this college will remain dedicated to meeting the needs of the students. They share a vision for the future of an institution that will address the needs of learners and the community, and do not doubt that their own values and beliefs will remain constant during the ‘hard times’.

### *Summary*

In this chapter, the second central question of the study has been explored. Participants describe the harmony and conflict they experience when their own values and beliefs about adult education are examined against the stated and implicit values of the organization. Finally, the participants reflect on the past, the present, and the future of the college, and offer their perspectives on the changing values and visions of the organization.

In the following chapter the findings of the study are summarized, and themes of productivity and efficiency in organizational culture, adult education’s role in preserving and maintaining the status quo, and the power and influence of language are explored. Links that have emerged between the findings, theory and concepts of education,

leadership, and personal development are described, as are suggestions for further research on this topic.

## Chapter 6 Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research project, highlight and summarize the findings, and describe the lessons I have learned. This interpretive inquiry has offered a means of exploring and extracting meaning from several sources of data. It has allowed individual interpretations and understandings of the topic to emerge, and tacit and new meanings to be revealed and confirmed. The particular emphasis in this chapter is upon lessons learned and the connections that can be formed between personal accounts of lived experiences and theory. It is hoped that readers will gain, as have I, an improved understanding and appreciation of the multiple and complex forces that influence contemporary adult education practice.

### *The Purposes, the Process, and the Problem*

The central questions of this case study, as described in Chapter one are "what do adult educators believe to be the imperatives of adult education?" and "what barriers and supports do they experience in enacting their aims?" A case study approach to the research offered the opportunity to learn from the lived experiences of others, and to analyze and interpret multiple sources of data. My desire to explore these topics has been spurred by the questions, warnings and challenges posed by writers about the quality and purposes of contemporary adult education (Hart, 2002; Heaney, 1996; Kerka, 1996; Lakeland, 1994; Lee & Long, 2001; Welton 1995a, 1995b, 1998). Three critical themes pertaining to adult education are frequently addressed by these authors: its transformative nature, the commitment of educators and governing bodies to ideals of education for social change and action, and the social and economic forces that influence adult education practice and philosophy. These issues, presented both positively and negatively,

not only permeate the literature of adult education, but are also evident in the narratives of the women who participated in the study.

### *Lessons Learned*

In the following section, I integrate material from those who have contributed to this study through interviews or through their writing, with a summary of the findings. Themes of productivity and efficiency, change, and the power and influence of language are explored and interpreted in the context of the lessons learned through this inquiry. I purposefully blend and intertwine sources in the belief that learning is not a distinct entity that occurs independently of the meaning and understanding that can be attached to lived experiences. Theoretical writing lends meaning to the spoken words of the participants, aiding me in my effort to gain insight into individual and organizational attitudes and behavior.

### *Lessons from the past.*

The adult education movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century portrayed education as serving two purposes; it was to be a mechanism for individual betterment and a vehicle for social transformation. In Canada, these imperatives were embraced and enacted by people such as Moses Coady, Roby Kidd and Elizabeth Murray, who believed that education could both inform and enlighten (Coady, 1937; Faris, 1975; Harris, 1998; Kidd, 1975). The citizens of Antigonish developed strategies that improved the economic and social health of their community (Faris, 1975; Welton, 1995a), rural Canadians studied and debated issues of the day through radio forums and discussion groups (Kidd, 1975), and community members of all ages in the Maritimes learned about local history, music and drama through Murray's commitment to community development (Harris, 1998).

At the heart of the adult education movement of the 1920s and 1930s was a search and a longing for a better and more abundant life for the citizens of the nation. Paired with a young country's desire for an informed citizenry equipped with skills and knowledge, these ideals shaped the direction of the adult education movement over the next three decades. Influenced by the economic, political and social forces of the times, adult education practice and philosophy maintained its reputation for promoting learning that was linked to social and democratic goals. An ethos of the Social Gospel and of those principles founded in democracy and an activist form of Christianity, were present in many adult education initiatives and organizations of the times (Faris, 1975; Harris, 1998; Kidd, 1975).

For the adult educators in this study, there is a consensus that the original imperatives of adult education movements are relevant to contemporary needs. The dual aims of education for individualistic and social purposes are evident throughout the participants' narratives, however the emphasis that is placed on each objective varies amongst the women. Iris, Ruby, Rose, and Violet express views similar to those of the early leaders of adult education movements in that they believe that the primary purpose of education is to improve people's economic and personal well-being. A person who has a fulfilled life, in material terms, is better equipped to contribute to and participate in community and society. Education then, is seen as the means of providing the skills, knowledge, and ability to improve one's life chances. This is expressed by Violet as the learner's "personal ability" to participate in and contribute to a "civil society." The skills needed for work are the same as those that are necessary for life. Effective interpersonal and communication skills for example, acquired in the classroom environment and

applied to practice, provide learners with foundational skills that will enable them to be more proficient in life. These adult educators believe that the experience of adult education facilitates growth and development, and that personal transformation takes place as a consequence of the exposure to new experiences and the acquisition of skills. Education increases personal ability in and of itself. Learners will apply and integrate newly acquired skills into personal and work experience and, by being informed, educated members of society, are able to make worthy contributions to their own well-being and that of the larger society. In this view, adult education seems to be understood as the means by which people acquire the ability to participate in the community and society, rather than as a vehicle for social change. The role of the adult educator becomes one of facilitating skill development, exposing learners to a diversity of people and experiences, and increasing awarenesses of the world in which students live and work. The learner bears the responsibility of taking that information and applying it to her life beyond the institution, embarking on a journey from learning-for-earning to learning-for-life. An adult who is confident and capable, and who has achieved some degree of economic or social control over her life then has the resources, both personal and economic, to shift her world view to one that includes the concerns of others.

Violet and Opal emphasize alternative views of the transformative nature of adult education. They believe that educators must prompt and, at times, propel learners to be aware of their responsibility and obligation to contribute meaningfully to community and to society. This perspective seems to be reflective of the women's commitment to social justice, and of a belief in the "intrinsic worth of every individual." These women raise learners' awareness of the injustices that are inherent in our society, prompting students

to examine their own values, beliefs and assumptions. They participate in activities that demonstrate their commitment to advocate on behalf of those who are vulnerable or marginalized. Through their teaching strategies and personal involvement in advocacy efforts, Violet and Opal model and support students to engage in community action. For these participants, the transformative nature of education is understood, interpreted and enacted from a social justice perspective.

Violet and Opal express a philosophy of education and of life that recognizes inequities in society, while highlighting the worth and value of all citizens. They believe that a critical part of their role is to instill in learners a desire to “make a difference” in the world. Learner’s values and beliefs are reinforced in an effort to increase confidence and risk-taking, and the values and “potential” that students bring to the learning experience are validated and affirmed. This approach, these adult educators maintain, empowers students, giving them the ability and motivation to act for social change. They suggest that a learner's social identity develops and can be transformed through the educational process, when new experiences and ideas are integrated into the learner's consciousness, becoming a natural part of her repertoire. This is akin to Hardiman and Jackson’s (1997) view of the process associated with social identity development, where the exposure to new and previously unencountered events or circumstances can provoke and promote change in individual perceptions and actions.

For Violet and Opal, learner empowerment leads to social action, and as adult educators, they perform a vital role in facilitating and supporting this process. They view learner empowerment as a necessary ingredient in a teaching and learning process that

aims to engender an awareness of issues of social, political, and economic inequities that exist in mainstream society (Hart, 2002; Thompson, 1997).

The dual imperatives of the early adult education movement are present in the perspectives of all of the women interviewed in this study. There are distinctions however, in the emphasis that each places on the objectives, and in perceptions of the role of the educator in facilitating these aims. For some participants, it seems that the adult educator is an observer in the transformational process, one who provides access to skills and knowledge, but who relies upon learners to use that information as they choose. Others view their role as being more active and dynamic in persuading learners to make the connection between skills, knowledge and action for social change, acting as “representative[s] of a moral order and ...entrepreneur[s] for its values” (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993, p. 222).

The adult educators in this study remember well the original ideals of the early adult education movement. The traditions of education for individual betterment and social transformation are reflected throughout their narratives, and they express a commitment to the creation and maintenance of adult education practice that is respectful of learners, equitable and accessible. However, profound social, political and economic events have created conditions and a climate where the enactment of these traditions in everyday practice is threatened. The social context in which these women work is unstable and uncertain. Change is imminent and ‘hard times’ are ahead. The institutional structure in which they work is fluctuating, influenced by internal and external forces. For some, the signals of change are subtle, wrapped in a veil of uncertainty and unease. They recognize that changes to funding formulas for post-secondary education for example,

and a review of educational priorities within the organization, may affect learner's access to services and supports and the quality of the learning environment. For others, the signs are more obvious and overt, and there is a sense of foreboding about the future. Programs have been cancelled, and tuition fees and workloads have increased. Prized and cherished values about people, learning and education are being challenged and contradicted by a seeming shift in priorities of the organization. Where once the women perceived an administrative commitment to learners and a quality educational environment, they now are experiencing the impact of policy changes that emphasize productivity and efficiency. Program cuts, increased class sizes, workloads and tuition fees, and quantitative measures of 'success' contribute to the belief that the organization is taking on the characteristics and attributes of the "business world."

*Learning for the present.*

Themes of education for personal betterment, growth, and development, and of education for a civil society, are expressed by all of the participants. These two perspectives of the imperatives of adult education are more closely aligned than may be evident on first impression. There is a link between these two spectrums that can be described by a third theme that emerged from the narrative of one of the participants. That is, the goal of education for personal empowerment, ultimately leading to action. Empowerment, as understood by participants who embrace a philosophy of education for social justice, refers to the acquisition of personal and subject knowledge that is integrated into action for the purpose of social change. An educational process that emphasizes the examination of personal and cultural norms and values provides learners with the confidence and ability to act. Implicit in this view is the belief that people will

act for worthy purposes, and that their values and views reflect those inherent in a philosophy of social justice. The adult educator is in a position to facilitate this process, deliberately and consciously acting to promote learner ability, awareness and confidence.

Differences between the women's views of their roles as adult educators become apparent in descriptions of how they believe that learners will ultimately use the knowledge they have gained. Some believe that the knowledge is a clear and direct route to personal transformation, particularly, the application of skills to home and work life. Others are firm in the belief that the role of the adult educator is to create change agents, motivating and encouraging learners to go out and 'make a difference' in their community and the world.

Some contemporary writers are calling for a re-assessment of adult education's role in promoting social change and action (Cunningham, 1993; Heaney, 1996; Kerka, 1996). They ask us to consider the condition and type of society for which we are preparing people, and invite us to reflect upon whose needs are being met by adult education practice that has as its focus, competency development. One of the adult educators in this study regularly asks those questions of herself and of her students. She describes being "driven" by a need to ensure that learners become aware of the inequities that exist in the world, and of the assumptions that exist in the norms and beliefs of the dominant culture. For her and another participant, there is a perception that competency driven curricula can neglect the subjective measures of learner's abilities and knowledge. Both of these women work in program areas where students learn to support marginalized and vulnerable citizens, and each has been educated in disciplines that stress the importance of listening to those whose voices have seldom been heard. As women, and as

advocates for those who are disenfranchised, they believe that social change is a relevant and worthy aim of adult education. They support and encourage learners to question and challenge a mainstream culture that maintains and protects the dominant status quo (Hart, 2002; Thompson, 1997).

Other participants appear to view education for social change as the exposure of learners to the diversity of the student population, and to the act of experiencing different cultures and abilities within the college environment. Social change seems to be interpreted as the response to the changing complexion of the dominant society, rather than as a reaction to a system that cannot and does not meet the needs of all people. In this view, social change or action is possible when learners acquire a broader knowledge and understanding of the norms of the majority world. Although at times the status quo and the assumptions of the world in which we live are challenged by some of these adult educators, the emphasis seems to be upon providing learners with skills to cope, manage and contribute to the existing status quo.

Writers in the field of adult education support the notion that the dual ideals of education for individual and social transformation have been diluted, and at times distorted, in adult education practice over the past two decades (Lakeland, 1994; Welton, 1998). The reasons for this are clear to critics of federal and provincial neo-liberal policies. McQuaig (1995), Brodie (1996) and Welton (1998) identify the willingness of governments to equate competitiveness in the global marketplace with a highly skilled workforce, trained to accommodate the needs of corporations and industry, as one such explanation. This belief is held by governments and the public, despite evidence that the 'real' deficit is not in individual skill and ability, but rather in the lack of significant

employment opportunities, particularly for women and minorities (Brodie, 1996). Indeed, in the last twenty years, several federal and provincial governments have promoted, through both policy and practice, the view that 'relevant' and 'efficient' adult education is that which trains a workforce to have marketable skills. This allows for competition in a global market, an increased ability to maintain a competitive technological edge and, ultimately, the means by which government deficits can be wiped out (McQuaig, 1995). The slashing of social programs that enable adults to engage in meaningful work and publicly funded education, is viewed as a means of motivating the unemployed to get relevant training. As Brodie (1996) points out, the decimation of social safety nets is doing more to reduce employability than is the lack of a skilled workforce.

The influences of government and organizational policy on the quality of education, and a seeming erosion of values associated with social equity, respect and caring are reflected in the narratives of all of the participants. During the course of this study, significant political and economic shifts occurred both provincially and locally, giving rise to some unexpected challenges, barriers, and opportunities in this inquiry. These changes included the implementation of several government initiatives intended to reduce the provincial deficit and the announcement of budget cuts and restructuring at Legare College. Several of the proposed restraints were to occur in areas of the organization where three of the participants work, and they were directly affected by the announced 'efficiencies'. As the month progressed, and the interviews proceeded, cuts to programs and services with which the participants were associated were formalized, and in some cases, implemented. Two of the educators put forward the view that increased class sizes, tuition fees and the reduction of supports and services would adversely affect

people's ability to access education and to complete their studies within the prescribed time frames. In the eyes of three of the participants, the Board and the administrative staff of Legare College were perceived as being unsympathetic to the social and democratic imperatives of adult education, and neglectful of the valuable resources and knowledge that were held by the members of the organization.

Two of the women identified the economic policies of the provincial government, and decisions endorsed and enacted by the Board of Governors and the administrative staff, as directly affecting their perceptions of the enactment of the stated values of the organization. As one of the women remarked, "values of caring and respect" were being replaced with values of "economy, efficiency and productivity."

All of the women in the study agreed that the organization's stated values, as expressed in mission and values statements, spoke of a dedication and commitment to a quality educational environment and experience for learners and employees. These were "worthy" values, according to the participants, and "no one could argue with them." For some of the participants however, the stated values were no longer being enacted by the current administration and by the Board of Governors. As one participant remarked, they were "worthy but empty" values.

According to Hodgkinson (1995), the primary obligation of the administrator is to maintain the organization. The administrator's role requires that she "maximize efficiency, ... be expedient and ... focus on short-term reality to the exclusion of long-term idealisms" (p. 80). In order for an organization to survive, decision-makers must preserve and maintain the structure within the surrounding culture and climate. It is likely that individuals will experience conflict with organizational goals that serve to sustain the

viability of an institution, particularly in a climate where the external culture is supporting values of productivity and efficiency.

Not all of the participants attributed administrative and Board governance and policy to their perceived shift in the stated values of the organization. Two of the women spoke of "external factors" and the current "political climate" as possible influences on the organization's Board and administration. They noted that they thought that there had been a shift in the values of the organization, but did not elaborate upon what changes had occurred to affect their perspectives. This could be a function of the timing of the interviews; both of these participants were interviewed prior to the formal announcement of program cuts and restructuring initiatives. Or, there may have been a reluctance to identify specific groups or people to me, a 'junior' colleague who, unlike these women, is a relative newcomer to Legare College. The other possibility is that the proposed changes were just that – anticipated and possible, but not yet formalized or implemented at the time of the interviews. Experience in this organization may contribute to a 'wait and see' approach to change, and to the view that there is no point in reacting to 'possible' changes until all information is at hand, and the change becomes a reality.

Several of the women described this period as the 'hard times', a period in their experience at this institution that has been of such significance that they can pinpoint the time that their perceptions changed. Their comments and descriptions of experiences are separated into two distinct timeframes; before and after the 'efficiencies'. All of the participants have experienced changes in the climate of the organization over the years, stable and comfortable at times, turbulent and disquieting at others. An organization's climate is defined by the perceptions of its members, and by the social reality of the

people who experience it (Ayers, 2002). In the case of Legare College, the women's perceptions and experiences inform them that there has been a change in the climate. Highly unstable external conditions, in particular, the widespread implementation of federal and provincial neo-liberal social policies (Lee & Long, 2001) have influenced policy and practice, creating obstacles that hinder the participants in the enactment of their aims.

Over the years that these women have worked at this post-secondary institution, they have also witnessed and experienced many changes in leadership. They describe periods during which they thrived and were stimulated by “visionary leadership” that inspired, informed and guided them. Under other leaders, they had experiences that led them to develop and rely upon alternative networks of personal support to sustain them in their work. Greenfield (1993) writes that “conflict is endemic in organizations .... Administrators represent values, but they also impose them” (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993, p. 153). It seems that when these adult educators felt that the values of administrative staff were contradictory to their personal values, they responded by seeking the counsel and support of colleagues with values similar to theirs.

At the core of the organizational changes at Legare College is a tension between the ideals of adult education for personal and social transformation, and a social and political climate that emphasizes productivity and accountability. Accessibility, equity, and a high quality learning environment, according to the participants in this study, are in jeopardy as class size, tuition fees, and work loads increase. The focus of adult education has shifted from learning-for-life to learning-for-earning, and to producing employable graduates who can demonstrate skills for employment. This approach to education

neglects the role of adult education in promoting the development of the skills needed for full and meaningful participation in society. Habermas, according to Welton (1995c), describes the primary function of adult education as transformative, providing people with the means to participate in democratic social action through discourse. The ability to communicate meaningfully, to be reflective, and to communicate honestly and sincerely with others, provides the foundation for active citizenship and participation in discussion, debate and dialogue. Habermas contends that in order to be socially responsible, adult education must create an atmosphere where matters of social and political importance can be debated (Lakeland, 1994). However, in an environment where productivity and efficiency are the measures of success, an organization's survival seems to be dependent upon its ability to take on the attributes of the corporate world. That is, it must respond to change by readjusting and adapting goals and visions to fit with ideologies of consumerism and globalization. Education thus becomes a vehicle for training adults to participate in a competitive workforce that demands high technological skills and abilities.

The language of industry and business – downsizing, accountability, restructuring, restraints, efficiencies, productivity – has become a part of educational discourse. The power of language and words to influence and shape our thoughts and behavior cannot be minimized, nor should it be underestimated. Greenfield warns that words can “bewitch us ... their meanings and connotations can take on greater reality to us than the substance they are supposed to denote” (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993, p. 44). The words and language we choose to describe ourselves both limit and create our realities. There is a danger then, that as the rhetoric of the corporate world filters into the learning

environment, students will be further inculcated in a world view that places a premium on individualism and consumerism. The influence of language, and its ability to reflect, influence, and ignite our understanding of ourselves, our role and our place in the world is powerful. Our social realities are individual constructions of the 'truth' based on experience and values, and the language we use to describe our 'truths' conveys to others, our beliefs and attitudes. We are viewed and understood through the labels and words that are used to describe us. Labels can confine, restrict and hinder our ability to participate in the lifeworld, and the labels that are used to describe people seldom reflect the words they would use to describe themselves. Habermas reflects on the nature of true, honest and respectful dialogue as a critical ingredient of meaningful public discourse (Welton, 1995c). It would seem that meaningful discourse would be difficult to achieve and sustain in an environment where the language is reflective of a social and political climate that views the rational and technical objectives of productivity and efficiency as primary outcomes of adult education.

There is no doubt that the adult educators in this study hold strong values relating to respect, equity and accessibility that drive, guide and inform their practice and world views. At the time that this inquiry took place, several of the women seemed to be struggling to make sense of the 'big picture', and to understand all of the possible ramifications of organizational restructuring and economic restraints. For some, the decisions that had been made by administrative staff and the Board of Legare College were understood as a means to "getting to the bottom line [of the budget]". They seemed to accept that change was inevitable in the current political and social climate. Others seemed to be immersed in trying to identify reasons and find explanations for the

decisions that had been made. This is a difficult task for, as Welton (1995c) points out, “any adequate understanding of human action must move inside the meanings people give to their actions ... No single person is ever fully aware of the way the [lifeworld] is shaping their every day lives” (p. 142). Welton thinks of the 'lifeworld' in Habermasian terms, as those assumptions and understandings of the world that provide us with guidance and understanding of our every day actions and interactions. In our efforts to understand change, and its effects on our lifeworld, we need to remove ourselves from the experience, and examine the world from a completely objective perspective. But, as Greenfield (1993) reminds us, all events and circumstances are experienced through a personal lens composed of past experiences, values, and beliefs. We shape our realities through individual experience, and as such, our view of the lifeworld is a personal and social construction.

Mills (1959) describes the challenge of viewing and understanding the world beyond the realm of the personal. Events and circumstances are interpreted from individual perspectives and within a limited frame of reference, that is, within the scope of our immediate environment. It is necessary to look beyond our own experiences, and to recognize the complex connections that exist between individual and social institutions in our efforts to understand change. We must allow our ‘sociological imaginations’ to contemplate how these circumstances are experienced in the larger structures of the world. According to Mills, people “yearn for facts, they search for their meanings, they want ‘a big picture’ in which they can believe and within which they can come to understand themselves. They want orienting values too” (p. 17). The difficulty lies in maintaining cherished values in a social and political context that is turbulent and

uncertain, and in understanding fully the way in which the lifeworld shapes our behavior and actions. Personal philosophies and values may be deeply entrenched, but will be affected by the environment in which people live and work.

Each woman who participated in this inquiry articulated, directly or indirectly, her philosophy for practice through descriptions of lived experiences, values and beliefs. As one of the participants noted, "we are what we teach. We teach what we are." That is, values and beliefs shape and inform our thoughts, and are evidenced in our behavior both as private citizens and in our practice as adult educators. The women describe strong and deeply entrenched philosophies about the purposes of adult education, and the responsibility they have to learners and the community. These beliefs have evolved over time, influenced by childhood, family, educational and work experiences. They are understood and interpreted in the context of the organization, its climate and culture, and are framed by distinctive personal philosophies. Considered together, these form their lifeworld, reflecting the way in which they act and interact with each other and within the organization. The problem, then, lies in being able to step outside of the immediate scope of our experience and in integrating previously unencountered events and situations into our existing knowledge. Viewing the world from a vantage point that differs from the known and the familiar, and incorporating new and, at times, unwelcome social and political transitions into our lifeworld can be a complex and arduous process. Our desire and ability to understand the "big picture" (Mills, p. 17, 1959) is hindered when we are mired in the present, constrained by past experience and knowledge. To make sense of change, and to gain an alternate viewpoint, we need to look at our experience, and the knowledge and biases contained in it "from the outside by looking at [ourselves] as being

different, the other" (Hart, 2002, p. 141). Viewing ourselves from the 'other' requires a shifting of consciousness. It means that we must try to gain a perspective that considers not only possibilities and obstacles, but also those "subjugated forms of knowledge" (p. 141) that are not always at the center of our known experience. "To see how one's own experience is placed in a larger, more encompassing context enriches one's understanding of the experience" (p. 141). Through listening, critical reflection, and talking with one another (reminiscent of the ideal speech act, as described by Habermas through Welton, 1995c) we can create a more complete and thorough knowledge of the world (Hart, 2002). A feminist perspective on the construction of knowledge reinforces the notion that meaningful dialogue, often gained through the telling of lived experience, contributes to a more complete interpretation and understanding of the realm that exists beyond the personal (Thompson, 1997). As feminist pedagogy teaches us, women's experiences can become resources "for identifying a historical location from which to imagine a different future ... for seeing differently" (Stone-Mediatore in Hart, 2002, p. 139).

### *Looking to the future.*

The adult educators in this study share a concern about the future of adult education in a changing social and political climate. They believe that adult education has dual imperatives that can satisfy both individual needs and the needs of community and society. Despite the uncertainty and 'hard times' that participants are experiencing, they express an optimism about their plans cope with, respond and react to organizational restructuring and restraints. They characterize these responses as "wishes and longings." One participant for example, describes her "romantic notion" of reviving the "heart and the spirit" of the college "after this terrible time." Many of the women emphasize that the

“people of the College” will continue to place the needs of students first, and that they will maintain their commitment to learners and to the “wonderful teaching-learning process we have here.” They seem to have no doubt that the adult educators with whom they work will continue to do “good” work, in spite, or perhaps even because of, the challenges they are experiencing. One participant believes that the “frustration” will cause “people to ... burst out with creativity!” This view contains elements of Ayer’s (2002) description of organizations that respond to a climate of turbulence and instability with creativity, innovation, and renewal. In order to foster such an environment, there must be open conduits for communication between faculty and staff (reminiscent of Habermas’ ideal of communicative discourse and action, see p. 43 of this thesis), and individuals need to be empowered and encouraged to pursue goals, and interests, and to take initiative. All levels of the organization assume responsibility for renewal, and there is a shared vision for the future of the organization.

According to one participant, Legare College has the “potential” to re-invent itself and to become a dynamic and vibrant organization. This optimism could be partially attributed to the connotations and meaning attached to the language adopted by the organization to describe its new direction. Words such as “renewal”, ‘rejuvenation’ and ‘innovation’ have become familiar in recent organizational dialogue and conversation, conveying images that evoke optimism and possibilities. Couched in those terms, and despite the ‘hard times’, change can be viewed as an enlightening, progressive and positive experience. It remains to be seen whether the members of this organization will act to create an atmosphere of renewal in response to the changing climate.

## *Conclusions*

Hodgkinson (1995) argues that “there is always something constraining about formal organization. We can never become totally committed to any institution” (p. 81). Welton (1995c) expresses a similar view of organizational behavior, its impact on individual members, and on individual interpretations of the lifeworld. “Institutions, as patterns of social activity and clusters of roles, form individuals and shape character by enabling or constraining possible courses of actions, and ways of interacting with others” (p. 133). For the adult educators in this study, change is imminent, and internal and external forces are presenting barriers and obstacles that will affect opportunities for action and interaction in the organization. The complexities of change, and the way in which it is perceived and interpreted by the participants, contribute to a sense of uncertainty and concern about the future. Mired in the day-to-day activities and requirements of their work, conscious of the social and political transitions that are taking place outside of their spheres of influence, these women are working to understand and interpret shifting organizational demands and priorities.

This inquiry is but a snapshot of a particular place and time. It reflects the perspectives of five women adult educators who, although they share a common history at this post-secondary institution, interpret their experiences through subjective knowledge and personal lenses. Their voices are illustrative of the complexities that surround us all in our limited vision of the world in which we live.

Although relevant and worthy, the dual traditions of adult education for personal and social transformation are at risk of being subsumed by a political and social climate where the needs of the individual as a producer and a consumer are stressed over the

needs of society. Organizational policy and practice in some post-secondary institutions emphasizes learning-for-earning, reflecting public attitudes and policies that question the value of education for purposes other than the development of a competitive workforce. Adult educators, some of whom hold firm views about the role of education in advancing and promoting social change, face substantial barriers in enacting these aims. They are challenged and at times threatened by 'new-era' policies that view unemployment as a temporary problem, stemming from the inadequacies of individuals and from the education system's failure to provide people with marketable skills. As Hart points out, learning-for-earning "seems to dominate the popular, practice-oriented discourse in adult education (1992, p. 99). Consistent with a neo-liberal ideology, this approach seems to echo the view that individual skill attainment is the means to national competition in an international marketplace, economic progress, and development (Brodie, 1996; Habermas, 2000; McQuaig, 1995).

Corporate ideologies, promoted and legislated by governments that represent the interests of business and industry, are filtering into educational and social support systems. The social imperatives of adult education are being neglected in a political and economic environment that views learning-for-earning as the key to community and social development. A community's or an organization's survival in the 'new-era' of global competitiveness and deficit reduction is dependent upon its ability to take on the attributes of the corporate world. Goals and visions are adjusted to fit with corporate ideologies of consumerism and globalization. The language of industry and business – downsizing, accountability, restructuring, restraints, efficiencies, productivity – has

become part of educational discourse, conveying an acceptance and acquiescence of an ideology that values efficiency and productivity over human need and worth.

These are 'hard times' for adult educators, students, and the organization. Further change is imminent, and the climate is one of uncertainty and turbulence. Tension, worry and anxiety about both the 'known' and the 'unknown' permeate participant thoughts and reflections. The impact of increased tuition fees and class sizes, and diminishing student supports and services threaten learner success and achievement, and adult educators are required to "do more with less" in order to "meet the bottom line." Where adult educators in post-secondary institutions once perceived stability and a common vision, they are now experiencing uncertainty about what the future will hold.

### *Recommendations*

The literature of adult education, like that of educational administration is not lacking in its examination of past and present educational practice and philosophy. It includes debates, criticisms and kudos for past and present practice. The literature of this discipline also examines its history and its future in light of educational, leadership, organizational and social theory. Overall, substantial research addressing a range of issues in adult education has been undertaken and completed by those who are concerned with its practices and prospects for the future. One area, however, that is less developed is that which addresses the abilities, values, philosophies and practice of adult educators who work in hierarchical and bureaucratic organizational structures. Although the literature on education speaks to these issues for teachers of children, it is at times unable fully to address the complex range of issues that adult educators face in post-secondary environments, and in their work with adult learners.

I make the following recommendations for adult educators and for future research in an effort to encourage and invite debate and dialogue, and to fill the void that I believe exists in our understanding of the unique and complex role of adult educators in the new millennium.

*For adult educators.*

1. Create and hold regional and local forums for the purpose of informing, guiding and supporting adult educators who are concerned about the erosion of the social imperatives of adult education in order to identify possibilities for practice.
2. Organize a local affiliation of adult educators from post-secondary institutions for the purposes of sharing information about practice and values, both individual and organizational, and other areas of interest to adult educators who work in organizations.
3. Encourage membership in established regional, national and international adult education organizations including: the Western branch of the Canadian Association for the Studies of Adult Education (CASAE); the Canadian Network for Democratic Learning (CANDL); and the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE).
4. Explore, in conjunction with administrative and management personnel, the characteristics of an organization that, while experiencing turbulence and disruption, can call on its members to collaborate in the spirit of renewal and innovation.
5. Create a mentoring or personal support network for adult educators who are new to the discipline, in order that they may benefit from the knowledge and experience that is held by seasoned adult educators in the post-secondary system.

*For further research.*

Knowledge and insight into adult educators' experiences of organizational changes and restructuring would be enhanced if a similar inquiry were conducted in 18 to 24 months with the same group of participants. Such a study could gauge whether organizational restructuring and economic restraints have had the anticipated impact on the perceived quality of education at Legare College.

It would also be valuable to explore the key questions of this study with members of the organization's administrative and management personnel. This would offer a means of identifying decision-makers' values and beliefs about the imperatives of adult education, and an enhanced understanding of the obstacles and supports that they experience in enacting their aims.

An inquiry aimed at exploring perspectives of adult educators who represent an array of disciplines would provide a broader spectrum of the values, beliefs and perceptions of those involved in post-secondary education. The exploration of life and work experiences of those who teach in the sciences, for example, could bring an alternative and possibly contrasting point of view to the topic under consideration.

Finally, it would be helpful to examine in-depth, both real and perceived influences on educators' values and beliefs, with particular attention given to those social and economic policies that act to enable or hinder practice. An increased awareness of those barriers and supports could provide adult educators with valuable insight and knowledge, aiding them to formulate effective responses to change in turbulent and uncertain times.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix A Sample Invitation to Participate*

Dear (potential participant)

As you may be aware, I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria.

I am writing to invite you to participate in a study entitled *The Purposes of Adult Education: A Case Study of Adult Educators' Values and Beliefs* that I am conducting as part of the requirements for a Master's Degree.

The purpose of this research project is to explore adult educators' values and beliefs about the purposes of adult education. The objective is to gain insight into the experiences that shape values and beliefs about adult education.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are involved in the delivery, design, implementation or evaluation of adult education programs. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will involve a one hour interview with me, at a mutually convenient time and location, with the possibility of a second, 15 minute follow up interview to address any questions that may arise from our first meeting. I would like to interview you to learn about your values and beliefs about the purposes of adult education. This interview will give you the opportunity to describe the experiences that have contributed to your values and beliefs, and will offer valuable insight into the values and beliefs held by adult educators about the purposes of adult education today. The interview questions are open-ended and will evolve according to participants' responses to the topic.

Research of this type is important because it will offer insight into the values and beliefs held by adult educators about the purposes of adult education, and will be of interest to adult educators, administrators, research and planning personnel of adult education institutions.

There are potential benefits to your participation in this research. Sharing and describing your values and beliefs about adult education may clarify, inform or validate your understanding and the understanding of others about the purposes of adult education today. Information from this research could enhance the knowledge we have about values and beliefs held by adult educators and may offer insight to others involved in adult education. This study may assist those who research, develop and evaluate adult education programs in their desire to meet the learning needs of the community.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may choose not to answer any of the interview questions, or you may choose to withdraw from the research at any time without any consequences or any

explanation. If you withdraw from the study, your data will not be used in the analysis. At each stage in the research, I will check with you about your willingness to continue participating in the study.

In terms of protecting your anonymity, be assured that I will keep your participation in this research anonymous and confidential. During the transcription of interviews your name and any identifying information will be deleted, and replaced with pseudonyms. Only my thesis supervisor will have access to interview transcripts. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected, as your name, initials or other identifying information will not be used in the data, results or discussion of this research project. Information about your position, location or any other identifying marks will be omitted or fictionalized in the data, results and discussion of this research project.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have about this project, or you may contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Carol Harris at (250) 721-7823, or at [harrisce@uvic.ca](mailto:harrisce@uvic.ca). If you are interested in being interviewed for the purpose of this study, I would ask that you contact me by (date) at (telephone number) or at (email address).

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you,

Sincerely,

Patti Odynski

### *Appendix B Participant Consent Form*

You are being invited to participate in a study that is being conducted by me, Patti Odynski. I am a graduate student in the department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Carol Harris. You may contact Dr. Harris at (250) 721-7823 or at [harrisce@uvic.ca](mailto:harrisce@uvic.ca).

The purpose of this research project is to explore adult educators' values and beliefs about the purposes of adult education. The objective is to gain insight into the experiences of adult educators that have shaped their values and beliefs about the purposes of their work.

Research of this type is important because it will offer insight into the values and beliefs held by adult educators about the purposes of adult education, and will be of interest to adult educators, administrators, research and planning personnel of adult education institutions.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are involved in the delivery, design, implementation or evaluation of adult education programs. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will involve a one hour interview with me, and perhaps a second interview of approximately 15 minutes if needed, for any follow up questions arising from our first meeting. We will meet at a mutually convenient time and location. The interview will give you the opportunity to describe the experiences that have contributed to your values and beliefs, and the final report will offer valuable insight into the values and beliefs held by adult educators. The interview questions are open-ended and will evolve according to participants' responses to the topic.

There are potential benefits to your participation in this research. Sharing and describing your values and beliefs about adult education may clarify, inform or validate your understanding and the understanding of others about the purposes of adult education today. Information from this research could enhance the knowledge we have about values and beliefs held by adult educators and may offer insight to others involved in adult education. This study may assist those who research, develop and evaluate adult education programs in their desire to meet the learning needs of the community.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may choose not to answer any of the interview questions, or you may choose to withdraw from the research at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you withdraw from the study, your data will not be used in the analysis. At

each stage in the research, I will check with you about your willingness to continue participating in the study.

In terms of protecting your anonymity, be assured that I am the only person who will know of your participation in this research and that I will keep your participation anonymous and confidential. During the transcription of interviews your name and any identifying information will be deleted, and replaced with pseudonyms. Only my thesis supervisor will have access to interview transcripts. Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected, as your name, initials or other identifying information will not be used in the data, results or discussion of this research project. Information about your position, location or any other identifying marks will be omitted or fictionalized in the data, results and discussion of this research project. Because of these features of confidentiality and anonymity, I do not anticipate that you will face any risk by participating in this study.

Other planned uses of this data could involve writing professional articles or presenting at scholarly meetings and conferences.

Data from this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and will be disposed of at the completion of the research. I will destroy the transcripts of interviews by shredding them, erase and destroy audiotapes, and erase all electronic data. Computer discs will be destroyed and the computer hard drive will be cleared of any research data.

It is anticipated that the results of this study may be shared with others through professional articles submitted for publication. The data may also be presented at scholarly meetings or conferences. I will provide you with an abstract of the completed report.

In addition to being able to contact me, and my supervisor at the above phone number, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research, at the University of Victoria (250-472-4362).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

---

Name of Participant

---

Signature

---

Date

*A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.*

*Appendix C Sample Interview Questions*

1. What do you believe to be the purposes of adult education?
2. What life and work experiences have contributed to your ideas about the purposes of adult education?
3. What do you believe is the responsibility of adult educators in preparing learners for life? In preparing learners for work?
4. What ideals of the early adult education movement are expressed in the organization's values, mission statements, and practices?
5. What values and beliefs about adult education do you share with the organization's stated mission and values statements about the purposes of adult education?
6. What supports do you have that enable you to enact your values and beliefs about the purposes of adult education?
7. Do you feel that you have been successful in fulfilling your values and beliefs within the workplace and the community?
8. Is there anything else that you wish to tell me about this topic?

*Appendix D Request for Institutional Permission*

Director,  
Educational Research and Planning,  
Legare College

Dear Director,

As you may be aware, I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria. As a requirement for a Master of Arts Degree, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Carol Harris. The objective of my research is to explore the values and beliefs held by adult educators about the purpose of adult education, and to discover whether the original ideals of the adult education movement are expressed by adult educators of today.

To this end, I propose to invite five adult educators to participate in an interview process to explore their values and beliefs about the purposes of adult education, and the experiences that have shaped and formed their views. I will be conducting these one-hour interviews at mutually agreeable locations, and at times that do not interfere with work schedules. A second interview of 15 minutes may also occur to conduct any follow up questions that may arise from the first meeting. I will be inviting those who are involved in the design, delivery, implementation or evaluation of adult education programs to participate in this research. All information gathered in interviews will be transcribed and reported using pseudonyms to ensure anonymity, and participant confidentiality will be maintained.

I believe that this study will be of benefit to adult educators and post-secondary institutions. The research will also assist research and development personnel in work related to the development of adult education programs that meet the needs of our community.

I am writing to ask for your support in this research, and for your permission to conduct this research with volunteers from Legare College. If you are willing to provide your approval I would ask that you write a letter of support that includes written permission to conduct this important research.

If you have any concerns about my work or its intent, please contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Carol Harris at (250) 721-7823, or at [harriscs@uvic.ca](mailto:harriscs@uvic.ca). I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Patti Odynski

## Vita

Surname: Odyński

Given Names: Patricia Lynn

Place of Birth: Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

### Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1999 to 2002
University of Nottingham	1986 to 1988
Red Deer College	1974 to 1976

### Degrees Awarded:

B.A. (Honours)	University of Nottingham	1988
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Title of Thesis:

Learning for Earning or Learning for Life? A Case Study of Women Adult Educators in the 'New Era'

Author:



Patricia Lynn Odyński

December 24, 2002