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Discerning Adult Students' Developmental Distinctions

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**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**In the Department of Educational Psychology
and Leadership Studies**

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

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Abstract

Counsellors are advised to include developmental knowledge of each adult student client into their practice and, in particular, to differentiate between those who are experiencing intrapersonal transformation and those who are not. The research, however, lacks guidance on specific ways counsellors might pragmatically accomplish this. Using an interpretative qualitative research approach, this study considered whether it was possible to discern a group of adult students' developmental distinctions by locating developmentally unique points of view they had towards experiences adjusting to school.

Participants were eleven female and four male adult students attending a British Columbia college; ages ranged in ages from early thirties to late fifties. Each participated in one audiotaped interview. Open-ended questions focused on gaining an understanding of their perceptions of their experiences adjusting to school. Issues salient to a participant were probed to determine meaning-making. Four dimensions of analysis were conducted on the data, transcripts of interviews. The first two dimensions located participants within the context of research literature on adult students. Consistent with other studies, though participants' life circumstances differed, they shared similar experiences. They had returned to school in response to a life transition, held common attitudes towards their schooling and faced similar challenges adjusting to school. The third dimension of data analysis assessed each participant's epistemological structure according to Robert Kegan's (1982, 1994) Constructive-Developmental theory. These findings revealed that, as a group, they were developmentally diverse. When interviewed, they had described their experiences from seven qualitatively different developmental perspectives. Nine participants had constructed meaning from varying phases of developmental transformation.

unique points of view, were concluded to be sufficiently reflective of specific epistemological structures to be considered a useful heuristic for recognizing clients' developmental distinctions. Developmentally distinctive points of view were reported, within the context of relevant adjustment issues, as Developmental Indicators—conclusive examples of how participants demonstrated developmental structures and phases of transformation, and also as *Developmental Clues* – inconclusive probabilities of developmental distinctions.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables	x
List of Figures.....	xi
Acknowledgments.....	xii
Dedication	xiii

CHAPTER I

Introduction.....	1
The Context of the Study within the Research Literature	1
Changing Demographics of Adult Students at Post-Secondary Schools.....	1
Researching Adult Students' Convergent and Divergent Characteristics	3
Developmental Conceptualization	4
Rationale and Focus of the Study.....	5
Research Questions	6
Significance of the Study	7
Definitions	9
Limitations	10

CHAPTER II

Review of the Related Literature	12
Perspective on Research and Practice in Post-Secondary Education	12
Research Describing and Conceptualizing Adult Students.....	13
A. Describing Adult Students.....	14
Divergent Life Contexts.....	14
Similar Attitudes	14
Thematic Adjustment Challenges	17
Psychological Issues.....	17
Situational Issues.....	19
Academic Issues	21
Environmental or Institutional Issues.....	21
Conclusions on Research Describing Adult Students.....	22
B. Developmental Conceptualization of Adult Students' Experiences	24
Including Concepts of Change	26
1. Adult Students' Multifaceted Experiences of Change	27
2. Transition and Transformation	28
3. Clarifying Transformation.....	29
4. The Potential of Schooling as a Catalyst for Adult Students' Transformation	30
5. Facilitating Transformation	32

Conclusions on Conceptualizing Adult Students' Experiences	
Developmentally	33
Integrating Research and Theory into Counselling Practice	35
A. Becoming Developmentally Informed by Theory	36
Developmental Theory Applicable to the Adult Student	38
Psychosocial Theories on Development.....	38
Jung.....	38
Erickson	39
Havighurst.....	40
Levinson.....	40
Neugarten.....	41
Midlife Transition	42
Contributions and Limitations of Psychosocial Theory for Conceptualizing Adult Students' Development	43
Structural Theories of Development.....	46
The Constructivist Perspective	47
Piaget.....	48
Perry	49
Women's Development – Rebalancing Gender Bias in Perry's Model.....	50
Kegan	52
Relevance of Psychosocial and Structural Theories to Adult Student Development	56
B. Becoming Developmentally Informed by the Client	57
Research on Assessment of Individual Developmental Structures	57
Relevance of Assessment Research to the Study	60
CHAPTER III	
Methodology and Methods	
Methodology	61
Characteristics of the Study's Qualitative Research Approach	62
The Value of Qualitative Research Approaches in Educational Settings.....	63
Rigour and Trustworthiness of the Study	65
Credibility	66
Transferability	67
Dependability	67
Confirmability	68
Researcher's Role	68
Researcher's Ethical Practice.....	72
Confidentiality	72
Honesty	72
Responsibility.....	73
Fair Return	74

Limitations of the Study	74
Methods.....	75
Recruitment of Participants	77
Data Collection	79
Context and Process of Interviews	79
Content of Interviews.....	81
Eliciting Participants' Perceptions of Experiences	
Adjusting to School	82
Facilitating Deeper Exploration of Participants'	
Perspectives with Subject-Object Probes	84
Sampling Decision	89
Preparation of the Data	90
Data Analysis.....	92
Taking a Qualitative Approach to Data Analysis.....	92
The Study's Four Dimensions of Data Analysis.....	93
The Study's Data Analysis Process.....	94
A. De-Contextualizing the Data	95
a. De-Contextualizing Data for First, Second and Fourth	
Dimensions of Analysis	96
Segmenting Units of Analysis.....	96
Developing Coding Categories	97
The Coding Process.....	100
b. De-Contextualizing Data for the Third Dimension of	
Analysis.....	102
B. Re-Contextualizing the Data.....	103
a. Re-Contextualizing for Dimension One	
- Life Contexts	104
b. Re-Contextualizing for Dimension Two	
-Attitudes and Challenges	105
c. Re-Contextualizing for Dimension Three	
- Developmental Distinctions	108
d. Re-Contextualizing for Dimension Four	
- Developmental Indicators.....	111
CHAPTER IV	
Findings and Conclusions.....	115
Dimension One Findings - Life Contexts	115
Audrey	116
Barbara.....	117
Chris.....	118
Darlene.....	119
Deanna	119
Janice	120
Josette	121

Marguerite.....	122
Maureen.....	123
Megumi.....	124
Myrna.....	125
Penelope.....	126
Peter.....	127
Raven.....	127
Stewart.....	128
Summary and Conclusions on Dimension One Findings.....	129
Dimension Two Findings - Attitudes and Challenges	130
Attitudes Towards Schooling	130
Learning	131
Achieving	132
Persistence.....	133
Recognizing Differences from Younger Students	133
Challenges Adjusting to School.....	136
A. Transitory Adjustment Challenges.....	138
Beginning a New Experience	138
Starting School.....	139
Financing Schooling	140
B. Prolonged Adjustment Challenges	141
1. Time and Energy	141
a. Situational Challenges and Responses	143
Physical Limitations.....	143
Learning in a Foreign Language	144
Other Responsibilities	144
b. Academic Challenges.....	145
Academic Skills.....	146
Academic Structure and Pace.....	146
Evaluation and Feedback.....	147
Self-imposed Pressure	150
Not Meeting Expectations	151
c. Responses to Academic Challenges.....	152
Managing Personal Expectations	152
Narrowing the Scope and Slowing the Pace	153
2. Campus Interactions	154
a. Instructors.....	155
b. Other Students.....	157
Summary and Conclusions on Dimension Two Findings.....	162
Dimension Three Findings - Developmental Distinctions.....	163
Descriptions of Varying Developmental Structures	165

A. Transformation between Structures Two and Three	165
Stewart (2/3) and Chris (3/2) – Middle Phase	166
B. Equilibrium at Structure Three	167
Darlene (3).....	167
C. Transformation between Structures Three and Four	168
Deanna and Josette (3(4)) – Beginning Phase	168
Marguerite and Raven (3/4) – Middle Phase	169
Penelope, Myrna and Peter (4(3)) – Final Phase	169
D. Equilibrium at Structure Four	170
Barbara, Megumi, Maureen, Janice and Audrey (4)	170
Summary and Conclusions on Dimension Three Findings	170
Dimension Four Findings – Developmental Indicators	171
A. Developmental Indicators	172
1. Academic Challenges	172
a. Evaluation and Feedback	173
Points of View of Participants in Transformation	
between Structures Two and Three	173
Points of View of Participants in Transformation	
between Structures Three and Four	176
Points of View of Participants in Equilibrium at	
Structure Four	179
b. Being Instructed.....	180
Points of View of Participants in Transformation	
between Structures Two and Three.....	180
Points of View of Participants in Transformation	
between Structures Three and Four	181
Points of View of Participants in Equilibrium at	
Structure Four	183
c. Adjusting to the Structure and Pace of Academic Work	184
Points of View of Participants in Transformation	
between Structures Two and Three.....	185
Points of View of Participants in Transformation	
between Structures Three and Four	186
Points of View of Participants in Equilibrium at	
Structure Four	189
2. Interactions with Others	192
a. Significant Off-Campus Relationships	192
Point of View of Participant in Equilibrium at	
Structure Three.....	192
Points of View of Participants in Transformation	
between Structures Three and Four	193
Points of View of Participants in Equilibrium at	
Structure Four	195

b. Other Students	195
Points of View of Participants in Transformation between Structures Three and Four	196
Points of View of Participants in Equilibrium at Structure Four	199
B. Developmental Clues	201
Experiencing a Life Transition.....	201
Attitudes Towards Schooling.....	202
Adjustment Challenges	203
Starting School	204
Learning in a Foreign Language.....	205
Summary and Conclusions on Dimension Four Findings.....	206

CHAPTER V

Discussion	210
Integrating Developmental Distinctions into Counselling Practice	216
Developmental Equilibrium.....	218
Developmental Transformation	219
Counsellor Beliefs and Values	224
Adult Development and Growth.....	225
Collaborative Relationship	226
Implications for Further Research.....	228
Concluding Thoughts	230
References	233

Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form	247
Appendix B: Permission to Include Camosun Students in Study.....	248
Appendix C: Participant Recruitment Notice	249
Appendix D: Letter to Participants	250
Appendix E: Dr. Nancy Popp's Credentials and Affiliations.....	251
Appendix F: Complete List of Data Generated Codes.....	256
Appendix G: Discriminating between Kegan's Developmental Structures and Phases of Transformation	267
Appendix H: Participants' Individual Subject-Object Developmental Assessments	276

List of Tables

Table 1: Overview of the Data Analysis Process.....	96
Table 2: Overview of Findings.....	115
Table 3: Overview of the Categories, Themes and Sub-themes of Participants’ Adjustment Challenges.....	138
Table 4: Developmental Indicators	207
Table 5: Developmental Clues	209

List of Figures

Figure 1: Divergent and Convergent Characteristics of Adult Students	4
Figure 2: Structural Conclusions on Developmental Assessments of Participants` Transcripts	165

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Dedication

In memory of ‘Deanna’

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

This study is based on the premise that understanding each adult student within his or her unique developmental context provides counsellors with a more holistic framework within which to meet client needs. Counsellors are advised to incorporate a developmental knowledge of their adult student clients into their counselling practice yet lack guidance on how development influences their clients individually. There is an absence of research on how adult students vary developmentally and on pragmatic ways to access this information. The purpose of this study is therefore to consider a way that counsellors might identify each adult student's developmental distinctiveness. I explored the effectiveness of identifying developmentally unique ways adult students individually make meaning of common issues as a heuristic for indicating their developmental distinctions. This focus was predicated on the notion that if adult students, as the research literature suggests, share common characteristics and issues yet are also developmentally diverse, they will express developmentally different points of view towards similar situations they face adjusting to school.

The Context of the Study within the Research Literature

Changing Demographics of Adult Students at Post-Secondary Schools

In the past twenty years, the average age of student populations at post-secondary institutions has increased. Enrollment of adult students is widely reported to be escalating at universities and colleges throughout the world, a trend that is predicted to continue (Breese & O'Toole, 1994; Conrad, 1993; Hybertson, Hulme, Smith & Holton, 1992; Kasworm, 1990; Kerka, 1993; MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994; Padula, 1994; Wong & Kwok, 1997).

In Canada, the increase in adult students' enrollment in universities and colleges has "vastly outpaced the rate of growth in the adult population itself" (Statistics Canada 1997, p 37). The average age of students in post-secondary education has increased dramatically over the past two decades, particularly in the past decade. Statistics Canada (1997) reported that, from 1976 to 1996, the number of adults attending post-secondary

schools full-time more than tripled. By 1996, seventy-one percent of part-time students entering post-secondary schools were over nineteen years of age (Statistics Canada, 1996, p 127). During this time, the age profile within older groups of students also changed. The number of part time students, forty years of age and over, increased from 16.5% to 23% of the student population (p 127).

Several reasons have been advanced to explain this phenomenon. In Canada, as in other countries, the number of older students increased substantially as the number of younger students correspondingly declined (Canadian Education Statistics Council, 1996, p 84). Also, although adult participation in higher education is seen to be motivated by individual goals to improve job prospects (Statistics Canada, 1997, p 32), it is also viewed as an outcome of social and economic change. Lifelong learning is now perceived to be both a necessity and a reality of adult life in Canada. The Education Quarterly Review (Statistics Canada, 1995) observed that, due to the acceleration of social, economic and technological changes, Canadian society has now adopted “a new paradigm of education The constant demand for the upgrading of skills is now, more than ever, seen as a prerequisite to the country’s sustained socioeconomic development” (p 47-48).

Adult students’ higher profile within higher education institutions has brought with it a demand for congruent institutional policy, curriculum and services (Kerka, 1995). Kegan (1994), noting the changing position of older students from their previously marginal status at post-secondary schools, observed that in the past older students had been “guests at someone else’s party . . . the ones who must struggle to fit in.” Now, they have become “why there’s a party at all . . . it is the institution that must now struggle to fit in” (p 273).

Post-secondary institutions and practitioners, reacting to the reality of an increased presence of adult students, were challenged at the onset to provide services and support consistent with their needs. The review of the literature in the following chapter will show that guidance was sought from research on the characteristics and needs of older students (Hybertson, Hulme, Smith & Holton, 1992) and from research and theory in the fields of adult education, adult development and adult learning.

Researching Adult Students' Convergent and Divergent Characteristics

Although research in higher education has traditionally been oriented to the individual student (Knefelkamp, Widdick & Parker, 1978; Taylor & Marienau, 1995), reviews of research studies on adult students conducted over the past two decades indicate a tendency towards characterizing the typical adult student. A predominant research focus has thus been on describing adult students' convergent characteristics. There is an abundance of research studies that describe adult students from a group perspective, as belonging, collectively, to a unique sub-population of the larger student body. The focus of such studies has been on identifying their similarities to each other and on their differences from younger students. These studies report that, while situated in diverse life circumstances and bringing a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences to their schooling, adult students share similar attitudes and face challenges with common themes (Kasworm, 1990; Kerka, 1995; King, 1994).

Recent reviews of such studies now point to the importance of also describing adult students' divergent qualities—how they are also different from each other. MacKinnon-Slaney (1994), for example, reviewed research on the difficulties of adult students to determine what, collectively, they needed to overcome in order to persist in their academic programs. She concluded that, though they faced similar difficulties, their responses were specific to the personal context of their experiences. Even (1988) concluded, "When adult students come to school they bring all that life and living have produced for that person and also the unique ways each adult has dealt with life" (p 30). Lawler (1991) considered recognition of adult students' inherent individual differences a central ethical issue for practitioners. "Adults are different from each other as well as from traditional students and our responsibility is to take these differences into consideration as we practice" (p 7). Figure 1 places the objective of this study, identifying adult students' developmental differences, within this holistic context. Research seeking to understand adult students requires a research perspective that includes both their convergent group characteristics and their divergent individual characteristics.

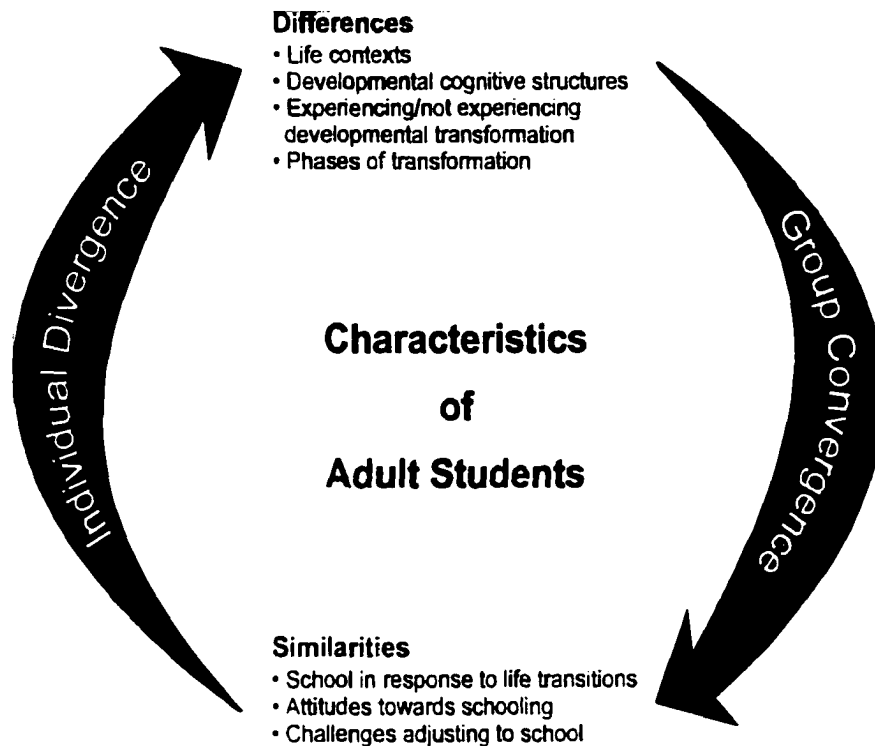


Figure 1. Divergent and Convergent Characteristics of Adult Students

Developmental Conceptualization

The review of the literature in the next chapter will also show that research on the needs and challenges of adult students has been conceptualized within applicable developmental theory. This line of research incorporated the view of adult students as, on the whole, returning to school in response to life changes or transitions (Cross, 1981; Kasworm, 1990; Kerka, 1995; Merriam, 1984). Further exploration into the multifaceted nature of adults' transitions and into individual change processes subsequently led to theoretical awareness that, in addition to experiencing a life change, some adult students might simultaneously be experiencing intrapersonal change, in other words developmental transformation. (Caple, 1985; Lyddon, 1990; McAuliffe, 1993). This view is consistent with the work of adult learning theorists.

Adult learning theorists (Daloiz, 1986; Knowles, 1980; Mezirow, 1994) have written about the transformative nature of adult learning, the developmental potential of adult students to acquire broader, more inclusive perspectives as they learn. In response to this body of research, there was a collective shift in adult education's basic

assumptions and accepted ways of operating with students. A different view emerged, formulating how adults individually learned and, as a result, developed. Adult education practitioners' approaches towards the learning needs of adult students subsequently changed from a rehabilitative, pedagogical view of adult education to an andragogical perspective on the developmental process of the individual adult learner (Cherem, 1990; Lawler, 1991; Taylor & Marienau, 1995).

Thus, concurring research strands describing adult students' similar characteristics, conceptualized within adult developmental and adult learning theory, have reached similar conclusions. The importance of a research focus on the complexity of the individual adult student that considers the needs of adult students within their personal developmental context is now recognized. As Mahoney (1990) has pointed out, "It has taken psychology a long time to put the person back together and we are just now beginning to sense the complexity and individuality of human experience. Moreover, only recently have we begun to recognize and value the contributions of each of the major theoretical perspectives" (p 21).

Rationale and Focus of the Study

Reflection, resulting in informed practice and thoughtful action, distinguishes the professional practitioner (Merriam, 1984). Reflective practitioners develop the habit of consciously and habitually asking questions (King, 1994). This study explores a way that counsellors may gain sufficient developmental knowledge about each of their adult student clients and thus be prepared to consider and respond to such important questions as the following: How is this client's personal development influencing the way he or she is negotiating this issue? Is he or she experiencing developmental transformation? Where is he or she located within this inner change process, at the beginning, the middle or the end? Does this positioning further affect management of issues? Also, how can I help this client in a way that is relevant and appropriate to his or her developmental context? Stein (1983) wrote that counselling is one of the few culturally accepted frameworks within which transformation is viewed as potentially beneficial: "What one finds with a knowledgeable counsellor, one hopes, will be tolerance, understanding and a

sense of the significance of their present psychological struggle. For this reason it is critical that a counsellor recognize what he or she is dealing with” (p 48).

Without a theoretical grounding in what is currently known about human development, counsellors may not be prepared to conceptualize the various dimensions of the client’s problems (Rosenfeld & Stark, 1987). According to Avis (1987), the client’s phenomenology, or subjective experience, is the most valid point of reference to help counsellors integrate what they know about adult development and adult change processes into their practice. The work of counsellors intrinsically involves “exploring the meanings and ramifications of presenting problems so that they can define them clearly and place them in relevant contexts” (Avis, 1987, p 18).

Exploring the different ways individuals make meaning of their experiences has been a focus for researchers interested in applying structural developmental theory directly to counselling practice (Baxter Magdola & Porterfield, 1988; Ivey & Goncalves, 1988; McAuliffe, 1993). This work, primarily conceptual, has focused specifically on validating the use of particular instruments or theoretical constructs to conduct epistemological assessments. To this point there is an absence of empirical studies that have extended this focus to research how assessing a client’s developmental structures might be integrated naturally into counselling practice. The intent of this study is to use structural theoretical constructs as reference points while considering how clients naturally show developmental distinctions.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided this study. The first research question was, *how do the attitudes and challenges of adult students converge and their developmental structures diverge?* This question was posed to affirm that the adult students who participated in this study shared qualities described in the research literature as common to adult students, that they were experiencing a life transition, and that they held similar attitudes towards school and perceived challenges adjusting to school that were thematic. The objective of this research question was also to affirm participants’ developmental differences. Predicated on findings responding to the first research question, the second

question was, *how do adult students' points of view reflect their developmental distinctions?* Lyddon (1990) concluded that client markers that may be associated with clients' developmental status are not well understood by counsellors. This question therefore sought to determine developmental indicators—natural and discernible markers of adult students' developmental distinctions.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to extend counsellors' knowledge of their clients' concerns to include an understanding of their individual developmental context. By extending the scope of research on adult students to include discerning an important aspect of individual differences, the study may help conceptually reconnect counsellors to their clients' uniqueness and also promote praxis, the joining of theory and practice.

Courtenay (1994), speaking from an instructor's point of view, questioned the rationale for understanding adult students' developmental diversity. He wondered how feasible it would be in a classroom to configure a learning approach based on students' differing levels of development. For counsellors, there is a sound rationale for seeking understanding of how adult students differ from each other in the ways they create and know their worlds. Cross (1981) has stated that practice without theory is blind. By including a perspective on adult students' developmental distinctiveness, counsellors are not only able to locate the adult student client within the context of research and theory, but also, again supported by theory, to return an informed focus back to the individual client sitting across from them. Given adult students' possibly diverse levels of development and having the ability to respond to each client at his or her individual level reconnects the informed counsellor to his or her client's uniqueness.

Understanding a client's developmental distinctiveness may provide a counselling framework that offers the opportunity to match service with individual needs, particularly during developmental transformation. The counsellor may be better able to structure his or her role to match clients' capacities and meet them at their level of understanding. In this way, counsellors could simultaneously offer appropriate and effective support to

accomplish the task at hand yet provide enough challenge to think in more complex ways (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988; Billington, 1990; Knefelkamp, Widick & Parker, 1978; Taylor & Marienau, 1995). It could also ensure a more client-focused and holistic counselling viewpoint (Ivey & Goncalves, 1988) and increase understanding of the constraints of the client's cognitive structure on adaptation (Daniels, 1993).

Sharing individual developmental knowledge with clients may also lead to a more realistic collaboration with clients on their immediate situation (Avis, 1987). It could offer clients a way to understand how they interpret their own experiences (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988), to understand their reactions to their educational experience (Fisher, 1997) and to identify behaviour patterns and constructive ways to maximize success in new or changed roles (Hughes, Graham & Galbraith, 1986). Such insights could also contribute to clients' increased sense of empowerment. McWhirter (1991) has written that the counsellor's conceptualization of the problem is critical in determining the potential empowerment of the client. Validating clients' subjective experiences and helping them to conceptualize their behaviour and analyze the effect of varying influences in their lives may promote client empowerment.

By re-focusing on the individual, this study also seeks to help extend research on adult students and further investigate the effective and appropriate integration of developmental theory into counselling practice. Having focused primarily on their convergent qualities as a unique sub-group of the student population, researchers are now also responding to the need to discern individual differences among adult students. This study joins this movement and, in doing so, contributes to completion of a conceptual research cycle. Returning the focus to the distinctive qualities of the individual student is consistent with the traditional philosophy of educational research and with client-centered counselling practice.

The other side of Cross's (1981) adage, that practice without theory is blind, means that theory without practice is empty. King (1994) has written that "The current knowledge base in the research literature provides educators with a powerful tool for understanding and identifying ways to improve students' experiences in higher education" (p 419). What is currently lacking, however, are useful real-life applications

(Fisher, 1997), the integration of theories of adult development with the practical day to day needs and concerns of adult students (Hughes, Graham & Galbraith, 1986). This study takes a step in this direction.

Definitions

Adult Student: In this study I have used age, thirty years old or more, to define an adult student. This is a criterion used frequently in the research literature on adult students (Lutter, 1982; Nordstrom, 1989; Taylor, 1995; Wolfe & Kolb, 1984).

Developmental Change: King (1994) defined developmental change in post-secondary students as “typically changes that are assumed to serve an adaptive function . . . to enable the individual to demonstrate not just different skills but more adequate skills . . . and reflecting not just a different perspective but a more mature perspective” (p 415). This definition is consistent with the perspective on developmental transformation taken by this study.

Developmental Clues: As summarized in Table 5, developmental indicators represented probable but *inconclusive* indications of participants’ developmental statuses. Different ways they talked about similar challenges starting school, about similar attitudes towards their schooling and towards younger students, about coping with language difficulties and about making the decision to return to school, were suggestive of characteristics of particular developmental structures.

Developmental Distinctions: Individual differences in developmental status and processes.

Developmental Indicators: As indicated in Table 4, developmental clues represented conclusive indications that participants had expressed developmentally relevant points of view towards some common issues. Unique meanings they had attached to academic and

interpersonal prolonged adjustment challenges were consistent with characteristics of their assessed developmental structures.

Developmental Perspective: Taking a developmental perspective means adopting a viewpoint towards adult students that places their experiences and situations within a developmental context. Implications from the literature on adult development and developmental change are considered when forming a comprehensive basis for understanding their issues. In this study indications of individual developmental status and change (see definition above) are included in this consideration.

Individual Student Development: This study applies this term when considering indications of an individual's distinct developmental characteristics and patterns that are reflective of their developmental status.

Transformation: In this study this term refers to developmental transformation, intrapersonal change in an individual's perception(s) or sense of reality towards situations.

Transition: In this study, this term refers to changes in adult students' life circumstances.

Limitations

The impetus for this study was my interest in expanding contextual knowledge of the adult student client. I wanted to deepen my own understand of adult student clients. I also wanted to help form a conceptual basis for adding developmental context to counselling practice in a way that is personally meaningful and relevant to the client. To do this, I sought understanding rather than explanation and thus focused on exploration and discovery of participants' unique inner thoughts and feelings. As such, the findings

of this study are not intended to offer understanding of adult students in general, or of their global developmental processes and characteristics.

The following chapter, Review of the Related Literature, expands further on the research and theory on adult students that have informed this study.

CHAPTER II - REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter surveys lines of research and theory relevant to the adult student, noting their contributions and delineating their limits. The intent is to set a broad stage for the parameters and the work of this study. There was no encompassing theoretical or research perspective in the literature to shape my research. What did emerge from my review, however, were concurring conceptual strands that offered a rich background and a plausible synthesis to support this exploration into how counsellors might discern clients' developmental distinctions. The educational, psychological and counselling research on the characterization of adult students and on applicable theory on adult development and adult learning offered valuable insights. These bodies of research substantiated and expanded on the ideas underlying this study.

Perspective on Research and Practice in Post-Secondary Education

Research and practice in higher education has traditionally been oriented to the individual student (King, 1994; Knefelkamp, Widick & Parker, 1978; Taylor & Marienau, 1995). Knefelkamp et al., after reviewing student development practices, reported the following:

From its inception the student development field has philosophically recognized the need for an orientation to student services that emphasizes the importance of responding to individual differences and working with the student at his or her developmental level . . . to date this is only haltingly developed and disturbingly incomplete . . . we have no theoretical models that provide us with a coherent picture of individual development upon which we could base our practice" (p viii).

King's similar review of student development practices sixteen years later again noted these limitations. Urging reiteration of education's traditional principle of attending to the individual student's development, she strongly recommended research on post-secondary students that adopted this focus. "Respecting individual differences has always been a central educational value and many assumptions are grounded in the acknowledgement of, and appreciation for, individual differences The importance of this sensitivity cannot be overstated" (p 418).

Attention to clients' individual differences and the uniqueness of their concerns is central to effective counselling approaches. Success as professionals caring for the needs of adult students "hinge[s] on the recognition of each student as a universe of one" (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994, p 274). MacKinnon-Slaney's review of research on the needs of adult students concluded "Adult satisfaction with, and continued participation in, formal learning is the result of a series of issues confronted by the individual adult in his or her unique situation" (p 274). Breese and O'Toole (1994) reached similar conclusions on the individuality of adult students' adaptation to college. For the participants in their study, successful adaptation "was ultimately found at the individual student level" and involved "factors located within the student" (p 188). Participants were thought to have adjusted differently to academic demands and the time commitment involved according to individual self-conceptions and relationships towards their student role.

Researchers have cautioned educators at post-secondary institutions not to be misled into considering adult students a homogenous group (Kerka, 1995). They are encouraged to recognize the differences among them (Gill, Coppard & Lowther, 1983) and to acknowledge that "the complex lives of adult students demand complex modes of interventions" (Hybertson et al., 1992, p 55). The available literature on adult students, however, has predominantly reflected a view of their convergent characteristics and challenges.

Research Describing and Conceptualizing Adult Students

Although the research literature acknowledges that, reflective of adults in general, adult students are complex and diverse, many studies primarily describe their diversity in terms of differing life contexts and focus on their converging differences from the traditionally younger students. The following section points out the contributions and limitations of this research perspective on adult students as a unique sub-group of the student population.

A. Describing Adult Students

Divergent Life Contexts

Numerous studies describe the rich uniqueness of adult students' past life experiences (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994), the wide variations in their backgrounds and life situations (Fisher, 1997), and their highly complex lives (Kerka, 1993). This information is generally presented to emphasize differences from younger students and to support expansion of institutional approaches that are more responsive to their immediate life needs (Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984; Kasworm, 1990).

Neugarten (1968), in her seminal study of middle adulthood, introduced the concept of "fanning out," which held that people change as they get older as the result of accumulated experiences. "As lives grow longer, as the successive choices and commitments accumulate, lives grow more different from each other" (p 891). An assumption in the literature, frequently noted, is that adult students are reflective of the diversity of adults in the general population. Counsellors of adult students are advised that they are dealing with a more heterogeneous population than traditional-age college students (Kerka, 1995). Their intergroup differences, however, are typically referred to in terms of demographic characteristics.

Similar Attitudes

While acknowledging diversity in adult students' life contexts, a generic profile of adult students emerges from the research literature. This approach locates adult students within the larger institutional context, as a sub-population of post-secondary students. Studies place an emphasis on adult students' differences from younger students. A key assumption in the literature on adult students, for example, is that older adult students, with life circumstances and needs that differ substantially from younger students, think about their academic work differently (Breese & O'Toole, 1994).

Adult students are reported to have different priorities than younger students (Lawler, 1991). They are typically described as self-supporting (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994) and, because they inevitably have other important obligations, as having more limited available time for school (Conrad, 1993). Kegan (1994) observes, "Traditionally

students entered post-secondary education during late adolescence or early adulthood as part of a process by which they gained independence from their families. Adult students enter higher education surrounded by the families they themselves have formed" (p 273). Also, unlike younger students with more limited life opportunities, adult students are also reported to bring life experiences and competencies to their student role (Lawler, 1991; Schlossberg, 1984).

Studies report that adult students share attitudes towards school that are different from those of younger students. Coping with other important role responsibilities and having different life experiences colours their values and decisions regarding school. They show different aspirations and expectations compared to younger students and have different perspectives on their school experience, different value systems and different learning characteristics (Conrad, 1993). According to Greenfeig & Goldberg (1984), a major difference is that adult students are seen to be voluntary students with highly specific and more clearly defined learning objectives in mind. Studies also report the highly focused reasons that adult students give for returning to school. Reehling (1980) reported that self-improvement and employment were almost equally ranked as major reasons for returning to school. Other studies have placed varying emphasis on these goals. Adult students are reported to be primarily motivated to improve their marketability in the workforce (Blair, 1993) by enhancing their value to current employers (Kent, 1994) and thereby increasing job satisfaction (Padula, 1994). They are also said to want to redefine their identity (Brandenburg, 1974; Lenz & Schaevitz, 1977) by increasing their personal knowledge (Smallwood, 1980) and by self-actualizing (Padula, 1994).

Possibly for these reasons, they reportedly value their schooling as a personal priority in their lives (Kerka, 1995). Studies report older students' higher motivation and greater determination to persist (Kerka, 1995; Schlossberg, 1984). For many, it is seen as a life choice, and "an overarching personal goal" (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994, p 273). They are not only seen as seeking an institutional credential but also new careers or job promotions, enhanced life competence, or simply a way to continue their love of learning (Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984). MacKinnon-Slaney (1994) concluded in her review of

adult students that they are “often relentless in their efforts to cope with combining complex lives and responsibilities with their academic life situation” (p 273).

A longitudinal study of adult students conducted by Reehling (1980) concluded that participants had high internal motivation for self-improvement. Von der Embse and Childs (1979) interviewed over five hundred undergraduate students to explore the effect of age as a factor in academic performance. They concluded that older students were more likely than younger students to be strongly influenced by a self-directed commitment to their educational goals and to be high achievers. The authors did not find significant statistical differences in native academic abilities based on age and therefore hypothesized that attitudinal differences between younger and older students were the result of older students’ complexity of life experiences and the motivational factors associated with age.

Adult students’ approach to their academic responsibilities is reported to be typically different from that of younger students. As a group, they are seen to consistently have higher educational aspirations and academic goals than younger students (Badenhoop & Johansen, 1980; Padula, 1994), be more self-directed and pragmatic (Lawler, 1991), show more commitment to their studies and be more self-motivated (Badenhoop & Johansen, 1980; Padula, 1994). They also reportedly spend more time studying and preparing (Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984) and accept more academic responsibility (Schlossberg, 1984).

Studies also report that it is important to adult students that their education is personally meaningful. They seek satisfaction in their courses (Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984). The adult students in Lawler’s (1991) study evaluated what they learned in terms of immediate application to their lives. Younger participants, on the other hand, were more likely to perceive what they learned as something that may or may not have future application.

Perhaps because of their attitudes and strong sense of purpose, adult students are also reported to achieve significantly higher grade point averages than younger students (Badenhoop & Johansen, 1980; Lauzon, 1989; Padula, 1994; Von der Embse & Childs, 1979). However, in spite of this generally positive outcome, the anxieties and pressures

of the older student are reported to exceed those of the younger student (Conrad, 1993). The challenges and obstacles they perceive themselves as facing are well documented in the research (Barkhymer & Dorsett, 1991).

Thematic Adjustment Challenges

The research literature portrays adult students as having similar challenges they encounter when adjusting to post-secondary institutions, which are also different from younger students. Devlin and Gallagher (1982) surveyed the student population of a British Columbia college to determine age differences in self-perceived needs. They found that older students had a common set of needs that were different from those of younger students and that they appeared to feel them more acutely. Rice (1991) also reported age differences in the intensity of perceived difficulties. He concluded that adult students “negotiate more formidable institutional barriers and have more roles and responsibilities that limit their participation” (p 88).

Reviews have noted similarities in the challenges adult students reported on their experiences adjusting to school. These thematic challenges have been categorized, recognizing strong overlaps, into psychological or dispositional issues; situational issues; academic issues; and environmental or institutional issues (Barkhymer & Dorsett, 1991; Cross, 1981; Kerka, 1989; MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994).

Psychological Issues

Psychological issues affecting adult students have received the most attention in the research literature (Kerka, 1989). These issues, defined as psychological factors surrounding the self and one’s world that affect academic success, include attitudes and self-perceptions (Cross, 1981), and coping skills, self-confidence and self-image, anxiety about schooling based on prior experiences and beliefs or expectations about outcomes (Barkhymer & Dorsett, 1991; Kerka, 1989). They also include issues arising from personal values, interpersonal competence and life transition experiences (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994).

Returning to school introduces academic rigour, a new system of interactive complexity, to an adult's agenda. For some this results in a shaky self-concept (Fisher, 1997) and low self-confidence (Lance, Lourie & Mayo, 1979). The adult students in Greenfeig and Goldberg's (1984) study reported becoming unsure of their abilities and worth. When the authors asked them to list their strengths and weaknesses, their list of weaknesses was twice as long as their strengths. This apparently is especially true for those who have memories of unsuccessful past education. Prior school experiences "can enhance learning, adding to the interpretation and complexity of the subject at hand and also hinder learning when it brings memories of negative education experiences producing anxiety, fear and a low level of confidence" (Lawler, 1991, p 5). Similar experiences are reported from first generation adult students (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). Padula (1994) speculated that female adult students have more problems in self-concept and self-perception than do male adult students. The women in her study showed significantly lower academic and leadership self-concepts than men. Although they had comparable skills relative to male participants, they were more likely to underrate their actual abilities.

For the participants in Carbone's (1988) study, embarrassment, fright, awkwardness and ambivalence attended the experience of returning. Other studies have also reported adult students' fears. They relate their fears of failing, of not being smart enough, of a lack of ability to study and learn, of dulled memory, of having been away from education too long, of competition and of not fitting in (Benjamin & Walz, 1990; Fisher, 1997; Lance, Lourie & Mayo, 1979). Fear also reportedly affected their attitudes toward themselves and toward their environment and to be a barrier to consistent progression through academic life (Fisher, 1997).

Studies are sometimes contradictory, reflecting the complexity of studying the psychological or dispositional issues of adult students. In a study on wellness factors involving almost four hundred students attending a university in Texas (Hybertson et al., 1992), the authors reported that the factor most frequently selected by two-thirds of the sample of older students as detrimental to wellness was not feeling in control of their own lives. Barkhymer and Dorsett (1991), on the other hand, after exploring forty-seven adult

students' perceptions on obstacles they perceived as producing high levels of stress, found that the factor most highly rated by participants was imposing too much pressure on *themselves* to excel academically.

Interpersonal challenges have also been noted as stressful. Adult students report feeling lonely and having a sense of being isolated primarily because of age disparities (Benjamin & Walz, 1990; Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984; Von der Embse & Childs, 1979). They have been shown to perceive the lack of both time and a supportive, encouraging peer group and informal networks, like those of younger students, to help them acquire important information about assignments, instructors and exams (Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984).

Some studies report adult students' struggles with a lack of interpersonal skills often needed in the school environment, such as learning how to read the social cues in the environment and how to balance assertiveness with diplomacy (Merriam & Yang, 1996). MacKinnon-Slaney (1994) observed that resolving administrative or instructor problems "necessitates dipping into a reserve of social competence and moving beyond the polite request to assertive negotiation. Some don't have that reserve for dealing with red tape or the inappropriate faculty member" (p 270). Kerka (1995) also commented on their challenges with faculty as emotional triggers. "Negative past experiences of school may become strong, especially when they walk into classrooms or deal with instructors that remind them too clearly of past experiences. This is especially true of learners who experienced insensitive teachers or racism and had been labeled failures" (p 2).

Situational Issues

Situational issues are circumstantial barriers adult students face that arise from personal life situations, particularly from role expectations imposed by family and work conflicts (Barkhymer & Dorsett, 1991; Cross, 1981). Such role conflicts disrupt their academic adjustment and well-being by distracting them from concentrating on the student role (Kerka, 1989). Role conflict is the most frequently reported stressor for many adult students, and a counselling priority (Padula, 1994). For example, Barkhymer and Dorsett (1991), in their study on obstacles facing adult students, concluded that of

greatest overall concern to participants are conflicts between academic, job and family responsibilities and guilt surrounding the perception of neglected parental or other family responsibilities. Wong & Kwok (1997) observed that occupation of multiple roles that simultaneously demand the fulfillment of certain responsibilities triggers intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts

For many adult students, school is a further, and unfamiliar, set of pressures, deadlines and tensions added to an already full schedule (Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984). They experience difficulties in simultaneously handling both school and family responsibilities (Breese & O'Toole, 1994; Carbone, 1988; Kasworm, 1990; Lance, Lourie & Mayo, 1979). There is an overriding sense for many adult students of not enough time to handle all of their responsibilities (Kerka, 1992). Many of the difficulties found in Woodley's (1987) study of adult students in England and Wales were related to the issue of time constraints. These were considered by participants to be their major concern. Similar conclusions have been reported in studies in Australia (Parkinson, Hayton & Strachan, 1987) and Hong Kong (Wong & Kwok, 1997).

Time constraints and role conflicts reportedly affect adult students' persistence levels. In her review of studies on adult students' retention factors, Kerka (1995) reported that participation is significantly complicated by competing external factors such as jobs and family responsibilities. A longitudinal study of adult students found that those who had dropped out did so primarily because of other responsibilities and lack of available time (Reehling, 1980). Returning to school causes considerable disruption in adult students' personal lives, causing anxiety and emotional distress (Creel, 1996; Padula, 1994). In Hybertson et al.'s (1992) study, the most frequently chosen beneficial factor in adult students' wellness was balancing personal needs with the demands from others. Younger students' most frequently chosen wellness factor was finding out who they were.

Several studies report more significant role conflict experienced by female than by male adult students (Kasworm, 1990). Lance, Lourie and Mayo (1979) compared data on role conflict gender differences from almost six hundred males and females. More women than men expressed personal conflict from balancing child care and family

responsibilities and also guilt for pursuing their own goals. Padula (1994) similarly observed that, although the men in the studies she reviewed were also parents, they did not cite family demands as a source of stress as frequently as women did. She concluded that juggling family and school responsibilities created problems that may be unique to adult women students. A study of male adult students (Lauzon, 1989), however, contradicts such conclusions. The author reported that an important theme in their difficulties was a sense of being torn between academic and family responsibilities. Many of the men reported that they felt as though they were caught in the middle of an inner tug of war.

Academic Issues

Issues categorized as academic involve adult students' abilities to learn, to study and to accomplish academic tasks (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). Studies have reported on adult students' writing and memory difficulties (Wong & Kwok, 1997) and on their unrealistic expectations regarding the time and expertise academic tasks require (Benjamin & Walz, 1990).

Some adult students begin their studies without adequate academic preparation, having never learned how to study and read well. They may have insufficient academic qualifications having been exempted from such requirements because of their mature student status (Wong & Kwok, 1997). As Benjamin and Waltz (1990) have observed, returning and persisting at school under such limiting circumstances takes a great deal of courage and determination. Phipps (1981) concluded that the academically unprepared adult who has compensated with other skills would need remedial assistance and that those who have not compensated would also need counselling.

Environmental or Institutional Issues

Studies of environmental or institutional issues focus on adult students' compatibility with the instructional environment and with institutional procedures and policies (Barkhymer & Dorsett, 1991; Cross, 1981; MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). Studies in this area include potential differences from younger students in perceptions of

instructional and institutional issues and identification of deficiencies and remediation interventions to ensure adult students' successful adaptation (Kasworm, 1990).

Adult students' sense of urgency about school procedures is frequently reported in the research literature (Lauzon, 1989). Adult students have demonstrated their impatience with standing in lines, with filling out forms, with accommodating inconvenient academic scheduling and time limits for completing course requirements and with other time-consuming campus regulations and processes (Benjamin & Walz, 1990).

Adult students are also reported to have different requirements of instructors. In contrast to younger students, they want more pragmatic information and clearer direction on what they, themselves, have to do to achieve academic goals (Cave, 1995). They also have different ideas on how they want to learn. Compared to younger students, they are reportedly less oriented towards passive lecturing formats and formal student/faculty relationships (Kasworm, 1990) and want more autonomy, freedom to be self-directed, and responsibility for their learning (Benjamin & Walz, 1990; Conrad, 1993).

Conclusions on Research Describing Adult Students

Researchers reviewing the literature on adult students have pointed out that many studies have attempted to describe "the typical adult student" (Barkhymer & Dorsett, 1991, p 5) and "to cast a broad net to develop baseline descriptors and dichotomous comparative samples" (Kasworm, 1990, p 355). Kasworm's extensive review of studies on adult students concluded that the largest area of contemporary studies "has been premised on the belief that understanding the adult student begins at a descriptive level. It was presumed that research could define global needs and concerns for adult students" (p 354). Studies were also predicated on the belief that, by defining collective characteristics, difficulties and needs, institutions would redesign structures and procedures for successful adult student adjustment (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994).

An appreciation of adult students' similarities is important. King (1994) has pointed out that researchers and practitioners are wise to recognize the potential for students' similarities and to take note of appropriate points of overlap. However,

although many important demographic characteristics have emerged from this research, the needs of adult students have not yet been clearly differentiated. Kasworm (1990) questioned research that tries to operationally define the adult student. "These discrete categorisations confound and mislead the more specialized and sensitive probing for variations, patterns, and categories of actions across the spectrum of the adult student population" (p 357). Adults, furthermore, are complex. "They can be described and categorised in an infinite number of ways on an infinite number of variables but not all will have utility or significance in counselling the individual client" (Avis, 1987, p 20).

MacKinnon-Slaney (1994) concluded that studies on the nature of returning students' difficulties "are plentiful but fragmented. They are contradictory and inconsistent and lack an integrated view" (p 268). Padula's (1994) review cautioned against counsellors' reliance on research that "concentrates more on describing facts . . . a collection of often unrelated information that seems to lack a co-ordinating structure on a theoretical level" (p 14).

Locating applicable and cohesive patterns and categories of behaviours and responses through descriptive and comparative generalizations of subgroups of adult students has not been effective in understanding the individual. After a series of studies designed to better understand adult students' motivational diversity at a university in Hawaii, Fujita-Starck (1996) concluded that, though findings revealed a distinctive set of student characteristics within subgroups of adult students, no single variable was found to adequately described any one group. Adult students have consistently confounded attempts to attach cohesive descriptors. Johnson, Wallace and Sedlacek's (1979) study, for example, inadvertently found support for the diversity of adult students' needs in their study. Their unsuccessful search for adult students' characteristic needs resulted in their conclusion that "the stereotypical returning student doesn't exist . . . the one variable necessary to consider is the heterogeneity of needs and characteristics of this group" (p 17). Other studies have also reached the conclusion that mature students deal with diverse difficulties in diverse ways (Wong & Kwok, 1997). Breese and O'Toole (1994) reported that, when participants in their study were asked for specific suggestions on their needs, their responses tended to be scattered across a wide range of areas.

Similar results have emerged from studies on factors affecting adult students' retention. Kerka's (1995) review concluded that a highly individual mix of factors led to conflicting results. Kasworm (1990) concluded that adult students reflected highly differential intragroup characteristics as well as significantly similar characteristics. "When considering the aggregate of adult students, there was no overall pattern of predictive influence of adjustment variables upon academic performance and satisfaction with college" (p 358).

Thus, the predominant research focus on understanding adult students' similar qualities and characteristics supplies a broader, though fragmented, group context for adult students as a population of students that are markedly different from the traditionally younger students. MacKinnon-Slaney's (1994) review concluded that research on adult students lacked cohesion in its conceptualization of adult students' adjustment issues and, for this reason, makes applicability to counselling practice difficult. From a broader, more comprehensive perspective, adult student clients' individual contexts, characteristics and challenges are more easily understood. (Benjamin & Walz, 1990; Kerka, 1995).

Practitioners have turned to the expanding literature on adult development to create a more comprehensive framework of knowledge about adult students (Taylor & Marienau, 1995). Adult students' collective differences from younger students and their similarities in attitudes and challenges have been conceptualized within applicable adult development and adult learning theory.

B. Developmental Conceptualization of Adult Students' Experiences

Viewing adult students from a developmental perspective is a predominant feature in the research literature. Research in higher education has generally been oriented to the development of the individual, and most goals in adult education reflect a developmental orientation (Merriam, 1984; Taylor & Marienau, 1995). For well over half a century, educators have maintained the importance of developmental theory as an important factor in planning and conducting educational experiences for students (Courtenay, 1994). King (1994) defined developmental change in post-secondary education as "typically changes

that are assumed to serve an adaptive function . . . to enable the individual to demonstrate not just different skills but more adequate skills . . . and reflecting not just a different perspective but a more mature perspective” (p 415).

Adulthood is recognized as having its own distinctive developmental characteristics (Levinson, 1986). Older students are recognized as significantly differing developmentally from younger students (Merriam & Yang, 1996; Mezirow, 1991; Nordstrom, 1989) and thus as facing different developmental issues and tasks (Cross, 1981). The main task of younger students is seen as preparing for adulthood. They attend post-secondary school as an extension of their schooling, usually fulfilling expectations of society and family (Lawler, 1991). Adult students, on the other hand, generally choose to return to school (Lawler) in response to changes in their lives (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980). For younger, late adolescent, students counselling focuses on helping them deal with issues of emerging identity and purpose in life. Adult students, in contrast, require a focus that enhances an already mature life and adds to the quality of their lives (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). Furthermore, compared to younger students, counsellors of adult students deal with an extremely heterogeneous population who are at vastly different stages of life (Kerka, 1995). Kasworm’s (1990) review reported findings suggesting that adult students, themselves, tend to see their involvement in a student role from a broader life context and to recognize that they have different and specific developmental needs from younger students.

Viewing adult change as a development process “creates a beginning point toward a more progressive, holistic, educational stance” (Wood, 1995, p 10). Knowledge of theory on adult development provides practitioners with guidelines for planning meaningful change experiences for adult students (Merriam, 1984). It delineates what they can and cannot expect of adults in terms of reasoning, thinking and decision-making styles, all vital ingredients in ensuring counselling success (Gold & Burggraf, 1998). Practitioners are concerned with helping adult learners with the “work” of development by helping them adjust to altered roles, relationships, routines and assumptions (Creel, 1996) and by offering a clearer realization of their patterns of change and accompanying characteristics (Wood, 1995).

Including Concepts of Change

At its simplest level, the concept of development implies change (Merriam, 1984). Contrary to earlier developmental theory, which assumed that adult years were marked by stasis (Nordstrom, 1989), adult lives are now defined as filled with change (Avis, 1987; Breese & O'Toole, 1994), and development is understood to continue throughout the life span (Creel, 1996). Returning to school is viewed for most adults as a major turning point that "has the potential to change an adult's life course with short and long range implications" (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994, p 271). The challenges adult students face are thus viewed by some researchers within a developmental change context (Blaxter & Tight, 1995; Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984; Kasworm, 1990), and practitioners' roles are seen, at least in part, as assisting or promoting this passage (Conrad, 1993).

All changes cause disorientation and stress to one degree or another (Schlossberg, 1984), and returning to school can create multiple stresses (Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984). Adapting to the student role can be compelling and challenging for any adult student. The more change pervades their daily lives, the greater degree of adjustment they must make (Creel, 1996). Adjustment often involves ambiguous situations for which there are no preparations and which have conflicting or unclear expectations (Champagne, 1989).

Bridges (1980) has pointed to a basic pattern, a process that underlies all types of life changes. There is always an ending, then a neutral or intermediate zone and then a new beginning. "When something ends we tend to feel afraid of loss. In the intermediate zone we feel confused, ungrounded. At the time of new beginnings we feel uncertain, anxious about choice and commitment" (Metzner, 1986, p 11). This three-phase pattern, pervasive in the literature (Metzner), has been used as a framework to understand adult students' experiences returning to school. Lauzon (1989), for example, explored a group of adult students' change process. He concluded that, as a group, they moved from an initial phase, adjusting to the loss of a former life at the beginning of their schooling into a period of personal disruption, adjusting to newer aspects of their life during the second or third year of study. Eventually, they moved into a third phase, reordering their personal priorities as they found a sense of balance between academic and family responsibilities.

1. Adult students' Multifaceted Change Experiences

A frequent assumption in the literature is that adult students return to school as a means of dealing with life transitions, large life changes. Enrolling in post-secondary school is well-documented to be a reaction to life changes, usually begun prior to entry and sometimes precipitated by disruptive life events (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Breese & O'Toole 1994; Creel, 1996; Cross, 1981; Merriam, 1984). After interviewing over seven hundred adult students, Aslanian and Brickell reported that 83% named some past, present, or anticipated transition in their lives as the reason for their participation in educational activities. The authors offered their frequently cited conclusion that transition in adult students' lives was the major trigger for their return to learning. "To know an adult's life schedule is to know an adult's learning schedule" (p 61). Similarly, Breese and O'Toole (1994) found that the adult students in their study had enrolled in post-secondary education in response to having reorganized life priorities. Taking on the role of student was perceived as a way of building a bridge to expedite the transitional process from a previous life role to a new one. Participants had moved beyond previous primary life roles and were attempting "to incorporate them into new identities" (p 187).

Some studies on adult students, however, also use the term "transition" to include adult students' experiences of intrapersonal change. They report that the effect of being in school is catalytic and facilitates psychological change. Lutter's (1982) two year study examined the impact of the transition to school on the lives of almost twelve hundred adult women students between the ages of thirty-seven and forty-five. Returning to school was concluded to be the opening wedge for changes other than simply changes in circumstances for many participants. The researcher observed that most experienced growing dissonance between old expectations of themselves and new desires that caused personal and family disruption and distress. They became "torn between what they should do and be and what they could do or be" (p 46). Lauzon (1989) reported similar reactions from the fourteen male adult students he interviewed at an Ontario university. The participants in his study had enrolled in school in order to cope with life changes. Lauzon, investigating their life transitions, concluded that the very act of participation in school itself had affected them and facilitated personal changes. They experienced

“fundamental changes in identity . . . in their relationships and in what was important or held value to them” (p 36).

The findings of these studies speak to adult students’ differing, perhaps concurring, change experiences. All such circumstances, however, are commonly referred to as transitions. Blaxter and Tight’s (1995) review concluded that there was a notable lack of clarity regarding adult students change experiences. “The idea of adult transitions has been too loosely defined, and has been applied in varied ways in different studies. In some cases, the literature focuses on the external, social roles assumed by individuals; in other cases, on the self-identities which they develop; while in yet other cases the two are linked” (p 234).

Of primary importance to counsellors, therefore, is to understand the multifaceted nature of the changes that adult students experience before helping to negotiate them (Bridges, 1980; Schlossberg, 1984).

2. Transition and Transformation

Life transitions, changes in life circumstances, can precipitate an inner sense of disturbance and propel a need to develop in some way (Wolfe, O’Connor & Crary, 1990; Wood, 1995). Levinson (1986) pointed out that transition, changes to life structures or circumstances, can be characterised by displacement from an equilibrium that: “challenges adults and requires them to grow” (p 28). A life transition, therefore, has the capacity for developmental *transformation*, “an inner paradigm shift towards new learning, new meanings of reality and development of new components of knowledge and skills” (Kasworm, 1983, p 32). Studies have found that adult students report transformative experiences. Not only does returning to school provide a sense of direction, but it can also offer the potential for inner development (Benjamin & Walz, 1990). Kegan (1994) observed that “only a fraction of the adults entering school do so with the hope or intention of personally growing . . . most have what they consider far more practical goals. Yet, schooling experience in adulthood places one in grave danger of growing” (p 293).

Caple (1985) stated that “people have the ability to increase the levels of their consciousness and the capacity to produce simultaneous levels of consciousness” (p 176). According to Caple, individuals experience change associated with being and change associated with becoming. He did not see these differing experiences as being opposed to each other but “simply two related functions of reality” (p 177).

In this study the term *transition* will be used in reference to adult students’ life changes. *Transformation* will be used to refer to adult students’ intrapersonal change.

3. Clarifying Transformation

Tennant (1993) differentiated between “developmental progress,” change “within a framework of taken-for-granted assumptions about the world” and a “developmental shift,” change to “a new-world view . . . a process which challenges these assumptions” (p 40). According to Tennant, a developmental shift, or transformation, “always involves critical reflection upon the distorted premises sustaining our structure of expectation” (p 40). Lyddon (1990) made a similar distinction between first-order change, essentially “change without change,” and second order change, “change of change” (p 122). First order change maintains the coherence of a system and does not change its fundamental structure, its way of knowing about the world. Second-order change, on the other hand, does alter this fundamental structure. There is a qualitative change in the body of rules governing the inner structure, an individual’s sense of knowing. Others have pointed out similar distinctions: surface and deep structure changes (Arnkoff, 1980), movement-within and movement-through forms (Basseches, 1984), and peripheral beliefs and core self-beliefs (Borders & Archadel, 1987). In all cases, the second term refers to transformation. “If a transition triggers a deconstruction and then reconstruction of a current way of knowing, the tacit assumptions that the person uses to make sense of the experience, then transformation can be said to have occurred” (McAuliffe, 1993, p 25).

Experiencing transformation has a profound impact on an individual. An individual’s patterns of thought or perceptions change. “The structures and functioning of our psyche become different . . . [it] changes the way we feel about the world, our emotional attitude of basic trust or mistrust, faith or doubt, acceptance or rejection, and

changes our feelings about ourselves, our self-acceptance, self-esteem, self-love” (Metzner, 1986, p 15). Movement through this acute time is seen as one of the most teachable periods in an adult’s life (Wood, 1995) in that it provides the motivation for new learning (Main, 1993).

4. The Potential of Schooling as a Catalyst for Adult Students’ Transformation

Studies have found compelling evidence that adult education and development are sometimes “inextricably bound” (Tennant & Pogson, 1995, p xii). Involvement in education has the capacity to broaden and transform adults’ perspectives and values (Billington, 1990; Creel, 1996; Hofer & Pintrich, 1997; Merriam & Yang, 1996; O’Connor & Wolfe, 1987; Taylor & Marienau, 1995). Taylor (1995) concluded her review on the development of adult students with the observation that, for some, “being a student entails a shift from identifying themselves in terms of their psychological surroundings to authoring and authorizing their own identity” (p 91).

Adult learning theory emphasizes the importance of understanding an adult’s capacity for transformative development (Merriam & Yang, 1996) and views practitioners’ roles in adult education as helping people grow beyond the familiar and unquestioned (Tennant, 1993). Adult learning theorists have written of the transformative nature of adult learning and the ways this produces broader more inclusive perspectives (Daloz, 1986; Knowles, 1980; Mezirow, 1991, 1994).

Knowles’ concept of andragogy assumes a growth orientation on the part of adult learners and that life experience, including education, holds the potential for learning that leads to development. He contends that, as individuals develop, their accumulated reservoir of experiences, their history, becomes a resource for learning, and their self-concept moves from dependency to self-direction. Daloz has written that learning in adulthood results in seeing the world differently, that developmental movement is from “narrow and self-centered filters through increasingly inclusive, differentiated and compassionate perspectives” (p 149). After extensive study of the effect of education and learning on adult students, Mezirow proposed the uniquely adult concept of *perspective transformation*.

From Mezirow's point of view, perspective transformation is "the engine of adult development" (1994, p 228). In other words, to Mezirow, changes in an adult's view of reality drives developmental change. "*This is what development means in adulthood*" [original emphasis] (p 155). Transformation of an individual's perspective, or frame of reference, emerges from interactions between the individual and his or her environment. According to Mezirow, an individual's meaning structures are transformed when he or she is confronted by a disorienting dilemma, a situation when old ways of thinking are no longer functional. If the individual subsequently reflects on the grounds or justification of his or her existing beliefs, transformation begins. New learning happens when he or she reconstructs the meaning of experiences and appropriates a new or revised interpretation.

Perspective transformation takes place within the context of problem solving. Individuals resist learning anything that does not comfortably fit with their meaning structures yet have an urgent need to understand the meaning of their experience. Thus, given the limitations of each meaning structure, individuals strive toward viewpoints that are more functional, more inclusive, discriminating and integrative of their experience. According to Mezirow, this process evolves towards "a more empowered sense of self, more critical understanding of how one's social relationships and culture have shaped one's beliefs and feelings." This process can bring with it "a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable and integrated perspective" and "more functional strategies and resources for taking action" (1994, p 223).

Mezirow points to the process of transforming meaning structures as central to both the developmental processes in adulthood and to perspective transformation. "Development in adulthood refers to movement toward more developmentally progressive meaning perspectives . . . through critical reflection we can change our perspective" (1994, p 224). Changes in an individual's ways of making meaning are also acknowledged by other researchers as the fundamental impetus for learning and development in adulthood (Courtenay, Merriam & Reeves, 1998). According to Daloz (1986), "we learn by progressively taking apart and putting together the structures that give our lives meaning" (p 236).

5. Facilitating Developmental Transformation

Developmental transformation is not a predictable outcome of change in an individual's life. Ackerman (1980) synthesized the views of sixty-three mental health professionals who were experienced in dealing with adults undergoing changes. She concluded that an individual "has both choice and power to grow and develop" and that making life changes during adulthood could result in "inner growth, maintenance or stagnation as a result of the strategies each individual chose to use" (p 23). Some of the participants who were changing their lives in O'Connor and Wolfe's studies (1987) did not subsequently experience transformation. It was only the participants "who more deeply examined and modified their underlying set of beliefs, values, assumptions and expectations" that were more likely to demonstrate personal growth (p 806).

These findings are consistent with Mezirow's (1994) view on self-reflection as a critical element in transformative learning. As discussed earlier, Mezirow's (1994) pre-requisite for perspective transformation was that the individual reflect on their current belief system to determine whether or not it was functional in a particular situation. According to Mezirow (1994), reflection of this nature involves critically examining the premise, the underlying assumptions, the origins, nature and consequences of beliefs.

We may reflect on the content, the process, or the premise of a problem. Reflecting on the content and process is the way we change our minds, an everyday phenomenon. Reflecting on the premise of our problem . . . can transform perspectives, a less common and more significant learning experience.(p 224).

In order to navigate developmental transformation, the adult student needs to develop a sense of direction and build supports that promote this (Taylor, 1995). Mezirow (1994) recommended that practitioners facilitating transformation "help adults construe their experience in a way in which they may more clearly understand the options open to them so that they may assume responsibility for decision making" (p 20). Counsellors should be in the position to provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support to help to facilitate developmental transformation. Counselling interventions "targeted at the stability and security needs of some adults will miss the mark for those in need of challenge and risk taking" (Gill, Coppar & Lowther, 1983, p 25). "If the

challenge or disequilibrium is too great the student will retreat, if the supports are too protective, the individual will fail to develop” (Knefelkamp, Widick & Parker, 1978, p ix). A student, for example, who is offered information beyond their immediate conceptual capabilities, may become overwhelmed and discouraged. On the other hand, a student who is prepared to begin expanding their conceptual capabilities, to develop, needs information just beyond what they already know in order to move forward.

Billington’s (1990) study on adult students’ transformation experiences revealed that adults could and do experience significant growth but only under helpful circumstances. She concluded that adult students need to feel a sense of safety to explore new ways of thinking and being. The participants in her study experienced support “only within [a] non-authoritarian environment which emphasized mutual trust and respect” and in which “feedback and unconditional acceptance were important elements” (p 59). She also concluded that they needed exposure to pacing, intellectual and, or, moral complexity beyond their present level of functioning. The students in her study who reported a sense of significant personal development had been challenged in this way. They reported experiencing high levels of intellectual stimulation to the point of feeling discomfort.

Conclusions on Conceptualizing Adult Students’ Experiences Developmentally

There is strong rationale supporting inclusion of a developmental conceptualization of adult students’ issues into counselling practice. It provides comprehensive understanding of adult development relevant to the changes and challenges they experience. Researchers point to the value of the adult development literature to inform counsellors about the diversity of change affecting adult learners and the importance of avoiding narrow views of a single perspective of adult development (Courtenay, 1994; Merriam, 1984; Wood, 1995). “The more one understands the developmental process the greater the likelihood of being able to relate better to a spectrum of adult learners” (Tennant & Pogson, 1995, p 194).

Periods of change in an adult’s life are opportunities for counsellors to consider individual developmental factors as well as other contextual opportunities and constraints that influence development (Fisher, 1997; Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). The research literature

points to the need for practitioners to pay critical attention to the varying nature of the changes adult students experience and to related processes. A particular need is to differentiate between the differing experiences of transition and transformation.

Underlying life transitions—life events involving a beginning with losses, a middle with personal disruption, and an ending with a sense of resolution—is the capacity for inner transformation. Experiencing a life transition, however, does not necessarily result in transformation. Clearly, to avoid inappropriately applying transformation theory and practice to transition situations, counsellors need to distinguish between changes that are transformative and those that are not (McAuliffe, 1993; Tennant, 1993). Lyddon (1990), in fact, calls this “ethically imperative” (p 125). Furthermore, an informed developmental conceptualization of the adult student client experiencing transformation would also include an understanding of where they are in this process. As a change process, it would also have an individually unique beginning, middle and ending (Bridges, 1980).

Understanding individually distinct patterns of development is important for relevant application of theory. Kerka (1989) noted mixed results in studies in which developmental theory was applied to adult student populations. She concluded that inconsistencies in the studies she reviewed were due to the individual diversity of adult students: “Perhaps the most relevant implication is to recognize the persistence of different developmental factors” (p 3). In her review, King (1994) came to similar conclusions:

It is better to think of student development using images that connote the complexity and richness of concept . . . acknowledging that each student represents a slightly different set of shapes, colours and textures that constitute his or her own personal kaleidoscope, each with its own specific set of developmental attributes. With new experiences, these attributes shift, slightly or dramatically, and the picture in the individual’s kaleidoscope changes accordingly. A more narrow or precise approach may not do justice to the richness of this concept. (p 413-4)

I turn now to a consideration of relevant adult developmental theories and their selective integration into counselling practice.

Integrating Research and Theory into Counselling Practice

Merriam (1984) predicted a need for ways “whereby knowledge about adult development processes can flow more easily between practitioners and researchers” (p 29). It has taken time, however, for research to build a body of knowledge on adult development and even longer to translate this knowledge effectively into practice. Though integrating developmental theory into practice has become an important counselling focus (Daniels, 1993), research has yet to offer practitioners guidance on how to identify developmental constructs and put them to practical use (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988). King (1994), noting this continuing gap, stressed the need for an organizing framework.

Avis (1987), for example, proposed using a counselling framework that combined developmental, collaborative and idiographic perspectives. Her approach was founded on the premise that “the making of enlightened choices” (p 17), in terms of relevant developmental theories, evolved from collaborating with clients and considering their individual frame of reference. Taking a developmental perspective means considering the broad implications of the literature on adult development and transitional changes as a basis for forming a comprehensive view of adults’ developmental issues. A collaborative perspective involves sharing this information with the client and helping them to define, assess, select and achieve personal growth possibilities for themselves. From an idiographic perspective, the counsellor “views individual differences as the source of each adult’s uniqueness” (p 18). This point of view conceptualizes the relevance of theory to the individual. According to Avis, because adults define, perceive and subsequently deal with change differently, it is important that the counsellor consider “the client’s phenomenology as the most valid point of reference for evaluating the applicability of the literature on adult development and adult change processes” (p 19). Avis’s proposed approach distinguished between counsellors as having professional expertise and counsellors as experts. This difference, according to Avis, empowers clients by validating their experiences and helping them construct their own informed frameworks to make decisions.

Appropriate use of a counselling model such as the one Avis has proposed requires not only knowledge of developmental theory relevant to adult students but also

the means to identify and consider their developmental distinctiveness. According to Avis, counsellors gain individual developmental knowledge of their client by becoming contextually informed by the client in order to apply relevant theories. In other words, the counsellor brings to the client what he or she knows theoretically about adult development and change, but this knowledge only becomes relevant and thus applicable as the counsellor learns from the client how their concerns fit within this developmental context. "What gives theories relevance is the degree to which they can be applied to an individual adult's unique life experiences" (Fisher, 1997, p 21).

The following sections explore this dual approach to becoming developmentally informed about the adult student client.

A. Becoming Informed by Developmental Theory

Merriam (1984) concluded her review of studies on adult students by commenting, "When one considers the diversity of concerns, developmental stages, abilities, within a group of adult learners, the task of meeting any of their needs seems overwhelming. On the other hand, when one is knowledgeable about the literature on the nature of adulthood, the implications for enhancing practice seem limitless" (p 17). Being informed about theory on adulthood and adult development is an integral part of counselling. Developmental models provide a theoretical and empirical foundation for practice to augment common sense and professional judgment (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988). Being informed also means that the counsellor's frame of reference includes knowledge of significant change issues (Manuele-Adkins, 1992). A number of reviews evaluating developmental theory in terms of its application to educational practice, however, have pointed out difficulties in acquiring a sense of being fully informed.

Knefelkamp, Widick & Parker (1978), after reviewing post-secondary student development theory and research, reported that, to the mid-1970s, educational practice lacked developmental theoretical models that provided a coherent, comprehensive picture of student development. Sixteen years later, King (1994) conducted a similar review and came to similar conclusions. Although the developmental knowledge base had grown

dramatically in the intervening years, according to King, “developmental theory remains unclear and ambiguous . . . had many gaps and offered limited perspectives for today's practitioner” (p 414). Other reviews have concurred. MacKinnon-Slaney (1994, p 268) concluded that “The literature on adult developmental theory elicits more questions than answers . . . and does not provide direction for counsellors who work with adult learners.” According to Wortley and Amatea (1982), “On the whole, developmental theory is too broad in scope and too unconnected in its implications to the counselling profession to present an integrated picture applicable to counsellors” (p 479). Elliott (1985) noted, “Their diverse approaches and properties often overlap and at times contradict each other, leaving even the most scrupulous readers bewildered” (p 134). Caffarella (1996) concluded that a possible reason that theories on adult development had limited ability to present a cohesive picture was that they lacked “the ability to adapt to different people and situations which always seem to be in a constant state of flux and transition” (p 43).

Adults' individual differences therefore diminish chances of an overall, comprehensive conception of the nature of adulthood. It appears that no set of theoretical assumptions adequately constitute a complete base of knowledge within which to consider adult students' developmental context (Courtenay, 1994; King, 1994; MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994; Merriam, 1984; Neugarten, 1968). “just as no single photograph can show all sides of an individual” (Billington, 1990, p 54). For these reasons, counsellors are cautioned against basing their practice on only one model of development (Courtenay, 1994; Merriam, 1984). Instead, they are encouraged to recognize and value the potential contributions of each of the major theoretical perspectives (King, 1994) and to focus on blending relevant developmental theories in order to develop their own developmental assessment of the students they serve (Elliott, 1985; Fisher, 1997; MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). “Different theories can best be seen as a mosaic of necessary pieces . . . [and] potential contributions to educational practice” (Knefelkamp, Widick & Parker, 1978, p xi). This blend should be a “multifaceted framework . . . encompassing the diverse aspects of adult lives” (Hughes, Graham & Galbraith, 1986, p 26) and “an intentional relationship . . . applied cautiously and creatively to practice” (Merriam, 1984, p 25).

Developmental Theory Applicable to the Adult Student

I have discussed theory on adult transition and transformation processes earlier. I turn now to examination of psychosocial and structural or cognitive orientations to adult development theory, prevalent theoretical references in contemporary educational research (Caffarella, 1996; Fisher, 1997; Kasworm, 1983; Knefelkamp, Widick & Parker 1978).

Psychosocial Developmental Theories

There are several characteristics common to psychosocial theories of development. First is the premise that individuals develop throughout their lives. A second is the presence of hierarchical stages, often involving age ranges for each stage, with a directional emphasis that extends from simplicity to complexity. Competencies in one stage must be acquired before an individual can move to the next. A third characteristic is an emphasis on self-identity and growth with common goals of autonomy, separateness, and independence (Courtenay, 1994). Development is therefore conceptualized within this orientation as a series of developmental tasks or stages that provide a foundation for evaluating personal growth. Life phase and life event models of psychosocial developmental theories have maintained popularity amongst North American education researchers, including those interested in development of adult students, over several decades (Blaxter & Tight, 1995).

Jung

The view of development as reflecting a linear life span progression through various age-related stages of development originated with Carl Jung's clinical observations and subsequent developmental constructs (Stevens, 1990). Jung viewed an individual's entire life cycle as a continuing process of metamorphosis. His theory of change incorporates the principle of individuation, "the development of the personality whereby an individual becomes as complete a human being as it is possible to be" (Stevens, p 9).

According to Jung, individuals experience three developmental stages of life: youth, middle age and old age. He compared these stages to the span of one day and the rising and setting of the sun. In youth, the rising sun of morning, the individual "looks upon

the wide, bright world which lies before it in an expanse that steadily widens the higher it climbs” (cited in Campbell, 1971, p 14). Middle age represented noon, when the sun began its descent towards sunset or old age. “And the descent means the reversal of all the ideals and values that were cherished in the morning. The sun falls into contradiction with itself. It is as though it should draw in rays instead of emitting them. Light and warmth decline and are at last extinguished” (cited in Campbell, p 15). Thus, middle age is seen as a turning point between youth, a period of time when an individual expands their global consciousness and old age, a period of time characterized by introspection and pre-occupation with the self. Jung noted that it is at midlife that individuals begin to question their long-held convictions (Fisher, 1997) and to incorporate certain un-lived or denied aspects of the self.

Erikson

Erikson (1978) extended Jung’s theories on human development. He proposed that human development is comprised of developmental tasks that arise at age-specific stages of life. Biological and social pressures provide awareness that these tasks, largely descriptive of ego development and involving dichotomous constructs, need to be addressed (Courtenay, 1994; Hughes, Graham & Galbraith, 1986). According to Erikson, resolution of conflict between each of these constructs is vital for successful development and the process is sequential. Resolution of earlier stages is required before an individual can move to later stages.

Erikson’s proposed developmental task in young adulthood was to resolve the struggle between intimacy and isolation and at old age to come to resolution in the conflict between integrity and despair. Between these two stages, middle adulthood, he proposed that an individual’s developmental task was to resolve conflict between generativity and stagnation (Fisher, 1997). At middle age, according to Erikson, one had achieved a sense of identity and developed and sustained intimate relationship. The individual was therefore ready to move from egocentrism and towards generativity, a concern for the welfare of society and future generations, movement that included an element of selflessness or reaching beyond one’s own immediate concerns. Stagnation

referred essentially to remaining preoccupied with one's own emotional and physical needs. As in all of Erikson's proposed tasks, the struggle for successful resolution of conflict at midlife involved interactions between the individual and their environment. At this stage in an individual's life, it was a turning point from which he or she made adjustments in response to changes within themselves and in their environment. They either moved beyond, or remained focused on, their own immediate needs.

Havighurst

Havighurst (1953) is credited with originating the term developmental tasks. He defined such tasks as "that which arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual, successful achievement of which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness, disapproval by society and difficulty with later tasks" (p 2). Several years later (1969b), he elaborated further on these tasks in terms of adult education. In his opinion, developmental tasks offered adult students, "teachable moments . . . the adult educator can usefully see the adult part of the life cycle as consisting of a set of stages or phases which make different demands on education and offer different opportunities to the educator" (Havighurst, p 18).

According to Havighurst, there are specific developmental tasks middle-aged individuals in western cultures face. Some of these are, accepting and adjusting to physical changes, reaching and maintaining satisfactory performance in one's occupation, adjusting to ageing parents, assisting teenage children to become responsible and happy adults, relating to one's spouse as a person, assuming social and civic responsibility, and developing leisure-time activities.

Levinson

Expanding on Erikson's theory, Daniel Levinson (1986) proposed a model of development in which adulthood is characterized by alternating periods of stability, when individuals solidify their life structures or circumstances, and by what he calls periods of transition, when the existing structure is re-examined and modified. According to Levinson, although adults are individually unique, all go through this basic sequence

during qualitatively different phases, or seasons. Developmental change occurs within each season, and a transition precipitates the shift from one season to the next. (Fisher, 1997).

The life course, according to Levinson (1986), is the concrete character of a life from beginning to end, and primary components are the individual's relationships with various others in the external world. A significant relationship with others—meaning a person, a group, institution or culture, or a particular object or place—involves an investment of self in terms of one's desires, values, commitment, energies and skills. The life structure mediates the relationship between the individual and the environment and grows out of the engagement of the self and the world. "It requires us to think conjointly about the self and the world rather than making one primary and the other secondary or derivative" (Levinson, 1986, p 7).

In Levinson's model, a transitional period terminates the existing life structure and creates the possibility for a new structure. "The primary tasks of every transitional period are to reappraise the existing structure, to explore possibilities for change in the self and the world, and to move toward commitment to the crucial choices that form the basis for a new life structure in the ensuing period" (p 5). Levinson believed that, because no life structure is permanent and periodic change is thus a given in the nature of our existence, almost half of our adult lives is spent in developmental transitions. "As a transition comes to an end, one starts making crucial choices, giving them meaning and commitment, and building a life structure around them. The choices are, in a sense, the major product of the transition" (p 6).

Neugarten

The life events model focuses on the psychological impact of life events that are likely to occur in an adult's life and on the consequent transitions that those events might trigger (Merriam, 1984). Neugarten (1968), rejecting chronological time and age as accurate indices for measuring adult development, proposed a model of development consisting of life events, age norms and social expectations. What Neugarten considered more important was an individual's perception and subjective reaction to his or her ageing process and its events; in particular, that it is not life events themselves that precipitate

change but the timing of these events. Neugarten's model is based on the thesis that there are social expectations regarding appropriate times in an adult's life when certain events are likely to occur and that each person is aware of a "social clock" that suggests, for example, the best times to leave home, marry and retire. Self-assessment therefore, particularly in middle age, often centres on considerations of being "on-time" or "off-time." Neugarten regarded those events that are "off-time" as having the most potential to cause trauma or conflict (Merriam, 1984) and to measure growth and development in an individual (Avis, 1987). Commenting on the contemporary fluidity of the adult life course and the irregularity of major life events and transitions, Neugarten has reiterated that age has become even less relevant to adult development and that it was therefore of doubtful value to continue to describe adulthood as part of an invariant sequence of stages, each occurring at a given chronological age (Fisher, 1997).

Midlife Transition

Psychosocial theory incorporates an integrated life event and intrapsychic view of change at middle life. Developmental transition at the beginning of midlife, the termination of early adulthood and the start of the middle adult years, is well-documented as a potential turning point in adult life, a time of appreciable change (Levinson, 1986; Wortley & Amatea, 1982). From a life phase orientation, developmental tasks faced during this time involve the resolution of significant issues: realizing one's mortality and limitations caused by ageing, dealing with the restimulation of feelings and conflicts that were experienced in adolescence, and adapting to changing roles and relationships (Schein, 1978). To Stein (1983), the psychological developmental purpose is the transformation of consciousness.

Bardwick (1978) observed that "middle age is that time when your future is not endless and, simultaneously, that truncated future seems to extend with a frighteningly unvarying script" (p 130). For some, she wrote, there is the realization that "unless you start a new career, a new lifestyle, unless you deliberately seek new beginnings, the life you are experiencing is the blueprint for your future" (p 141). According to Jung, this results in a time of contraction, a turning inward "to illuminate the self" (p 12) and brings

“important changes in the psyche” and a questioning of “cherished convictions and principles” (cited in Campbell, 1971, p 12). Neugarten (1968) considered such reflection “a striking characteristic of the mental life of people at mid-life.” For her, “the stocktaking and, above all, the structuring and restructuring of experience” resulted in “heightened sensitivity to how one fits in one’s social environment in a more complex way” (p 97).

Middle adulthood is reported to be a time when neglected or suppressed aspects of one’s personality become recognized and when the individual has reached the potential to become more fully balanced (Fisher, 1997). A primary developmental task of this transitional period is considered to be “intense work towards individuation . . . the drive of the self to become increasingly differentiated from its environment in its own unique way” (O’Connor & Wolfe, 1987, p 800). “To the extent that this occurs, we can become more compassionate, more reflective and judicious, less tyrannized by inner conflicts and external demands, and more genuinely loving of ourselves and others. Without it, our lives become increasingly trivial or stagnant” (Levinson, 1986, p 6).

Gill, Coppard and Lowther’s (1983) analysis of midlife transition research observed that some adults appeared to move through the midlife transition easily while, for others, it was a time of “severe crisis brought on by the tension between what has been achieved and what is wanted” (p 24). For the midlife participants experiencing such emotional tensions in O’Connor and Wolfe’s (1987) study, “It was a time to address the imbalances inherent in, and created by, their existing life structures” (p 814). Carlsen (1988) summed up the dilemma of midlife: “Our expectations are to arrive at maturity: our realities are [to experience] the complex processes of adult development. We are frequently caught by the contradictions of that which we think we are and that which we are yet to be” (p 35).

Contributions and Limitations of Psychosocial Theory to Theory on Adult Students

Psychosocial developmental theorists Erikson, Havighurst, Levinson and Neugarten are often cited by adult educators as providing the cornerstone of practitioners’ knowledge about adults as learners from a developmental perspective (Caffarella &

Olson, 1993). While clearly contributing to counsellors' developmental understanding of adult students, psychosocial theory presents an incomplete picture of adults' development.

Psychosocial theories, particularly those adopting a life phase and life event orientation, have provided a foundation for studies conceptualizing developmental approaches towards counselling adults. Using a life events framework, Danish, D'augelli and Ginsberg (1984), for example, proposed life development interventions as a preventative counselling strategy that assists adults in identifying resources and setting goals for their futures. Similarly, Gazda (1984) presented a view of the counsellor as a teacher of age and stage-related developmental coping skills.

Theory and research from this developmental perspective have also included a number of issues relevant to adult students. Neugarten's (1968) recognition of the importance of time limitations and social time defined by societal expectations is an example. An understanding of the concurrent work and family life stages of adult learners is important for counsellors (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). It is also important, however, to apply contemporary revisions of societal expectations to this orientation. Complicating forces such geographic mobility, career change, and changes to family composition, for example, have now intervened to alter and diversify life courses (Wood, 1995). Kerka (1995) has observed that the traditional concept of the life course, education, work, and retirement has been challenged as people change jobs, retrain voluntarily or involuntarily, and re-enter the work force at various times in their lives.

Theoretical and empirical validation of the potential of midlife as an important transitional stage in adulthood, with potential for inner change, is also particularly pertinent to the lives of adult students. Knowledge of the literature on the midlife transition offers a contextual understanding of external and internal pressures, which contributes to stresses adult students experience. Psychosocial theories are not sufficient as exclusive guides, however, for providing services for adult learners. According to Caffarella (1996), these theories lack a vision of what adult development specifically means.

There are limitations to psychosocial theories, with respect to their ability to conceptualize a full developmental context for adult students. They are said to offer monolithic explanations of multi-faceted processes (Gill, Coppard & Lowther, 1983), to be simplistic, using one dimensional theories to explain complex behaviour (Weathersby & Tarule, 1980), and to make generalizations about human development normed on research samples of middle-class, white males (King, 1994). In her review of theory on post-secondary students, King noted the absence of realistic application. She reported that educational practitioners "are understandably skeptical since they fail to match the observable everyday vicissitudes of development" (p 417).

Limitations of psychosocial theories could lie primarily in their inability to conceptualize individual developmental processes and to advance understanding of the diversity of individual developmental experiences. They do not reflect the highly complex dynamics of development in terms of its importance to the individual (Gill, Coppar & Lowther, 1983, p 25). They "suggest that an individual's characteristics are a crucial constituent in their ability to cope with phase-specific developmental tasks yet don't provide an understanding of how individuals, even of the same age, may differ on what they perceive those tasks to be" (Kegan, 1994, p 235).

Because of the influences of individual life contexts and that the specific interactions of intrapersonal and environmental factors have received little attention: they are difficult to operationalize. Erikson's view of development arose from his concern with individual life course. Levinson acknowledged wide variations in the kinds of life structures people build, the developmental work they do in transitional periods, and their sequence of social roles, events, and personality change. "Each individual life structure progresses through the successive periods in its own unique way, influenced by a multiplicity of specific biological, psychological, and social conditions" (1986, p 12-13). Their theories, however, support but do not promote ways to understand how these individual processes unfold.

Structural Theories of Development

Structural theorists (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Perry, 1970; Piaget, 1970) view development as the reorganization of an individual's cognitive, moral or ego-related meaning making structures. Research from this orientation focuses on individual developmental processes involving the whole person and takes intra-individual variability into account. Changes within the individual—including their patterns of cognition, character development, introspection, interpersonal relationships and motivation—are addressed (Billington, 1990), and the diverse ways people view, interpret and react to events in their lives are considered.

Structuralist theorists make several assumptions about the nature and levels of development. They assume that there are qualitatively different stages or structures in individuals' modes of thinking about their personal world which represent different cognitive and behavioural capacities. Structures are seen as hierarchical integrations, proceeding from less to more complex with each structure incorporating the earlier, less complex, level. Each structure is assumed to represent an individual's perceptual and cognitive structure of thought and to influence the perceptual filters with which individuals view and interpret their world.

Development is viewed as evolution through a series of qualitatively different structures. Consistent with Mezirow's (1991) concept of perspective transformation, with each movement to a more mature developmental stage, the individual learns to view and interpret his or her experience from a more complex frame of reference. This process involves a series of paradigm shifts or transformations of consciousness. However, while all individuals can make the transformation from structure to structure, not everyone will (Courtenay, 1994).

The Constructivist Perspective

Constructivist models of development are said to provide an important framework for understanding and supporting adults in the process of growth and change that education often engenders (Taylor, 1996) and to offer ways of studying the variability apparent in adult students (Cook, 1998). This perspective is founded on the belief that

humans, as self-organizing developing systems, actively construe or create their personal and social realities. “We don’t just passively ‘copy’ or ‘absorb’ already organized reality; instead, we ourselves actively give shape and coherence to our experience” (Kegan, 1994, p 199). Individual conceptions of reality are therefore the result of personal constructs, internal representations that individuals develop about the world (Kelly, 1955).

The nature and utility of the various meaning-making structures through which individuals create experience and how they change is the major focus of study from the constructivist perspective (McAuliffe, 1993). “We literally *make* sense because our human being and becoming is the composing of meaning” (Carlsen, 1988, p 22). Because individuals are active in both building and organizing their constructs and in making meaning of their experiences, there are an infinite number of ways of construing any event different individuals encounter (Kelly, 1955).

From a constructivist perspective, problems are conceptualized as potential developmental challenges. The manner in which an individual addresses salient issues will vary according to the structural, or meaning-making, framework from which he or she operates (Lyddon, 1990). An important assumption in structural theory, therefore, is that a person’s meaning-making framework provides the basis for the individuality of his or her approach to problem solving. It is this framework that contributes significantly to his or her ability to adapt when faced with challenges and change.

Constructivist-developmental theory also recognizes that developmental challenges are frequently accompanied by episodes of emotional variability, intensity and distress (Lyddon, 1990; Mahoney, 1990). Meaning making is not just a detached, analytical, intellectual enterprise: “It involves our excitements, our grief, our passions as well” (Carlsen, 1988, p 22). Structural theorists therefore also tend to value emotions as another way of knowing and as functional to the human system as cognitive knowing. “Assumptions are not simply cognitive products without regard to feelings or attitudes or shifts . . . emotional attachments form a part of the context for assumptions; when assumptions are challenged, emotions are aroused also” (Courtenay, Merriam & Reeves, 1998, p 77).

Piaget

Jean Piaget (1970) articulated the underlying principles guiding structuralists' view of development. His theory on human change has influenced, directly or indirectly, most modern developmental conceptions (Ivey & Goncalves, 1988). Piagetian constructs have stimulated research consistent with the view that development of the individual is the aim of education (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988).

Development, according to Piaget, is progressive equilibration between the individual and the world (Billington, 1990). Learning and growth occur through interaction between the individual and his or her environment and is the result of the two complementary cognitive processes, assimilation and accommodation (Lyddon, 1990). When an individual's experiences are discrepant with his or her thought patterns, this will put them in a state of disequilibrium. The individual is then motivated to seek equilibrium, or balance, by striving to resolve the discrepancy. In doing so, he or she reacts with assimilative and, sometimes, accommodating behaviours. Assimilation is the tendency to make meaning of an experience from one's current developmental stage by organizing experiences to fit into one's current thought pattern. When the discrepancy is too difficult to integrate in this way, the second reaction, accommodation, emerges. This reaction, involving the alteration of one's thought patterns to integrate the new experience, represents developmental change (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988).

Piaget's studies detailed the periods of infancy to adolescence but not adulthood (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988). Furthermore, he focused mainly on the sequence of structures and, although recognizing that changes were required for the shift from one structure to another, did not specifically study this transformation process. According to Levinson (1986), he treated these developmental shifts "as lacunae or zones of ambiguity between the structures, rather than as stages in their own right, possessing a distinctive character of their own" (p 9). Neo-Piagetian developmental theorists, for example Perry (1970) and Kegan (1982, 1994), have used the essential Piagetian paradigm, an individual's increasing ability to accommodate new experiences into her or his awareness, to extend understanding of transformational processes beyond adolescence and to describe adult psychological development.

Perry

Building on Piaget's premises, William Perry (1970) extended understanding of structural development to include young adults. Over a twenty-year period, beginning in the late 1950s, Perry and his associates conducted two longitudinal studies involving extensive interviews of young college students over their four years of study. Similarly to Piaget, he collected data through unstructured interviews and examined the nature of their developing patterns of thought (Kasworm, 1983). From these data, Perry outlined a theory of intellectual and ethical development that described students' ways of making meaning out of their college experiences (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988). He delineated a "map of sequential interpretations of meaning . . . found to be characteristic of the development of students' thinking throughout a variety of educational settings" (Perry, 1970, p 78).

Perry's model of development conceptualized the individual's progressive developmental cognitive movement through hierarchical structures that involved changes in ways of thinking. He identified nine distinctly different structures that exist over the course of development, each of which characterized a position or stage in a hierarchical and integrative developmental process. Perry grouped these positions into three categories: dualism, relativism and commitment. Dualism characterized the first three positions as dichotomous structures from which the world is viewed in absolute either-or terms. Truth is assumed to be known; for example, information is processed to fall neatly into either right or wrong or good or bad (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988). Movement into relativism involves change from a simplistic, uni-dimensional focus of knowledge to a complex, contradictory multi-dimensional perspective of knowledge. Knowledge becomes viewed as relative. Other possibilities are recognized and answers considered in terms of context. Movement in the third category, commitment, involves a commitment of self-values in relation to knowledge (Merriam, 1984). The individual is seen to take responsibility for making choices and affirming his or her identity in numerous contexts or areas of life (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988).

Perry's theory has contributed to a wider understanding of individual developmental processes. Nevertheless, it faced the problem of sampling biases. His

findings were based on research data from samples largely composed of young, white males educated at Harvard during the 1950s (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988) and therefore could not validate developmental understanding beyond these age, gender and cultural limitations (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997).

Women's Development—Rebalancing Gender Bias in Perry's Model

Many early developmental theories, based on male samples, are acknowledged to be gender biased (Courtenay, 1994) and to not reflect the reality of women's development (Caffarella & Olson, 1993). Perry's work has come under this criticism. Further research, using his developmental constructs and focusing on samples of women, has attempted to provide a gender balance.

Perry claimed that women's experiences could be mapped onto the pattern of development he had identified in men. In response, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) used Perry's scheme to classify similar data obtained from an exclusive sample of women undergraduate students. The findings revealed that participants' experiences did not conform to Perry's proposed developmental structures and patterns. The women were dualistic during the initial phase, approached the middle phase of multiplicity with more caution, and defined the final stage of commitment as less of a single, self-defining act and more of a commitment to a community and to relationships (Enns, 1991). These conclusions prompted Belenky and her associates to create a developmental classification scheme of epistemological perspectives more compatible to women and women's ways of knowing. Noting the tendency of participants to ground their epistemological premises in metaphors suggesting speaking and listening, the authors described characteristics of developmental stages by "holding close the women's experience of voice" (p 19).

By telling us about their voice and silences, by revealing to us how much they could hear and learn from the ordinary and everyday . . . women told us about their views of the world and their place in it (p 19).

They describe five different perspectives from which they understood participants "to view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge and authority" (p 3). These

perspectives were silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge.

Silence, the absence of voice, was described as representing an extreme in denial of self and dependence on authority for direction. From a perspective of received knowledge, women were seen as having little confidence in their own ability to speak and to believe that truth came from others. Their ideas and ideals were described, similarly to Perry's category of dualism, as concrete and dualistic. Things were right or wrong, true or false and good or bad (Belenky et al., 1986). From a perspective of subjective knowledge, women were seen as having moved from an externally oriented view of knowledge and truth to a more "personal, private and subjectively known or intuited position" (p 54). According to the authors, becoming aware of inner resources for knowing and valuing and discovering an inner source of strength is a significant shift for women. Relying on intuitive processes was considered an important adaptive move towards self-protection, self-assertion and self-definition. Knowing from a subjective orientation was concluded to have repercussions in women's behaviours, relationships and self-conceptions in that it eventually led to acting towards shaping and directing their own lives.

From the perspective of procedural knowledge, described as either separate or connected knowing, women were seen as speaking from two distinct voices or orientations. Separate knowers preferred critical thinking and, essentially, took an adversarial form, particularly towards authority figures. Connected knowers, building on the orientation of subjective knowing, were seen to focus energy on their own intuitive understandings and on personal experiences rather than on authoritative voices. Interested in discovering others' experiences, they developed empathy. They acted as connected rather than separate in that they tried to see the other not in their own terms but from the other's perspective. From a perspective of constructed knowing, they have a unique and authentic voice that "moves outside the given" (p 136), and all voices are integrated. Women are seen to actively create their own frames of reference by combining knowledge they intuitively know as important with knowledge they learn from others. Constructed knowers are described as showing a high tolerance for internal contradictions and ambiguity, as recognizing the inevitability of conflict and stress, and

as no longer denying or suppressing aspects of the self in order to simplify their lives. “There is an impetus to try to deal with life, internal and external in all its complexity. And they want to develop a voice of their own to communicate to others their understanding of life’s complexity” (p 137).

Researchers have reinforced the importance of expanding understanding of adult development to include women’s experiences, previously missing in traditional developmental theories, and to incorporate this understanding into counselling practice (Kerka, 1993). Developmental models that provide a focus on women’s unique developmental processes have been said to acknowledge the complex and diverse nature of women’s lives (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997) and to be more recognizable, and thus applicable, to women clients (Marienau, 1995). Marienau introduced sixty-five adult women students to models and theories about adult women’s development. She concluded that this offered structures and language that they could use to make sense of the experiences they brought with them to school. She also reported that, in doing so, the women increased their ability to conceptualize their experiences and, marking a developmental shift, began to examine their lives from a new perspective.

Women’s developmental models, however, are also limited by a gender-focused, narrow socio-economic data sample. Enns (1991) cautioned that tendencies to generalize about women and men must be tempered with research that identifies the effects of circumstance and individual difference on behaviour. Eastmond (1991) recommended that educational practitioners acknowledge theoretical gender differences and look for creative ways to foster and reflect them in educational practice. He also suggested that practitioners use a theoretical model that explains the development of both sexes simultaneously. On this gender-neutral basis, Daloz (1986) recommended researchers use Kegan’s constructive-developmental model.

Kegan

Robert Kegan’s (1982, 1994) model of development has been recognized to encompass both women’s and men’s experiences of development (Taylor, 1994). In his theory, “the lifelong tension between the yearnings for inclusion and distinctness”

(Kegan, 1982, p 107) is intrinsic to the developmental growth of every individual, and make equal contributions. Bar-Yam (1991) used Kegan's model to explore developmental gender differences. She concluded that both the males and females in her study responded with recognition to qualities characterizing each of Kegan's stages of development.

Kegan's constructive-developmental, or subject-object, theory has been called one of the most inclusive of developmental theories in that it considers how the self constructs meaning across the affective, cognitive, and moral domains (McAuliffe, 1993). Daloz (1996) has described it as "a classic among many adult educators" (p 114) because of its usefulness as a framework for recognizing the kinds of changes experienced by adult students.

Founded on Piagetian principles and expanding on Perry's research, Kegan's theoretical constructs draw on a view of development as qualitative change in how individuals make meaning. Development is regarded as transformation of individuals' perceptions of their reality. Individuals change as their perceptions become increasingly complex. They learn to see themselves and others differently and act accordingly. A central component to change, according to this theory, is an individual's changing balance of the relationship between what is subject and what is object for them. These are considered the basic principles of individuals' cognitive organizations or ways of knowing and making meaning about the world.

Subject refers to those elements of knowing or organizing that individuals are identified with, tied to, fused with, or embedded in. What an individual is subject to is immediate, ultimate or absolute and he or she thus is not able to take responsibility, be in control of or reflect upon it. Thus, when an individual is subject to an issue or experience, he or she is unable to construct any wider form of reference for the experience. They cannot talk about what is subject for them, they can only demonstrate it. *Object* refers to those elements of knowing or organizing that are relative to individuals. When an individual is object to an issue or experience, he or she can take a perspective on it and can therefore reflect on it and take responsibility for it. They can talk about what is object for them.

A given subject-object relationship is the consequence of an ongoing evolutionary process, a gradual cognitive unfolding. Each subject-object relationship is not only different in that there are distinct qualities characteristic of each structure, but they are also related. Kegan described the developmental process, in terms of this concept, as “a succession of qualitative differentiation of the self from the world, with a qualitatively more extensive object with which to be in relation each time” (1982, p 77). Each new evolutionary truce differentiates the self from its embeddedness in the world, guaranteeing, in a qualitatively new way, a more integrated relationship to the world. Individuals “achieve an increasingly more expansive, open, inclusive understanding of themselves and the world” (McAuliffe, 1993, p 23). According to Kegan, this is accomplished “by the evolution of a reduced subject and a greater object for the subject to take, an evolution of lesser subjectivity and greater objectivity, an evolution that is more “truthful” (Kegan, 1982, p 294). Individuals move beyond a structure, into disequilibrium, as the balance in subject-object relatedness changes. When they begin to transcend a way of making meaning—to see it, as *a* way of making meaning (object) rather than *the* way (subject)—they have begun transformation to a new structure.

Subject-object theory distinguishes an individual’s evolution through five increasingly complex epistemologies with qualitatively different orders of consciousness or structures of thought. At structure one thinking, first labelled *Impulsive* (Kegan, 1982) and then *Single Point* (Kegan, 1994), individuals are subject to their impulses and perceptions and object to their sensing and moving reflexes. At structure two, initially called *Imperial* (1982) and then *Durable Category* (1994), individuals are subject to their needs, interests and wishes and have become object to their impulses and perceptions. At structure three, called *Interpersonal* (1982) at first and then *Cross-Categorical* (1994), individuals are subject to mutuality, the interpersonal, and have become object to their needs, interests and wishes. At structure four, called *Institutional* in 1982 and then *System-Complex* in 1994, individuals are subject to authorship, identity, psychic administration and ideology and are now object to mutuality and the interpersonal. At structure five, which changed from *Interindividual* (1982) to *Trans-System* (1994), individuals become subject to interindividuality and object to authorship, identity,

psychic administration and ideology.

Kegan's developmental structures are seen to naturally evolve in sequence, with each successive structure contained in the last. The theory focuses on "two primary human yearnings" (1982, p 107), the need to be distinct and separate and the need to be included and attached, as making equal contributions to an individual's developmental process. Growth for all individuals is represented as evolving movement back and forth through epistemological structures that include inclusion and separateness. There are structures in which separateness is part of the dominant theme (i.e. structure two and four) and structures in which inclusion is the dominant theme (i.e. structures one, four and five). Significantly the most evolved structure, structure five, is one of integration and interdependence and is beyond the concern with autonomy and self-distinction that is characteristic of orientation toward individuation of earlier developmental theories (Bar-Yam, 1991). He visualized this process as taking the form of "a helix of revolutionary truces." Each position on this helix represented "a temporary peace before the individual resumes the inner struggle that enables him or her to grow beyond the perceptual limits of their reality as they know, or knew, it" (1982, p 109).

Each developmental structure is defined by a particular meaning-making framework, a perspective that determines how an individual views the world—their beliefs, communications, perceptions, values, and relationships to others and to themselves (Taylor & Marienau, 1995) and carries particular limitations and abilities relevant to the nature of a subject-object balance. An individual's perspective or way of thinking about a situation will therefore contribute significantly to his or her ability to adapt when faced with challenges (McAuliffe, 1993). A shift towards a new, more complex structure represents a shift towards a new way of thinking or constructing reality that enhances adaptation to challenge. For a detailed description of each structure's discriminating characteristics, see Appendix G.

Pertinent to this study on adult students, Kegan has suggested that the third, fourth and fifth structures are characteristic of adults in western society and that the shift from structure three to structure four is the most prevalent pattern of adult development. McAuliffe (1993) has described the capacities of these three structures in terms of

individuals' differing abilities to adapt. The person operating from structure three thinking, for example, cannot easily act on internal cues to make changes because he or she cannot clearly identify a self from which to speak. Individuals operating from structure four thinking, on the other hand, although able to speak from a clear sense of self and pursue a self-authored track, also have a potential for getting stuck on a narrow path. Unable to hear negative feedback, both internal and external, they can restrict themselves by not being able to imagine options beyond the boundaries they place on their sense of reality. In contrast, the person operating from fifth structure thinking has an advantage in facing change, in redefining the self and in accommodating a world that is sometimes dissonant. This person, with the ability to seek out newness and contradiction, is prepared to discover new paths.

Relevance of Psychosocial and Structural Theories to Adult Student Development

Including both psychosocial and structural models of developmental theory is useful for conceptualizing the adult student within a comprehensive change and human growth perspective. Both contribute theoretical knowledge that is helpful to understand different aspects of changes a client might be experiencing.

To use the analogy of taking a picture of adult students' developmental issues, psychosocial life phase and life event theories could be seen as offering a wide-angle lens on social and age-related similarities and a broad context for life changes or transitions. Relevant to adult students, an adult's interest in, and need for, education is generally seen to be propelled by life-phase or life-stage concerns and tasks. Structural theory, on the other hand, introduces a zoom lens. By focusing on individual changes and change processes, structural models of adult development supply theoretical context for a counselling perspective on adult students' individual experiences of development that includes diverse developmental processes and developmental transformation.

The work of many practitioners counselling adult students is already informed by developmental theory. Additional steps, however, are needed to incorporate theoretical concepts more directly into practice and to learn how to developmentally assess students individually (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988). I turn now to research that has

attempted to incorporate structural developmental theory directly into counselling practice.

B. Becoming Developmentally Informed by the Client

There is theoretical awareness that the nature of development is multidimensional and multidirectional and that adults have a range of developmental structural abilities, which change in different ways (Tennant & Pogson, 1995). Researchers have emphasized the central importance in counselling practice of an understanding of the complexity of adult development (Hughes, Graham & Galbraith, 1986). Counsellors are advised to view adult student clients within a multidimensional framework of human development theory (Gill, Coppard & Lowther, 1983) and, in particular, to become sensitive to developmental variability among adult students (Benjamin & Walz, 1990; Daniels, 1993; Ivey, 1986, 1988; Kasworm, 1983).

An emerging focus within counselling research is the direct integration of developmental theory into counselling practice by assessing and applying knowledge of clients' individual cognitive structures. Understanding developmental distinctiveness in this way enables counsellors to determine how a client's personal and developmental issues interact and to structure appropriate, realistic counselling interventions that match his or her developmental levels, strengths and weaknesses (Manuele-Adkins, 1992).

Research on Assessment of Individual Developmental Structures

Ivey (1986, 1988) has proposed *developmental counseling and therapy* (DCT), a counselling framework within which counsellors can assess clients' cognitive structures in terms of Piaget's progressive stages of logical thought development. As described earlier, these stages are sensorimotor operations (preoperational thought, characterized by the development of the symbols and language utilized in conceptual thinking), concrete operations (the beginning of an individual's ability to apply logical thought to concrete problems), and formal operations (the ability to apply logical reasoning to a variety of possible contexts and relations). According to Ivey, incorporating this knowledge into

counselling practice helps counsellors match therapeutic style to the client's assessed developmental structure.

DCT is premised on three central assumptions. First, it is possible to identify a client's Piagetian developmental level by listening to their expression of the cognitive processes he or she uses to construct his or her knowledge and way of being-in-the-world. Second, different methods of counselling and therapy can be framed within a developmental approach, making it possible to match counselling methods with client developmental level. Third, counselling can be intentionally used to produce movement within and between levels of development (Ivey & Goncalves, 1988).

The emphasis in DCT is on client-counsellor interaction, which is viewed as a dialectical process that is focused on facilitating client movement to more adaptive developmental levels. According to Ivey and Goncalves, "People always face flaws in their ideas of reality and need to move to new developmental tasks if they are to continue growth" (1988, p 411). Daniels (1993) has recommended use of DCT to educational practitioners. In his opinion, counsellors could, with training in developmental assessment using Piagetian constructs, readily incorporate its principles into all stages of practice and, in doing so, allow organization of their current skills beyond a relatively unfocused eclectic approach.

Baxter Magolda and Porterfield (1988), attempting to link developmental theory and research with educational practice, developed the Measure of Epistemological Reflection (MER), an instrument designed to assess an individual's developmental level in terms of Perry's structural constructs. Their major goal was to develop an assessment tool to accurately identify students' levels of development. According to Baxter Magolda and Porterfield, though other studies have implied there are benefits to students when Perry's (1970) scheme of developmental structures is used meaningfully, practical implementation has been hampered by lack of accurate, practical assessment techniques. Although not specifically designed for counsellors, Baxter Magolda and Porterfield endorsed using MER in counselling practice as an opportunity to join in clients' perceptions of their concerns, "to interpret students' understanding of major decisions about values, relationships, life styles, study habits and time management" (p 65).

There are, however, shortcomings to using MER in counselling practice. Effective administration by counsellors, as presented by Baxter Magolda and Porterfield, is based on arranging a special intake process with clients in order to assess their cognitive structures. "The counsellor could then approach the counselling session with the student's Perry position in mind" (p 64). MER therefore lacks the capacity for natural incorporation into the emerging process of a counselling session and risks premature application of developmental theory on clients and their concerns.

McAuliffe (1993) explored the utility of assessing and applying differing levels of meaning-making structures, according to Kegan's model, to clients seeking career counselling. He examined the interplay between clients' career transition decision-making and developmental transformation and proposed compatible counselling strategies for assisting clients operating at varying developmental structures or subject-object balances. According to McAuliffe, a career dilemma can trigger a simple transition, such as a job change, and also become the opportunity for personal transformation, a substantial shift in self-definition. He maintained that counsellors could help with either or both "if they are able first to assess a client's developmental constructions and second provide a challenging yet supportive environment for change" (p 25).

McAuliffe's exploration was based on several premises. First, the manner in which individuals address their career concerns will vary according to their subject-object balance. Second, similar to Ivey, a counsellor will be able to identify their clients' balance by listening to their epistemological framework, how they speak about their concerns. Third, assessment of a meaning-making balance that a client appeared to find adequate to his or her situation would imply a simple life transition, and assessment of an inadequate balance could reveal the client's experience of transformation.

McAuliffe makes a strong case for relevant application of Kegan's theoretical constructs to counselling adults. His case, however, is conceptual and lacks practical direction. Other than recommending detailed understanding of assessment procedures based on Kegan's theory (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman & Felix, 1985), he has little advice to counsellors on how to recognize clients' different developmental structures.

Relevance of Assessment Research to the Study

Theorists researching application of developmental theory recognize that counsellors need practical ways to incorporate developmental theory directly into counselling practice. Ivey (1986) and Baxter Magolda and Porterfield (1988) have presented interesting speculations suggesting that use of Piagetian developmental constructs to assess individual developmental structures has potential to help counselling practitioners understand their clients' developmental contexts. McAuliffe's (1993) implication that assessing clients' differing levels of preparedness to address change involves considering their distinctive cognitive structures is valuable to counsellors. All three researchers, however, have offered theoretical conceptualizations only. There is an absence of empirical research that offers counsellors practical guidance on how, other than gaining expertise in a specific structural theory, they might recognize clients' differing developmental structures and processes. This study explores one way that counsellors might be able to discern developmental indicators, recognizable reflections of adult students' developmental distinctiveness. The next chapter, Methodology, describes this exploration.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

In this chapter, the methodology section describes the philosophical assumptions and perspectives of the qualitative research orientation adopted by this study. The methods section shows the specific research procedures and logic used to conduct this study and how they were consistent with qualitative research principles.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is an umbrella term used to refer to a collection of logically related assumptions, concepts and predispositions that emphasize a naturalistic approach to researching (Walker, 1981). The paramount objective in a qualitative research paradigm is understanding, and a qualitative researcher generally seeks understanding of a phenomenon from the perspective of those who live it, as they understand it (Patton, 1991). These and other philosophical principles, characteristic of a qualitative research orientation, were consistent with my research focus and how I conducted this study.

Questions that generate and guide qualitative studies tend to come from real-world experiences and observations of researchers and practitioners (Whitt, 1991). My interest in conducting this study was primarily to gain awareness of the individual developmental differences of adult student clients in my counselling practice. The purpose of this study was therefore to explore how I might recognize their developmental distinctions in the unique ways they approached similar adjustment issues.

Patton (1990) identified two types of studies for which qualitative research methods are especially appropriate and relevant to researching students in post-secondary institutions. The first are studies that consider how well something is done. The second are studies that ask how something happens and include the perceptions and experiences of those involved. This study falls into the second category. It looks at how, at a particular point in time, participants make sense, or meaning, of their experiences adjusting to school and considers how they might do this differently from each other in terms of their developmental statuses.

Two research questions guided this study. The first was *how do the attitudes and challenges of adult students converge and their developmental structures diverge?* This question guided inquiry into participants' group similarities and differences in life circumstances, and into possible similarities in their opinions about being a student and in their difficulties adjusting to their student role. I was also looking for support for the notion that, consistent with research speculations articulated in the previous chapter, participants were developmentally diverse, that they constructed reality from varying cognitive perspectives.

The second research question was based on the assumption that findings for the first question would confirm that participants shared converging characteristics and demonstrated divergent developmental structures. This question was *how do differences in adult students' points of view reflect their developmental distinctions?* By posing this question, I reasoned that if I compared differences in how participants personally construct meanings to similar situations and experiences and then compared these meaning construction differences to relevant developmental characteristics, I might reach a deeper understanding of their developmental distinctiveness. In this way, I hoped to identify developmental indicators, natural and discernable ways of recognizing their developmental diversity.

Characteristics of the Study's Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative researchers share "a way of looking at the world, about what is important and what makes the world work" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p 22). Consistent with a primary focus of this study, they are essentially concerned with locating the meaning people place on the events, processes and structures of their lives and with connecting these meanings to the world around them (Van Manen, 1970). Patton (1991) wrote of these philosophical commitments. Qualitative researchers' primary ontological stance, according to Patton, is that fundamental reality is created by the person. Intrapersonal constructions, processes of making meaning, therefore have primary status in qualitative conceptions of human conduct. It is also assumed that an individual is active rather than passive in constructing meanings.

This constructivist assumption provides an explicit focus for qualitative research in general and, specifically, for this study. "Inquiry is directed to determining what persons know and how they use what they know" (Patton, 1991, p 390).

The primary epistemological principle of qualitative research, according to Patton, is that an individual's knowledge is not direct. It is a matter of situations and experiences first being presented to the individual and then being worked into a personal representation. "We know the physical world only through an act of mind on the phenomena the world presents us" (p 310). Given this assumption, that humans are active in constructing their knowledge of the world, a main task of this study was to explore and describe how participants, a group of adult students, individually interpreted their adjustment experiences. The study was also based on the assumption that, characteristic of a qualitative approach, "The perspective of the individual actually experiencing the situation is the most valid one in understanding it" (Scott, 1991, p 418). Data were participants' unique accounts of their experiences adjusting to post-secondary schooling and what those experiences meant to them.

This study takes an approach compatible to researching that Tesch (1990) describes as "descriptive/exploratory research that seeks to discern meaning" (p 67). This term describes how the overall purpose of this study guided appropriate systematic inquiry. According to Marshall & Rossman (1995), a descriptive study asks what are the salient behaviours, events, attitudes, structures or processes occurring within a setting? An exploratory study asks what are the salient themes, patterns and categories in participants' meaning structures?

The Value of Qualitative Research Approaches in Educational Settings

Qualitative research approaches are recognized to have advantages in educational settings, particularly in their capacity to understand student experiences (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Manning, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Morgan, 1986). In positivist research, "numbers represent student behaviour" whereas in qualitative studies, "words describe the student experience" (Kuh & Andreas, 1991, p 398). Qualitative

studies are reported to provide “another window that can illuminate aspects of students’ experiences inaccessible through conventional research methods” (Caple, 1991, p 387).

Focusing on students’ individuality and personal learning are long-standing values in educational research (Caple, 1991). Consistent with this focus, and with that of this study, qualitative research approaches emphasize the individual complexity of human behaviours and “underscores the belief in the uniqueness of human experience and development” (Patton, 1991, p 394). Studies using this approach search for multiple views of reality and the way that such views are constructed (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Also relevant to this study, qualitative research studies in education are valued for their ability to realistically reflect the significance of context in the complexity and diversity of different student cultures. Whitt (1991) wrote that including contextual understanding of educational situations “helps us understand how students use and count on a background of meanings for their own interpretations and actions” (p 407). Scott (1991), noting the advantage qualitative studies have in recognizing individual differences, pointed out that doing so “increases ecological validity for professional practice with students” by uncovering “the construction of reality held by students rather than trying to see how they fit” (p 418). Recent reviews of post-secondary education research methodologies have concluded a need for more of a qualitative approach, particularly in studies on adult students.

Although qualitative studies did not gain prominence in education until the late 1980s (Scott, 1991), use of this research approach has now gained wide acceptance (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Whitt (1991) reasoned that the growing acceptance of qualitative research in education was the result of practitioners and researchers finding that conventional social science assumptions and positivist research methods were insufficient and often inappropriate to the task of discovering students’ multiplicity. “The tapestry of student culture portrayed by qualitative research is as complicated and intricate as the culture itself, reflecting as many diverse viewpoints, experiences and meanings as possible” (p 265). Kuh and Andreas (1991) found similar advantages and

recommended extending this approach “to more accurately describe and understand the behaviour of individual subgroups such as adult students” because research methods grounded in positivist approaches “tended to mask individual differences” (p 399). The serendipitous nature of qualitative research findings is recognized to “often lead to new integrations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and to offer “fundamental knowledge on multiple perspectives, similarities and differences” (Manning, 1992, p 133). Recent reviews of research on adult students, observing a relative lack of studies that take a qualitative research perspective, have recommended increased use of this methodological focus in order to resolve the growing need for new perspectives (Padula, 1994; Whitt, 1991).

Rigour and Trustworthiness of the Study

Scientific rigour “lies not in the use of one method versus another but in the soundness with which a given method is applied” (Scott, 1991, p 421) and on whether the researcher is conducting specific procedures correctly (Patton, 1991). In this study, I have followed accepted canons of rigour (italicized) recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1982) to researchers taking a qualitative approach to research.

Research methods in this study were *systematic*. Because they were logical and orderly, readers should be able to follow my line of reasoning and the methods I used, and acknowledge that reasonable next steps follow prior steps. The study is also *internally consistent*. I have taken care to ensure that a line of reasoning taken in one component of the research was not contradicted in another component without justification. Also, the specific procedures I used *were at the highest level currently known* and, as discussed earlier, *chosen for their consistency with the needs of the research question*. I referred extensively to current literature describing qualitative research methodology and methods to guide me on my research path. I also consistently and continuously used the research questions and the purpose of the study as compasses on this path. Finally, *materials used in this study are open to public inspection*. In addition to the data, transcripts of interviews with participants, coding materials, drafts of

analytic processes, and all procedures and rationales for final decisions made in this study have been documented and therefore available for critique.

Evaluation of the soundness of a study that uses a qualitative research approach does not rely on tests such as reliability and validity that are external to data collection and analysis. Instead, techniques ensuring a quality study are internal to the research process (Manning, 1992). In order to show that a study is sound, has value and logic, and accurately reflects the philosophical assumptions of a qualitative paradigm, Lincoln and Guba (1985) have recommended that qualitative researchers show that they have used practices that ensure *trustworthiness* of the findings of a study. Trustworthiness is indicated if findings are *credible* (truthful), have *transferability* (processes apply to another setting or group of people) are *dependable* (re-examination is likely to support findings), and *confirmable* (reflective of the participants and the inquiry rather than a creation of the researcher's biases).

Credibility

The goal of credibility is to demonstrate that the study was conducted in a manner that insures that the phenomenon was accurately identified and described (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Fetterman (1989) stated, "success or failure of a qualitative study depends on the degree to which it rings true to natives in the field" (p 21). It was critical to the purpose of this study that my perceptions on how participants viewed their experiences were faithful to their own interpretations. The study was designed to uncover their individual processes. For this reason, as I describe in a later section, I initiated member checks. I requested participants' verification of the accuracy and completeness of their interview transcripts, encouraged debriefing sessions, and offered to share conclusions I had reached.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the participant-researcher relationship is a central factor affecting faithfulness of the data to participants' experience. In the methods section, I describe the emphasis I placed on creating a trusting and respectful researcher-participant relationship with all participants. I am confident that each participant, to the

best of his or her ability, engaged in genuine introspection and offered a subjective understanding of his or her experiences.

Transferability

Given that qualitative research is context-bound, replication is impossible (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Transferability of a study cannot depend on replication by another study because qualitative researchers will not produce the same findings even if they are faced with exactly the same task. According to Tesch (1990), "If the research is conducted competently, each individual exploration will give us a different perspective on the phenomenon studied" (p 305).

The burden of demonstrating the applicability of one set of findings to another context therefore rests with the researcher who is interested in applying findings rather than with the original researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). By assessing similarities and differences between the context of a study and an intended context, another researcher can consider the extent to which the findings of the study are transferable. I offer sufficiently detailed contextual descriptions in the methods section to allow this comparison. It is important, however, for the researcher to point out limitations of a study. The limit of this study, discussed more fully at the end of this section, is that the knowledge I gained from the participants, a group of adult students from a particular post-secondary institution, was not intended to be applied generally to groups of adult students at another post-secondary institutions. I gained understanding and meaning in conducting this research from individuals, a particular group of adult students within particular contexts. My experiences are intended to convey sensitizing concepts only, a contribution to other counsellors' understanding of their individual adult student clients at other post-secondary institutions.

Dependability

A theoretical assumption regarding dependability in qualitative research is that the social world is always being constructed and is thus always changing (Marshall &

Rossman, 1995). This is different from the assumption of an unchangeable and unchanging world underlying the traditional positivist canon of reliability. This study rests strongly on the concept of an individually constructed, subjective perception of reality. Changes over time are therefore assumed and taken into account.

To meet the criteria for dependability, I have therefore provided evidence to confirm that decisions I made throughout the study were appropriate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following section, Methods, offers descriptions of decisions I made and includes supporting rationale.

Confirmability

The findings of this study are based on the data collected and on the logic of my interpretations of this data. All procedures and protocols are clarified in the methods section, my audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interview transcripts, which include my notes on interview processes, and all phases of data management and analysis have been stored in well organized, retrievable forms. Support for the study's findings and interpretations are therefore readily available to other researchers for inspection and confirmation. I have confidence that examination of this material would find support for the findings of this study and represent the data.

Whether or not this study is trustworthy ultimately depends on the soundness and professionalism of my methodological practice, on how I conducted myself in the role of researcher, and on the ethics of my research practice. The following sections consider these issues.

Researcher's Role

The integrity of qualitative data depends on the competence of the person collecting it. Data are therefore only as good as the qualifications of the inquirer (Kuh and Andreas, 1991). My qualifications were consistent with generally accepted, "markers of a good qualitative researcher-as-instrument" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p 17). In the following paragraphs, I describe and confirm such indicators (*italicized*).

Researchers must have the requisite knowledge and skills about qualitative methodology (Kuh & Andreas, 1991; Patton, 1991). Prior to beginning this study, I received training, with supervised practice, in qualitative data collection techniques and analysis. I also describe in the next section the supervised training I received in the use of subject-object interviewing and analysis techniques and procedures, the developmental assessment instrument used in this study.

Because qualitative inquiry is context bound, *researchers should have familiarity with the type of setting and the nature of the issue being studied and have strong conceptual interests* (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Giorgi (1986) calls this qualitative orientation “educated looking” (p 43). Lack of familiarity with the setting can lead to relatively naïve and easily misled fieldwork (Whitt, 1991). According to Miles and Huberman, “you can understand little more than your own evolving mental map allows A naïve, undifferentiated map will translate into global, superficial data and interpretations” (p 391).

A researcher knowledgeable about the setting is said to be more bias resistant, quicker to hone in on core processes that hold the inquiry together (Patton, 1991), and better prepared for what might be encountered (Crowson, 1987). My background in counselling adult students and my familiarity with their experiences adjusting to school prepared me for what I might encounter in interviews with participants. This preparation also allowed me heightened awareness of adult students’ core issues and inner processes.

Also consistent with my counselling experience, *effective qualitative researchers should have good investigative skills* (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Skills required to conduct qualitative interviewing and analysis effectively are congruent with those I use in my counselling practice. Interviewers should have an interest in listening and talking to people (Guba & Lincoln, 1982), intuition and tacit knowledge about people (Marshall & Rossman), empathic skills (Whitt, 1991), and the ability to draw people out and to ward off premature closure (Patton, 1991).

Qualitative interviewing resembles counselling interviews on the surface and may provide, to some participants, the sense of a naturally therapeutic experience. There is a

high degree of congruence in that both explore meaning-making processes. During interviews with participants, I elicited underlying, often unexplored, emotions and insights, as participants were encouraged to explore and develop thoughts and memories. I was fully aware that my dual roles, a college counsellor acting also as a researcher, might be confusing or even appear synonymous to participants. I thus took steps to mitigate the potential of such role confusion. All participants in this study were, previous to data collection, personally unknown to me. They knew that I was a counsellor at the college; however, they also understood, from initial contact, that interview sessions were research oriented and that I would be acting in the role of researcher and not counsellor. For my part, I clearly differentiated my researcher role from my counsellor role and kept this distinction uppermost in my mind during interview sessions. I viewed my relationship with participants as a partnership in information development and not, as in a counselling relationship, an opportunity to help improve functioning (Weiss, 1994).

Qualitative researchers must also *be familiar with their own expectations, values and assumptions and recognize how these attributes may influence their judgements and interpretations* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Scott, 1991; Van Maanen, 1979). Patton (1991) wrote that, given the assumption that humans are active in constructing their knowledge of the world, “the researcher is also an active interpreter of those same events. This means that he or she must exercise caution by taking into account how his or her prior knowledge might bias the events being observed” (p 240).

I recognized that my background in counselling adult students also carried the potential for preconceptions, expectations and assumptions about adult students’ behaviours and thought processes. I realized that this could influence my judgement and that unconscious biases could affect my perceptions and, subsequently, my interpretations or meanings I might make of what I had perceived. I therefore consciously exercised caution in when and how I took into account my prior knowledge and assumptions about adult students. I was particularly vigilant when interpreting participants’ experiences. Periodically scanning my notes, particularly collections of ideas or conclusions I had reached, helped me identify and bracket interpretations that may have included my value-

laden expectations or assumptions. As I describe in the methods section, I frequently returned to the data to verify my “knowing.” Interpretations were retained only if they were verified by what participants had actually said.

In qualitative research, researcher values are seen as part of the research process, an influence that can be offset to some extent but never eradicated (Tesch, 1990). Crowson (1987) concluded that the effects of researcher values could be ameliorated somewhat by rigorous and prolonged immersion into participants’ perspectives. Again, I return to my counselling background with adult student clients at the college. Perhaps paradoxically, although my experience brought the potential for biased interpretations to this study, it also reinforced my strong belief in the uniqueness of each adult student. Each adult student client, to me, is always a new phenomenon. I know I will be invited to share experiences that may have familiar themes but will most certainly be unique not only to the client but also to me. Patton (1991) wrote, “Qualitative data will tend to make the most sense to people who are comfortable with the idea of multiple perspectives rather than absolute truth” (Patton, p 483). Central to this study was my search for multiple views of reality, an exploration of differences in how individuals perceive being an adult student. I therefore brought to this study a willingness to become informed by new information and openness to the uniqueness of individual perspectives.

I also brought a holistic concept of human behaviour to this study, an understanding that the experiences of the adult student participants I was studying were part of larger, more complex, individual experiences (Patton, 1990). Merriam (1984) has stated that qualitative researchers seek to understand the ways in which parts come together to form a whole, a whole that is greater than the sum of those parts. My objective in conducting this research was to seek understanding of an important part of each adult student’s wholeness and his or her developmental diversity and distinctiveness. I explored the complexity of individual behaviours from a developmental perspective in terms of several contextual dimensions.

Researcher's Ethical Practice

Qualitative researchers understand ethical practice in terms of their obligation to participants (Curry & Davis, 1995). Ethics involves “taking your participants’ welfare and interest to heart and incorporating this into your practice” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p 47) and in both correctly defining your responsibility and then recognizing this responsibility in practice (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). In the methods section, I describe the steps I took to attend to participant welfare and to ensure their psychological and physical comfort. Whitt (1991) has presented four additional criteria: confidentiality, honesty, responsibility and fair return, which further evaluate ethical practice in a qualitative study.

Confidentiality

Before beginning an interview, participants read, discussed and then signed a consent form (see Appendix A), which stated how I intended to protect their anonymity and maintain confidentiality with regard to their participation. I took strict measures to uphold this promise.

Respecting participants’ confidentiality includes protecting their anonymity. In this study, this included not disclosing participants’ names, ages, academic programs, settings (college campus), ages and sexes of children, previous occupations, and any other identifying information. I offer a more detailed description on this important issue in the methods section.

Honesty

Researchers must be open and honest about the purposes of their research and the uses that will be made of data and the results (Whitt, 1991). Prior to the commencement of this study, college administrators were informed about the nature and purpose of my research activities at the college. They gave written consent (see Appendix B) to the research conditions I had outlined. Before signing a consent form, participants were given several opportunities to learn about the purpose of the study and how the data

would eventually be used. In progressively more detailed ways—recruitment posters, telephone contact and then discussion prior to each interview—this information was offered.

In terms of my “revealedness” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p 24) and how openly I conveyed the purpose of this study to participants, I was “truthful but vague” (p 25). I offered a general description of my research goal. I described the study simply as an exploration of adult students’ experiences adjusting to post-secondary school with a specific interest in individual perspectives. I did not talk about the study’s developmental focus. It was not my intention to conceal the nature of the study but to prevent inhibition of participants’ natural behaviours and ways of expressing themselves. After interviewing each participant, I offered more details on the broader, developmental scope of the study, answered participants’ questions on research objectives, and invited all fifteen to contact me at any time with further questions on these purposes.

Responsibility

In this study, I was mindful of potential ways the research process could affect both the participants and the setting. As I describe in the methods section, I tried to anticipate problems and took steps I considered necessary to mitigate the possibility of any negative consequences for either. In particular, I ensured that the purpose of this study, the completion of my PhD dissertation, would in no way take precedence over the well being of participants in this study or affect the general welfare of students and staff at the college.

The risks to participants in qualitative interviewing are not usually significant (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). One potential risk, however, is premature closure (Weiss, 1994). As a consequence of the time-limited nature of the interviewing relationship, participants may feel let down when the interviewing ends. As a precautionary measure, at the end of each interview I summarized the issues we had talked about to help participants come to a sense of closure. I also extended open invitations to each participant, both before and after the interview, to debrief their interview experience and

indicated my ongoing availability at the college. Finally, the covering letter accompanying copies of each interview transcript mailed to each participant (see Appendix D) reiterated my invitation to meet with me to discuss residual thoughts or feelings.

Fair Return

Some qualitative researchers have raised concerns regarding an apparent lack of reciprocity. There is a sense of the researcher taking more from participants than they give (Whyte, 1992), of simply being a sponge-like observer (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). At times, I was also touched by this sense. I was deeply aware that participants gave much of themselves to me in their interviews—their interest, their time, their private thoughts, and their inner struggles—and I tried to show my appreciation. To each of them I offered to send a copy of the final research results, my dissertation. I also offered them, after interviewing had been completed, the opportunity to meet with me to pursue any further emotions, insights or needs for self-understanding they may have. Carlsen (1988) wrote that being questioned about one's self could stimulate further self-reflection. The individual is sometimes, "challenged to process 'the facts' of personal knowledge with new insight and understanding" (p 99).

Limitations of the Study

In qualitative research, one study alone is not expected to provide the whole picture (Tesch, 1990), and no attempt is made to make predictions about an environment, particularly one so complex and dynamic as higher education (Weick, 1985). The adult students who participated in this study, therefore, should not be considered representative of adults or of adult students in general.

Rather than seeking to determine global characteristics of adult students, this study sought understanding of the experiences of particular individuals in order to offer sensitizing concepts about adult students. Knowledge generated by this study of one group of adult students, at a particular point in time and at one college was not expected

to be generally applied to adult students at other post-secondary institutions. Instead, I hoped that the findings and understandings I uncovered would contribute to a more informed and knowledgeable perspective on the part of the reader “in the sense of fuller knowing” (Tesch, p 305). This, according to Tesch, is the ultimate goal of qualitative research.

Also, later sections on data collection methods will show that participants were asked to describe ‘their experiences adjusting to school’. I decided to use the term ‘adjusting’ in order to offer participants the opportunity to respond with either, or both, positive and negative experiences. My intention was to avoid using leading questions that conveyed the assumption that they *had* encountered difficulties and problems. Findings, reported in Chapter Four, will reveal that participants may not have perceived the word adjustment as a neutral term. They unanimously responded to interview questions by volunteering the difficulties they had encountered, their challenges, as central to their experiences returning to school.

Methods

There are core, recurring methodological principles and practices that characterize a qualitative research orientation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tesch, 1990). This study embodies the primary features of qualitative research as defined by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), and the following sections will describe how the methods I used to conduct this research were consistent with these features. I will show that I was the key research instrument and that I collected descriptive data, in the form of participants’ own words, within the context of the setting. I will also show that analysis I conducted on the data was inductive and maintained the data as closely as possible in the form in which they were transcribed. I sought understanding from participants’ perceptions of their experiences and constructed a conceptual picture that took shape as I explored different parts of their experiences.

The injunction “to be creative” when making design decisions however, is also concluded to be characteristic of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Marshall

& Rossman, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tesch, 1990). Researchers have been advised to bend their methodologies to the peculiarities of the context (Michler, 1990) and to "use methods inventively and tailored to the situation". (Smith, 1987, p 177). I will describe the ways in which methods in this study, though adhering to common qualitative methodological features, were also designed to conform specifically to the study's objectives. While maintaining close connections to the data, I introduced the flexibility of a multi-dimensional approach to data collection and analysis. In this manner I believe I was able to "offer a deeper, more extensive and more systematic representation of participants' points of view" (Candy, 1989, p 5). This was an unnerving part of the research design process and I regularly consulted respected authorities on qualitative researching methods. As you will read further on, I followed the advise of authors such as Smith (1987) who wrote that, because qualitative researching lacks conclusive and inclusive designs and methods, "thoughtful researchers describe what they did in detail" (p 174). I also took heart from Miles & Huberman's (1994) suggestions regarding ways to decide on an appropriate design for analysis of the data.

The biggest enemy of your learning is the gnawing worry that you're not "doing it right". Dissertation work tends to encourage that. But any given analytic problem can be approached in many useful ways. Creativity is definitely the better stance. (p 14)

The following descriptions of the study's methods may give an impression of discrete phases of inquiry following a linear process. Characteristic of qualitative research methods, these procedures were, in reality, interrelated and the process multidimensional. Data collection, organization, analysis and interpretation phases were conducted in a simultaneous and connected manner. Each phase was connected to prior and subsequent phases and required that I engage in more than one process at a time. Meloy (1994) called this research process a "conscious and tacit learning-thinking-researching-feeling-knowing-writing process of inquiry that ensures the integrity of a qualitative research effort" (p xxii). Marshall and Rossman (1995) offered a more colourful and true-to-life description of these processes as "messy, ambiguous, creative and time consuming . . . not neat" (p 111). I have tried to balance realism with my

concern for the reader's ability to follow and comprehend how I conducted this study. To this end, I have presented research phases in an orderly fashion with occasional, carefully identified, lapses. The reader is thus forewarned that, at times, overlapping information is repeated and foreshadowed. There are references to earlier information and to material that follows.

Recruitment of Participants

Participants for this study were adult students recruited from two campuses of a college in Victoria, British Columbia. At the time of the study, this college had a combined student population of 7800 full and part-time students enrolled in credit courses. Permission to interview college students for this study was solicited from the office of the president and subsequently granted (see Appendix B).

A sample of convenience (Weiss, 1994), self-selecting adult students, was recruited from both college campuses over a two and a half week period. Notices soliciting volunteers for this study (see Appendix C) were posted in well-frequented areas on both campuses. These recruitment notices described the study in general, asked interested volunteers to share their experiences adjusting to the college, described participant criteria (over age thirty and enrolment at the college for at least six months) and included my name, phone number and affiliation with the college counselling department. The notices directed interested students to one of two sign-up locations at each campus. On both campuses, these locations were the reception areas of the counselling and the learning centres.

Signs offering information on how to volunteer for this study were prominently posted at each of the four sign-up locations. These signs directed interested students to fill out the lower part of the recruitment notice (name, age, telephone number), to put the completed notice in a supplied manila envelope addressed to the researcher, to seal the envelope and, finally, to place it on the receptionist's desk. Support staff at the counselling and learning centres at both campuses were given extra copies of recruitment notices, addressed manila envelopes, and information signs. They were asked to collect

and forward all sealed envelopes to me at the end of each day. They were also asked to ensure the visibility of information signs and the sign-up areas yet to also protect the privacy of students who chose to sign up for the study. They chose to do this by placing signs and sign-up areas in prominent places at both centres that were adjacent to, but not bordering on, other display areas and that had a central, and thus anonymous, writing area.

At the end of the two and a half-week period, I had received completed recruitment notices from twenty-five adult students over the age of thirty, who had been registered at the college for at least six months. During the following week, I phoned each volunteer. Some students proved difficult to contact, but eventually I was able to make telephone contact with twenty students, who indicated their continued interest in participating in the study.

During my telephone conversations with volunteer participants, I outlined the general purpose of the study and briefly explained how their interview would fit with my research objectives. I then described the nature of their participation and solicited, and answered, any further questions they had regarding their participation and the general objectives of the study. I also shared my willingness to collaborate with them on the accuracy of completed transcripts before beginning analysis. Following this, I told them of my intention to conduct interviews over a two-week period beginning the following week. If they indicated continued interest and availability, I arranged an interview at a time and campus convenient to their schedules. Fifteen of the respondents were available for interviews over the following two weeks. At the end of each phone call, I encouraged the scheduled volunteers to contact me at my home or my office if they had further questions or wanted to reschedule their interview.

The number of students who had volunteered to participate in the study and the number of scheduled interviews I was able to arrange surprised me. I had anticipated that, considering the short recruitment period and the difficulty many adult students experience finding unscheduled time, I would be fortunate to schedule a lesser number of interviews. Assuming at least thirty to forty percent attrition, because of my experience

with the generally time-pressured nature of adult students' lives. I had anticipated interviewing approximately ten students and was prepared to begin the recruitment process again if I was not able to complete that number of interviews. In fact, all fifteen students managed to find the time to complete an interview with me. Eleven women and four men, ranging in age from early thirties to late fifties, were interviewed.

Data Collection

The data for this study were transcripts of the audiotaped interviews I conducted with each of the fifteen participants. Audiotapes and transcripts permit "repeated analysis and re-analysis of the data and also makes the data, and the analytic conclusions drawn from them, open to public scrutiny" (Patton, 1991, p 392).

Context and Process of Interviews

Interviews were conducted over a two-week period in counselling offices on two campuses. Eleven participants were interviewed on one campus and four on the other. Each session was scheduled for ninety minutes to allow sufficient time for preparation before the interview and for debriefing afterwards.

After initially attending to participants' comfort, I restated the general objective of the study, to understand how they perceived their experiences adjusting to post-secondary schooling, and answered any further questions they had on the nature of the study or on their participation. I then ensured that they understood they were free to talk about any adjustment experiences they chose and in any manner they wished. After participants confirmed that they understood these rights, they were asked to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix A).

I also explained that pseudonyms would be used throughout the remainder of the study to protect their identity and asked if they had a preferred name they would like me to use. If they declined, I supplied a name and, from that point on each participant was identified in research materials only by their pseudonym. Records of participants' real names and any other identifying information were separated from all other research

materials and securely stored.

Before beginning the interview, participants were told that they could pause or turn off the recorder at any time during the interview. They were also told they could determine when taping ended. I told participants that when the interview started I would first ask them to tell me about themselves in any way they wished and then offered them time to reflect on how they wanted to respond. When they indicated they were ready, I asked them to turn the recorder on.

A primary goal of in-depth interviewing is to help participants feel relaxed and open enough to talk in a meaningful way (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Throughout the interview, I remained attentive to participants' comfort and safety. It was important to me to help them feel comfortable sharing personal information about themselves. I was asking participants "about one of the most human aspects of being a human being—the giving of order or shape to our inner and outer experiencing." (Lahey et al., 1985, p 8). I was aware that I was a stranger asking them to reveal private, and often elusive, inner processes. As Manning (1992) has written, "participants try to put their feelings and meanings into words for, perhaps, the first time" (p 133).

Throughout the interview, I was both empathic, receptive listener and active inquirer. To ignore the first on behalf of the second would have been disrespectful to the participant. To ignore the second, however, would have jeopardized data collection. "People rarely spontaneously speak in an epistemologically unambiguous fashion" (Lahey et al., p 433). Not to have actively clarified participants' meaning-making structures would have resulted in insufficient data to consider their distinctiveness and assess developmental structures.

At the end of each interview, participants were invited to contact me with any further thoughts or ideas regarding issues raised during the interview or with further debriefing needs. They were advised that I would be sending them a transcript of their interview and invited to add or delete material to their satisfaction. When three participants later contacted me to add further thoughts on their adjustment experiences, I added this information to their transcripts according to their directions.

Content of Interviews

I conducted in-depth interviews, an approach to data collection relied on extensively by qualitative researchers (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In this type of interviewing, the researcher explores general topics to help uncover participants' perspectives but otherwise respects how they frame and structure their responses. In-depth interviewing is said to allow the researcher to learn and understand the meanings people hold for their everyday activities, how people think, the perspectives they hold, and how these meanings affect their thoughts and feelings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Weiss, 1994). This approach to data collection provides "a detailed description of what it is persons know and accomplish in the occasions they themselves create and manage" (Patton, 1991, p 392).

The questions I asked in this study focused on eliciting participants' perceptions of their experiences adjusting to the college. I asked open-ended questions to allow them to answer freely from their own frame of reference. When they talked about issues that appeared to be salient to them, I used subject-object probes to explore their deeper meaning-making structures. Clarifying cognitive and emotional sources of participants' reactions to situations is consistent with qualitative approaches to interviewing in which participants' responses are viewed as material to be understood (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1956). "People being interviewed have a tendency to offer a quick run-through of events and need encouragement to elaborate at deeper levels" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p 94).

My interviewing approach placed responsibility on participants to choose adjustment issues relevant to their experiences and to explore, in their own ways, those that were salient to them. In the following sections, I describe how I encouraged participants to share their perceptions of experiences adjusting to school and how I facilitated deeper exploration of their perceptions using subject-object probes.

Eliciting Participants' Perceptions of Experiences Adjusting to School.

As I have discussed earlier, before the interviews were taped I told participants that my opening statement would be "Tell me about yourself." If they indicated uncertainty on how to respond, I rephrased this invitation, "Tell me anything you think might be important for me to know about you." I then told them to turn on the recorder when they were ready to respond. When they did so, I repeated my opening statement.

I began all interviews in this way to foster participants' trust and comfort. The intent of this initial invitation was to establish rapport and also to gain information that showed their personal context relevant to becoming a student and thus the meaning schooling experiences had for them. This question elicited information on marital, parental, occupational, academic, and social roles and experiences and often led to participants sharing information about how they made their decision to return to school. If this did not happen spontaneously, I asked, "How did you decide to come back to school?"

Participants were then asked similarly evolving open questions regarding their experiences at the college. I first asked, "What's it like for you being at school?" and then, moving at their pace to a focus on past and present experiences adjusting to the college I asked, "Can you tell me what it was, or still is, like for you adjusting to being at school?" I then asked, "What are some of the experiences you've had, or are now having, adjusting to being at school?" I helped participants articulate their experiences by offering relevant encouragement and clarification. Examples of this are "Can you tell me more about (prior statement)?" and "I'm not sure what you mean by (prior statement or word used)." I also helped participants to reflect on their experiences and to begin to articulate perceptions of their experiences by asking, for example, "How was that for you?" This process helped to determine whether or not an issue was particularly significant to them.

An issue was judged to be not salient to a participant if he or she did not indicate interest, verbally and non-verbally, in pursuing the issue. For example, they would say such things as, "Well, it's not really a big deal" or "I guess I don't really think about it

that much” and accompany such statements with body language, including voice tone, congruent with lack of interest or emotional involvement. Issues that did not appear salient in these ways to participants naturally “lost steam.” Any encouragement I offered elicited little response, pauses increased, and participants would often look at me expectantly, as if waiting for me to initiate further discussion. When this happened, I would ask if they wanted to move on. If they confirmed this, I would ask, “Are there other experiences adjusting to school you’d like to talk about?” Sometimes participants sent incongruent messages. For example, they might state a lack of interest in an issue but demonstrate non-verbal behaviours that clearly indicated emotional impact. At such times, I had to consciously put aside my counselling instincts. I was directed in the interview only by material that participants chose to talk about, and I did not identify or return to issues unless they chose to initiate this.

Experiences were deemed salient if participants showed clear verbal and non-verbal indications of their importance. They needed very little facilitation to elaborate on issues that seemed significant to them and demonstrated body language congruent with high interest. For example, they leaned forward, increased the intensity of their voice tones and displayed strong affect. When this happened I encouraged them to continue, “Tell me more about . . .” and checked on an issue’s salience, “Sounds like this was/is important to you.”

When appropriate, I also asked participants to talk about how they contended with the challenging situations. Usually this was not necessary; they spontaneously offered this information. If they did not, I would ask, “Then what happened?” or “What did/will you do?” and sometimes, “What would you have liked to have done/not done?” On several occasions, my silence was important. By saying nothing, I allowed participants time to collect their thoughts and, at times, to provide unanticipated directions to our interview.

After reviewing the audio tapes of each interview, I was satisfied that I had consistently conveyed respect for participants’ rights and abilities to tell their own stories and to share their perceptions of their experiences in their own ways.

Facilitating Deeper Exploration of Participants' Perspectives with Subject-Object Probes.

I had sufficient understanding of subject-object constructs after thorough readings about subject-object theory in Robert Kegan's books, The Evolving Self (1982) and In Over Our Heads (1994). According to Lahey et al., "you cannot conduct a successful [subject-object] interview unless you know exactly what kind of material you are trying to generate" (1988, p 10). Procedures detailed in Lahey et al.'s (1985) manual, A Guide to the Subject-Object Interview: Its Administration and Interpretation, offer crucial direction on how to choose subject-object probes and integrate them appropriately within an interview. (The previous chapter, Review of the Related Literature, Dimension Four-Developmental Distinctions in the following chapter, Findings and Conclusions, and Appendix F offer more detailed descriptions of Kegan's subject-object theory and related theoretical constructs). I also received tutoring in the appropriate use of subject-object interview probes.

Before I began interviewing, I conducted a pilot interview in order to ensure that I was including subject-object interview probes into my interviews adequately (sufficient to conduct a subject-object assessment) and appropriately (naturally incorporated into the research focus of the interview). By pre-arrangement, I sent a transcript of this interview to Dr. Nancy Popp of Harvard University, a research colleague of Dr. Robert Kegan (see Appendix E). After Dr. Popp had reviewed the transcript, she contacted me by phone. During a two-hour tutorial, she pointed out ways I could effectively elicit more adequate subject-object material from interviewees and how I could do so without sacrificing the interview's research focus. I conducted another pilot interview that incorporated her suggestions and again sent her the transcript. In a subsequent telephone conversation, Dr. Popp verified the effectiveness and appropriate integration of subject-object interview probes.

With this preparation I was able to help participants more deeply explore their perceptions, their developmental meaning-making structures, by incorporating subject-object probes. The purpose of incorporating subject-object interview probes was to generate enough data to answer the question, "From which subject-object balance or

structure is this person primarily operating?" Answering this question was central to assessing participants' developmental structures and the developmental point at which they were personally constructing or making meaning of their experiences at the time of the interview. I needed to be able to frame tentative answers to this question in order to know when and how to incorporate subject-object probes as I interviewed participants and when and how to test the abilities and limits of possible structures.

When I used subject-object probes, they were always directly and immediately related to experiences participants had introduced. In subject-object interviewing, probes are deliberately and selectively placed throughout the interview according to the potential for participants' specific responses to yield developmentally relevant material. I integrated such relevant probes, sometimes a series of them, into the interview whenever I thought we could be at a place in the interview where I might discover how a participant had constructed meaning of a particular experience. Making this decision involved considering distinctions between what material appeared to be *subject* to participants (their system of knowing) and what material appeared to be *object* to participants (how their system of knowing was organized). This meant becoming oriented to what material they seemed unable to take a perspective on, control, or be responsible for (be subject to), and what they seemed able to take a perspective on, control or be responsible for (be object to).

I judged, for example, that I was possibly in participants' "subject territory" when I heard them talking as if, in the experience they were describing, they were unable to construct any wider form of reference for this experience, despite opportunities I may have created to do so. When this happened, I decided they could be demonstrating the limits of a particular cognitive structure. I judged what was possibly "object territory" for a participant by listening for what issues they were able to consider within a wider field of reference. When this happened, I decided they were possibly demonstrating the abilities of a particular structure.

When I had identified participants' promising subject-object areas, I first clarified what they had said to ensure that I had understood the intended meaning of their words.

An example of this is, “When you say they mixed you up are you saying you were confused because of what they did?” This step was crucial. Subsequent structural interpretation depended on this initial level of mutual understanding. When I was satisfied there was shared understanding, I began using subject-object probes.

I began eliciting subject-object material early in the interview. If they had not already introduced how they had come to decide to come to the college, I asked them this directly. If appropriate, I probed the reasoning that had led them to making this decision. At a later time, usually after they had talked about being at school in a general sense, I also asked them what they now thought of their decision to come back to school. For example, I asked, “What tells you/lets you know that this was a good/bad decision?” I also used this type of probe when a participant was describing a personal philosophy or belief. An example of this was, “What lets you know this is the right position for you?” I was probing to explore how they evaluated their choices. Inviting participants to evaluate their own ideas was an invitation to demonstrate, if they could, their capacity to build their own theories rather than to recite elements of some internalized external theory. I wanted to find out whether they or others were authoring current beliefs and values. This is critical to distinguishing structural levels in subject-object theory (see Appendix G for a more detailed description of distinguishing subject-object structural levels).

One of the elements of an effective subject-object interview is uncovering an individual’s basic constructs, the premises underlying decisions to attach particular meanings to certain situations (Lahey et al., 1985). Typically, individuals do not immediately expose meaning-making structures: “we will initially tap into the ‘what’s’ or content of their experiences” (p 320). Thus, when participants offered me the “what’s” of a situation—what decisions they made, what adjustments they encountered, and what challenges they perceived as difficulties—it was important to determine not only the meanings they attached to these situations, but also how, and especially why, they chose those particular meanings. Uncovering this information helped me understand how their cognitive construction of situations shaped their sense of “the reality” of their experiences.

I wanted to know the “how’s” and, particularly, the “why’s” of their perceptions. I wanted to find out, for example, how they came to decisions and why they considered particular situation challenging and important to them. It is important to note that I explored these areas without directly asking participants “why?” I was probing real-life, often deeply and obscurely felt, experiences. As a counsellor, I understand that “why” questions can unintentionally suggest doubts about the appropriateness of a person’s opinions, decisions or feelings. I therefore took care, by asking variations on “why” questions, to frame such probing questions in a way that did not suggest to participants that I was being evaluative. Rather than risk conveying a “should” impression, with the intent to obtain explanation, I used alternative probes to clarify my actual intention, to find out about participants’ thinking in making a decision or forming an opinion, a thought or a feeling.

The alternative probes I used were different ways to elicit the same subject-object information. I asked, for example, “In what sense . . . ?” or some form of “what” questions: “What allows you to . . . ?” or “What prompts you/prompted you to . . . ?” I would also ask, “What would have changed this experience for you (or made it better or worse?)” in order to find out about other unmentioned thoughts and feelings relevant to their construction of a situation and to clarify what it was about an experience that made it salient or meaningful to them. I sometimes followed their response to this probe by asking, “How would . . . have changed this situation for you (or made it better or worse)?”

To determine what was most meaningful about a situation for participants, I would ask about the most significant parts of anything they had previously indicated was a primary part of their experience. For example, I might respond to “I was really surprised” with “What was the most surprising part for you?” or to “I felt very angry” with “What was the part that made you most angry?” Sometimes I asked directly, “What was most significant (or meaningful) about . . . for you?” This type of questioning was useful in discovering their limits and what, to them, was at stake and thus critical to self-organization. These were probes that elicited information most central to participants’

way of knowing, the heart of their subject-object construction. They led, directly or eventually, to responses about the personal cost, or feared outcome, of a particular situation or experience. When it seemed that a participant considered an implicit self-image to be at stake, exploration often elicited important subject-object material. Tentatively offering such reflections as, for example, “Sounds like to you it was like this was saying something important about you (or reflecting on you in some way)” frequently yielded rich structural information.

Critical to knowing what kind of probes to ask at particular points in each interview was forming a structural hypothesis. As I listened to participants, I consistently asked myself if I had adequate data to make a structural judgement. To do this, I considered what I was coming to know about their way of organizing their experiences. I tried to identify whether this participant, speaking on this issue was directly or indirectly informing me about how he or she was constructing a perspective. When I felt ready, I generated working hypotheses of the epistemological structures I thought they were most likely operating from and then tested my speculations with further probes. I needed two kinds of evidence to validate working hypotheses: one, that responses to further probes confirmed my hypotheses and, two, that responses to further probes (either the same as or different from the first probes) disconfirmed any alternative structural hypotheses. Once I felt I had confirmation or disconfirmation in this way, I focused on making participants’ subject-object material less ambiguous and more explicit.

When I was satisfied that I had tentatively identified one or more structures and that other counter-interpretations would not have portrayed the structure of the participant’s response as adequately, I probed further to try to make ambiguous and implicit statements more specific and explicit. My focus was now on determining the extent of participants’ structures, that is on finding the upper and lower limits of hypothesized structural capabilities. Often, I was also exploring and clarifying indications of structural transformation, that they were operating from between subject-object structures. To do this, I considered whether participants’ current ways of structuring their experiences demonstrated meaning-making capacities that went beyond

a hypothesised structure or described its limits. I was attempting to find cognitive boundaries participants had constructed around ways they perceived their reality.

After reviewing interview audio tapes, I was satisfied that the inclusion of subject-object probes to explore participants' meaning-making structures did not detract from the flow of the interviews or from participants' freedom to relate their experiences and their perspectives on their experiences in their own ways. There was congruence between using subject-object probes and maintaining a focus on the ultimate purpose of the study, hearing and understanding the distinctiveness of participants' perceptions of their experiences adjusting to school. In my opinion, subject-object probes were effective vehicles to allow me access to a deeper, more complex view of participants' ways of making meaning of their experiences. Using subject-object theoretical constructs also provided me with a sense of direction and purpose in terms of knowing the extent and type of data to collect, what was missing and when data collection was adequate. Holding this objective viewpoint within interviews is consistent with qualitative interviewing approaches. "Without thinking and making judgements about it, the data collected may not be substantial enough to accomplish analysis" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p 95).

Sampling Decision

As I have discussed earlier (see Recruitment of Participants), I had anticipated that natural attrition would eventually reduce the number of participants in the study to approximately ten. Before recruiting, I had expected fewer volunteers and scheduled interviews and was surprised that twenty-five adult students meeting the criteria of the study had volunteered and then, that I was able to arrange mutually convenient times to interview fifteen of these volunteers. As well, given my experiences with the limited free time available to many adult students, I anticipated completing fewer interviews than I had scheduled and was again surprised when all fifteen interviews were successfully completed within the two weeks scheduled. I was thus faced, however, with "an embarrassment of riches" in terms of data for the study. I needed to choose between

reducing the data to my originally planned ten interviews, by eliminating five of the fifteen interviews I had completed, and changing my sampling plans to include all fifteen interviews. After consulting credible qualitative research sources on sampling decisions and considering the research questions and objectives of this study, I decided to include all fifteen interviews as data for the study.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), sampling decisions sometimes involve choices that pull the researcher in different directions. The researcher needs to set sampling boundaries yet also ensure that the sample provides the potential to yield sufficient material to conduct the study. To resolve such dilemmas, they recommend choosing participants who are “the meatiest, most study-relevant sources” (p 34). After listening to the audiotapes of interviews with all fifteen participants, I concluded that all indicated satisfactory ability to reflect on and express their perceptions of their experiences. Also, they had all willingly explored their perceptions sufficiently to provide adequate material for subsequent data analysis and developmental assessment. Most important, I concluded that I had serendipitously assembled a richly diverse group of adult students. The fifteen interviewees reflected a broad range of life contexts and choices and had already expanded my understanding of adult students and their experiences. Each interview seemed to reveal yet another unique perspective.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend adopting the goal of maximum diversity to select sources of data. They point out that diverse sources can mitigate researcher bias by allowing for negative examples of hypothesized constructs. Whitt (1991) also supported obtaining a wide variety of perspectives, particularly in an educational setting. “The tapestry of a student culture portrayed by the qualitative researcher should be as complicated and intricate as the culture itself, reflecting as many and as diverse viewpoints, experiences and meanings as possible” (p 407).

Preparation of the Data

The data for this study were transcripts of the audiotaped interviews with the fifteen participants. Audiotapes were transcribed verbatim either by me or by transcribers

from outside the college. In addition to being provided formatting instructions, transcribers were told to record all nuances of verbal interactions. Finished transcripts therefore included such indications as participants' sighs, laughs, hesitations and lengthy pauses. Transcribers were also instructed to change any material on the tape likely to identify participants and then to proofread their completed transcripts against the tapes.

I rechecked the accuracy of each transcript to corresponding tapes. Where necessary, I corrected transcript errors, clarified portions marked "inaudible" and inserted missing descriptions of participants' vocal expressions. I also wrote my recollections of participants' non-verbal behaviours in the margins. I then edited interviewer portions of each transcript. I deleted interviewer material I considered irrelevant to participants' responses—for example, my reflections of what they had already said—but retained, verbatim, all questions I had asked. Verbatim wording of all interviewee content was retained and kept intact in its original form.

Participants were sent a copy of their transcript with a covering letter (see Appendix D) inviting them to make additions or deletions to this record of our interview and asking them to return the transcript to me in the enclosed stamped envelope. Two participants responded to this request. Both offered minor grammatical corrections to their transcripts and otherwise indicated they were satisfied with the content. I did not follow up on those who had not contacted me.

The fifteen transcripts were then sent to Dr. Popp at Harvard University for initial verification in two areas. First, had I incorporated subject-object interviewing protocols appropriately into my interviews? Second, did each transcript have sufficient material to conduct a subject-object developmental assessment? Within two weeks of receiving the transcripts, Dr. Popp contacted me to confirm that both conditions had been met on all fifteen transcripts. She agreed to conduct, independently, more thorough subject-object assessments on all transcripts. By prior agreement, Dr. Popp did not reveal the results of her subject-object assessments until after I had completed the study's first three dimensions of data analysis, including my own subject-object assessments. My intention was to approach these dimensions of data analysis unbiased by prior knowledge of Dr.

Popp's findings on participants' developmental structures. Once I had completed data analysis to this point, Dr. Popp and I compared the results of our separate subject-object assessments on each of the fifteen transcripts. I discuss this comparison in a later section.

Data Analysis

Taking a Qualitative Approach to Data Analysis

Tesch (1990) offered "an almost universal" synthesis of principles and practices of qualitative analysis that she described as "not an exhaustive prescription . . . but if a researcher adheres to these principles and commits no logical or ethical errors, his or her work will qualify as scholarly qualitative data analysis" (p 299). In the following paragraphs, I identify Tesch's principles (in italics) and indicate how they were reflected in the ways I analysed the data in this study.

The analysis process was systematic and comprehensive but not rigid; manipulation of data during analysis was an eclectic activity in that no one right way was practised (see also Researcher's Role and Researcher's Ethical Practice discussed earlier). Tesch (1990) has written that a hallmark of qualitative research is the creative involvement of the individual researcher. The analysis process in this study was emergent. My analytic perspective therefore remained responsive to evolving meanings and patterns. As unanticipated meanings emerged and I discovered previously unknown patterns, I gradually gained insight into unforeseen nuances in the ways participants perceived and made personal sense of their experiences. As my insights became my interpretations and then my findings and conclusions, I supported my analytic process with frequent re-readings of literature on qualitative research data analysis and of participants' transcripts.

Data was divided into relevant and meaningful units, yet the connection to the whole was maintained. Data segments were categorized according to an organization that was predominantly derived from the data themselves, and categories for sorting segments were tentative and preliminary in the beginning and remained flexible. As I segmented and coded the data, I again monitored this process by periodically referring

back to each participant's transcript and rereading each participant's entire story to achieve a sense of the whole. I subsequently organized the data with exclusive regard to themes that participants generated. Data segments, codes and code categories were generated from an emic perspective from which the researcher strives to consider, and appreciate, the setting from the viewpoint of the persons within it and to understand what is seen from their frames of references (Whitt, 1991). The organizing process was also subject to frequent modifications and refinements until a satisfactory integration was established that offered, in my opinion, an authentic reflection of participants' experiences.

The main intellectual tool was comparison and the result of the analysis was a higher-level synthesis. I will show that a goal of this study was to discern, compare and integrate adult students' characteristic and conceptual similarities and differences resulting from several dimensions of data analysis. The final goal was the emergence of a larger, more consolidated, view of adult students' experiences adjusting to being a student that included a developmental perspective.

The Study's Four Dimensions of Data Analysis

In order to answer the study's two research questions, I analyzed the data in four ways or dimensions (see Table 1). Dimensions one, two and three responded to the first research question, *how do the attitudes and challenges of adult students converge and their developmental structures diverge?* Dimension four responded to the second research question, *how do differences in adult students' points of view reflect their developmental distinctions?*

Responding to the study's first research question required that I explore whether participants, as a group, demonstrated the similar qualities reported in the research literature as characteristic of adult students (dimensions one and two) and then whether participants were, as speculated in the research literature, also developmentally diverse (dimension three). Analysis at dimension one—Participants' Life Contexts—considered participants' range of demographic characteristics, backgrounds and experiences and whether they were experiencing a life transition. Analysis in dimension two—Attitudes

and Challenges—considered whether participants demonstrated similarities in their attitudes towards their schooling and in the challenges they saw themselves facing as they adjusted to school. Analysis in dimension three—Developmental Distinctions—considered the outcome of participants’ subject-object developmental assessments and whether participants demonstrated developmental diversity.

I posed this first research question to place the participants in this study within the context of the research literature on adult students, as reflective of well-documented characteristics of adult students. I reasoned that, by responding affirmatively to this first research question, in addition to substantiating important research guidance, I would confirm a conceptual basis for further exploration into discerning participants’ development diversity, the focus of the second research question.

Responding to the study’s second research question required a fourth dimension of data analysis, a more detailed reanalysis and integration of the data that supported findings from the previous first three dimensions. This dimension—Developmental Indicators—considered ways participants demonstrated their developmental distinctiveness.

The Study’s Data Analysis Process

The goal of data analysis in qualitative research is to identify clear and consistent patterns of a phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The pattern I ultimately explored in this study was distinctive ways that adult students with similar group characteristics demonstrated their developmental diversity (dimension four). Reaching this point required first that I discover and clearly identify consistent patterns of similarities and differences in behaviours (dimensions one, two and three). To do this, I systematically segmented the data and then reorganized data segments to re-establish relations between them according to the purposes of the four analytic dimensions. Tesch (1990) has called the segmenting and then reorganizing processes of data analysis “de-contextualizing” and “re-contextualizing” the data (p 115). I have adopted these terms to

describe the process I used to come to new perceptions and insights on what participants told me about their experiences.

I found it challenging to document my analytic steps in a way that reflected the complicated nature of the data analysis process and yet showed the clear lines of reasoning that led to each set of findings. The process of analysing the data in this study, though firmly and consistently systematic, is reflective of the complex nature of the purpose of the study which, in turn, reflects the complexity of the phenomenon it studied. Data analysis was multifaceted with some parts of the process operating simultaneously. I have done my best to organize this experience into sequential steps showing a systematically progressive process but do acknowledge that comprehension requires close attention.

In the following sections, I will first describe how I decontextualized the data in preparation for all four dimensions of data analysis. Next, I will describe how I recontextualized coded data segments for dimensions one and two of analysis and then the subject-object data segments for the third dimension of analysis. Finally, I will describe how I integrated recontextualized coded data segments with findings from the first three dimensions of data analysis for dimension four. Table 1. Overview of the Data Analysis Process, provides a summary of these steps.

A. Decontextualizing the Data

The data for analysis dimensions one, two and four were decontextualized from an *emic* perspective. In other words, the issues that participants' raised and the perspectives that they volunteered guided the segmenting of data and the generation of coding labels. Data for the third dimension of data analysis were decontextualized from an *etic* perspective. The potential of the data for developmental assessment according to Kegan's subject-object theoretical constructs guided the segmenting and labelling process.

Dimension of Data Analysis	One	Two	Three	Four
Topic	Life Contexts	Attitudes and Challenges	Developmental Distinctions	Developmental Indicators
Research Question dimension responds to	One	One	One	Two
Objective	To consider whether, as a group, participants had diverse life circumstances and if they were similarly experiencing a life transition	To consider whether, as a group, participants had similar attitudes towards their schooling and encountered challenges that were thematic to the group.	To assess each participant's epistemology, at the time of the interview, in order to determine whether, as a group, they had demonstrated developmental diversity.	To consider whether differences in participants' points of view towards similar experiences were sufficiently reflective of differences in developmental structural characteristics to be useful as a heuristic for discerning developmental distinctions.
How data was decontextualized	Segmented into units of analysis which were then coded and organized within coding categories. Units, codes and categories were data-generated (emic).	Segmented into units of analysis which were then coded and organized within coding categories. Units, codes and categories were data-generated (emic).	Units of analysis segmented according to their potential for developmental assessment (subject-object material) in terms of Kegan's theoretical constructs (etic).	Segmented into units of analysis which were then coded and organized within coding categories. Units, codes and categories were data-generated (emic)
How data was recontextualized	Patterns reflecting relevant differences and similarities were noted.	Similarities in attitudes towards schooling and themes reflecting all adjustment challenges volunteered by participants were noted.	An assessment of each participant's epistemological structure (at the time of the interview) was conducted. Conclusions were the collaborated results of independent assessments by two raters.	Differences in participants' points of view towards similar experiences (life transitions, attitudes towards school and adjustment challenges) and characteristics of developmental structures were synthesized.

Table 1. Overview of the Data Analysis Process.

a. Decontextualizing the Data for the First, Second and Fourth Dimensions of Analysis

Segmenting Units of Analysis

I first read through the transcripts to immerse myself in each participant's story. I then reread each transcript and delineated relevant data segments or units of analysis. Units of analysis are defined as a portion of the text of any size that "provides a complete thought" (Weiss, 1994, p 155) and "contains one idea, episode or piece of information" (Tesch, 1990, p 116). I selected such units, taking care that I did this "in a way that they

retained meaning, even when they are encountered outside of their context” (Tesch, p 117).

Developing Coding Categories

Each unit of analysis was eventually labelled with a code name that was derived from, and organized within, coding categories. The purpose of assigning such labels is astringent, to aggregate all data about the same topic or theme so that each category can be studied individually (Miles & Huberman, 1994). My next step, therefore, was to develop a set of organizing or coding categories to help me begin to code and sort the data. Although I was guided by the research objectives of the study, uppermost in my mind was my strong interest in learning from the data. I wanted to provide a resilient foundation that allowed coding to evolve. My guiding criterion, therefore, was that though circumscribed by my research focus, code categories would, primarily, be data generated. Patton (1990) referred to such categories, created and expressed by participants and emerging from the data, as “indigenous typologies” (p 306). Wolcott (1990) recommended beginning this sorting process gradually by first identifying “the broadest categories imaginable” (p 33). Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1994) advised constructing “a conceptual web” (p 58) that is not too content specific but instead points to general domains within which codes can be developed inductively.

My first step, therefore, was to re-read all transcripts and list predominant, broad and study-focused themes. I listed many possibilities as I became aware of a various groupings with study-related potential. I was, however, cautious about narrowing this range by making specific category choices. I was concerned that moving too quickly in this direction risked imposing premature interpretations and missing more implicit, subtle distinctions. At the time, I wondered if my ‘caution’ was actually timidity. In retrospect I realize that I intuitively knew that I needed to begin with a useful but neutral interim set of categories that would allow study-related expansions and modifications over time. My next step was thus to ‘adopt’ a set of general coding categories recommended by Bogden and Biklen (1998) and to incorporate some of the study-related groupings I had listed

earlier. These categories were Setting, Definition of the Situation (how participants define the setting and how they see themselves in relation to it), Perspectives Held by Participants (participants' ways of thinking about and understanding of the setting, people and objects), Processes (sequences of events, changes over time, and passages from one type or kind of status to another), Events, (specific events/activities that occurred in participants' lives), Strategies (conscious ways participants accomplish various things), and Relationship and Social Structure (formal and informal interactions with others and also with the structure or setting).

With use, I eventually modified these categories to conform more directly to the general focus of the study and to ensure that definitions incorporated many of the themes that I had listed after reading the transcripts. For example, I changed the Strategy category to a Contend category to reflect not only participants' actions but also how they approached and reacted to challenging situations. Holding these categories lightly, I coded data from three transcripts chosen randomly. As I did so, I kept in mind Tesch's (1990) advice to code the data "by identifying the topic, what is talked *about*, not abbreviating the content, the substance of the message" (p 119). I examined the results for fit and comprehensive coverage of the data.

Tesch (1990) correctly predicted that, in the process of coding, the researcher usually discovers that originally developed categories do not fit and might need to be renamed, modified in content, subdivided, discarded or supplemented by new ones. I found that the Setting category was used infrequently. Participants in the three "test" transcripts rarely raised issues regarding the environmental or institutional structures. Confirming the Life Context code, however, they did make frequent references to the effects of their general life contexts both within and outside the college. More specific descriptive codes—for example, changes to lifestyle, making the decision, financial and medical—were therefore added to this category.

Definition of Situation, Events and Processes code categories proved too unfocused. I therefore gave them more study-specific definitions. The Definition of Situation (DefSitn) code category was refined, under the same name, to include specific

situations. For example, DefSitn—about being an adult student; DefSitn—about returning to school; and DefSitn—about being evaluated were added. I included statements delivered by participants as “facts” in the definition of this category. The Event code category was also redefined under the same name to include codes relating to specific situations that, to participants, exemplified their experiences. The Process code category was refocused and renamed, Ways of Thinking about Change (WOT Change), to reflect only participants’ expressed perspectives of whether and how they had changed their views over time.

The biggest change I made to code categories was to subdivide the Perspectives held by Participants category. This category, central to participants’ meaning-making and thus to the focus of this study, was used frequently and diversely. I decided to eliminate this general category and replace it with four categories, predominant themes on participants’ perspectives that I had noted earlier. These were WOT Academic (Ways Of Thinking about Academic: WOT Needs (Ways Of Thinking about Needs): WOT People (Ways Of Thinking about People): and WOT Self (Ways of Thinking about Self).

Before beginning to code the complete data, I reapplied these revised categories to four more randomly chosen transcripts. I found that the data fit more naturally into these modified categories. “Eventually the refining process stops as the researcher becomes satisfied with the congruence of the data and the organizing system” (Tesch, 1990, p 91). Each code category appeared to me to be interconnected conceptually and the overall coding scheme allowed sufficient exploration of my research question. With minor modifications over time, these code categories proved structurally resilient and inclusive and clearly separated desired aspects of the study. Although individual data segments naturally overlapped into more than one category, there was clear delineation of meanings. Overall, I decided that this classification scheme had discernible and discriminating categories that were internally consistent and related to one another in ways important to the study.

The Coding Process

I used a computer software program, Atlas/ti, specifically designed to facilitate qualitative analysis and to code data. Although this software program has several functions to assist data analysis in qualitative research, my use was limited exclusively to its capacity to code data and to organize and systematically store codes and coded materials.

I considered each data segment within each transcript separately. Each time I read a segment in a transcript, I thought about the participant and asked myself "What is he or she talking about or describing here?" I would then consult the code list. If there was not already an appropriate code, I would create a new one that reflected, more precisely, the subtle nuances of what the participant had actually said. One segment was sometimes assigned several codes.

The units of data I had delineated were assigned codes primarily in terms of participants' expressed meanings, the sense they themselves made of their adjustment experiences. Coding, however, also involves "thinking about the material" (Weiss, 1994, p 156). At times, I asked myself Wolcott's (1990) subtler question, "What is going on here?" (p 32). Having reread each interview several times, I decided that I had sufficient understanding of participants' implied meanings to cautiously code their inferences. As Weiss reported, "There is a change in the character of coding as analysis progresses" (p 156).

It was important, particularly to the objectives of the fourth dimension of data analysis, to attend to participants' meanings during the coding process. Bliss, Monk and Ogborn (1983) have written that a word or phrase "does not contain its meaning as a bucket contains water but has the meaning it does by being a choice made about its significance in a given context" (cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994, p 56). I was aware that ways participants chose to describe their experiences excluded other possible choices. The researcher's speculations on participants' reasons for making such choices "should be embedded in logic" (Miles & Huberman, p 56). When making inferences about participants' implied meanings, it was important that I do so with conscious

understanding of my underlying logic. Patton (1990) cautions researchers not to “impose a world of meaning on the participants that better reflects the researcher’s world than their world” (p 398). I did not code a data segment at an inferential level until I was able to substantiate it with data. I asked myself how I had come to this decision and searched each transcript until I had confirmation that information from participants had led, logically, to this inference. In this way, I was confident that an inference was based on prior knowledge of relevant statements made by participants earlier or later in the transcripts, for example, particular words chosen or opinions or priorities clearly stated that had subsequently been clarified and mutually understood. This “abundance of caution” made coding a very slow process.

After coding each transcript, I examined the code list and, when necessary, code contents. I amalgamated codes that could be reasonably combined, eliminated codes with clearly duplicated meanings, and divided up frequently used codes that needed to be differentiated. Monitoring my code list this way ensured that it was comprehensive in its coverage of the data and that each code had been generated because there was a difference from codes already generated.

Overall, the code list grew with each interview. I found more and more ways to distinguish the unique ways that participants talked about their experiences. As Miles and Huberman pointed out, “though some codes decay, others will flourish . . . there is more going on than our initial frames have dreamed of” (p 61). New codes were added as I made subtle distinctions from previous codes, and existing codes became overburdened. Finding new possibilities and discovering new insights was exciting, overwhelming and illuminating. I wrote the following in my journal during this time:

I feel like I’m building a monster here. I’m faced with a longer and longer list of codes each day. What am I going to do with all of this! I know I’m learning so much. I didn’t realize how differently they’d feel about the same things. I assumed that confronting an instructor or being evaluated would be stressful—but in so many ways and for so many different reasons? One student even talked about how much she relishes the challenge! A pre-set list of codes would have missed all of this.

After coding approximately two-thirds of the transcripts, I noticed a marked

decline in the number of new codes I was generating. Coding and recoding is over when all of the incidents can be readily classified and categories appear to be saturated (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Although I had clearly begun to reach this point of saturation, coding was not entirely over. I continued to generate new codes until the end of the last transcript, albeit with relative infrequency and generally to refine, rather than introduce, a concept. Weiss (1994) observed that, while the researcher never reaches the point where new material no longer enriches the code list, towards the end of the coding process there should be few important phenomena that significantly extend or qualify codes. When I reached the end of the last transcript, once again I checked the code list for redundancies and overlaps. Finally, I compared the completed code list to the transcripts and ensured that each data segment, particularly those that had been coded earlier in the coding process, had been scrutinized in terms of all of the codes on the list.

The final code list included 436 codes that had been assigned to 13 categories. (see Appendix F). Categories were Adjustments Identified, Contend, Definition of Situation (DefSitn), Events, Life Context, Ways of Thinking about Academic (WOT Academic), Ways of Thinking about Change (WOT Change), Ways of Thinking about People (WOT People), and Ways of Thinking about Self (WOT Self). Ways of Thinking about Academic had three subcategories: Ways of Thinking about Academic Goals (WOT Academic Goals), Ways of Thinking about Academic Process (WOT Academic Process), and Ways of Thinking about Academic Tasks (WOT Academic Tasks).

b. Decontextualizing the Data for the Third Dimension of Analysis

To prepare the data for developmental assessments, I first segmented units of analysis in each transcript that I identified as either subject or object material. Lahey et al. (1985) define these basic units of analysis as “any excerpt in which structural evidence can be found for narrowing the range of possible structures” (p 247). No set number of units of analysis are recommended in subject-object assessments, and it is further assumed that two experienced assessors will arrive at the same overall score without necessarily choosing exactly the same units. Although there are no fixed rules on how to

delineate units of analysis, assessors are guided to “separate any material which could stand alone as structural evidence for a particular structure” (p 248).

To do this, I read through each transcript and considered whether I was at a place in the interview in which a participant was demonstrating how they were constructing the meanings they attached to situations. As I have discussed earlier (see Facilitating Deeper Exploration of Participants’ Perspectives), I was oriented to subject and object material. There was content in the transcript in which it seemed a participant was *unable* to take a perspective on, control or be responsible for a situation (they were *subject to it*). There was also content in the transcript in which he or she seemed *able* to take a perspective on a situation, be responsible for, or to consider within a wider frame of reference (they were *object to it*).

B. Recontextualizing the Data

Recontextualizing the data meant reorganizing and reintegrating the decontextualized materials in terms of the purposes of each dimension of data analysis. For me, this was a process that was, as Marshall and Rossman (1995) have described, “intellectually demanding and requiring creativity . . . the most difficult, complex and creative phase of data analysis with few descriptions of how to do this in the literature” (p 114).

Weiss (1994) differentiates between two different objectives for reorganizing decontextualized material. One is *local integration* and the other is *inclusive integration*. The objective of local integration is to bring coherence to codes and their contents in terms of what participants say. Main themes of this material are therefore recognized and then summarized. If there are variants, material that does not fit with main themes, these are also summarized. In this study, recontextualizing the first three dimensions of analysis could be classified as local integration. The objective of inclusive integration is to “knit into a single coherent story the otherwise isolated areas of analysis that result from local integration” (p 160). The researcher moves logically from one area of data to the next towards this objective, introducing a broader, more interpretative, framework. In

this study, recontextualizing the fourth dimension of analysis could be classified in this way.

In the following sections, I describe how I recontextualized data segments relevant to each dimension of data analysis and then formulated findings and conclusions based on these reorganizations. Descriptions of these processes are presented chronologically. I begin with the first dimension of data analysis and proceed, sequentially, to the fourth.

Common to each dimension were several general steps I took within each analytic process. I first made sure that I was clear about my purpose, my reason for analyzing materials within this particular dimension, and what I hoped to learn. I then assembled all materials conceptually relevant to this purpose and read them through as a whole in order to understand what participants had said within the context of my purpose. As I read, I looked for ways to recontextualize materials. I considered descriptive configurations, similarities and apparent inconsistencies or contradictions and tried to identify ways data segments were related. I looked for patterns “that suggested that certain pieces of data belong together, or that an individual piece was an instance of a more general class of ideas” (Tesch, 1990, p 87). I highlighted and otherwise noted configurations and patterns that stood out for me and then, several times during each dimension of analysis, laid these possibilities aside and repeated this process. I would start from the beginning once again, recontextualizing the same collection of data segments towards the same purpose and from, I hoped, a fresh perspective. By recontextualizing data segments within each dimension in a number of ways, configurations eventually began to reflect consistent patterns, and patterns yielded similar configurations. At this point, I felt enough assurance to draw conclusions.

a. *Recontextualizing for Dimension One—Life Contexts*

My purpose during this first dimension of analysis, Participants’ Life Contexts, was to discover whether, consistent with the research literature on adult students, participants reflected diverse life contexts and had returned to school in response to a life

transition.

With this purpose in mind, I read all coded segments from the codes categorized as Life Context. I considered what participants shared about important past and present circumstances of their lives and the differences they demonstrated within these groupings. I then read coded segments from the codes labelled as WOT Change and considered whether participants' decisions to return to school could be attributed, either directly or indirectly, to life changes. Next, I explored coded segments from codes in other categories that I considered relevant to the purpose of this dimension of analysis. In this way, I located overlapping information in the Adjustments Identified category. As I reached tentative conclusions, I reread participants' transcripts to confirm my findings.

When I was ready to summarize my findings and offer conclusions, I was faced with a choice on how to present this information. The different aspects of participants' life circumstances and reasons for returning to school were already grouped according to these topics within codes. In order to compare similarities and differences, data segments from all of the participants' transcripts had been assembled in terms of common issues. This grouping lent itself to a detailed summary from this perspective of participants' collective similarities and differences. Reporting on participants' diversity in terms of group differences, however, did not strike me as respectful of their individuality. It seemed more appropriate, to me, to re-present findings within individual life contexts. I followed my instinct and reported findings from this dimension of data analysis by constructing a description of each participant, a portrait reflecting personal life contexts and experiences of life transitions.

b. Recontextualizing for Dimension Two—Attitudes and Challenges

My purpose in recontextualizing coded segments for this second dimension of data analysis was to determine whether participants showed similarities in the attitudes they had towards their schooling and in the challenges they perceived themselves as facing as they adjusted to being a student.

I first assembled and read coded segments from the Definition of Situation category and considered ways participants indicated attitudes towards their schooling. I conceptualized “attitudes” as times when participants took a theoretical approach or explicitly expressed an opinion towards the academic context. Separating relevant data segments was my first challenge. I had difficulty clearly delineating segments that reflected my definition of this concept. I finally chose segments in which participants appeared to present “facts” about approaching academic contexts or materials that, in a somewhat distanced way, reflected their views. Sorting segments into common themes in order to consider similarities was my next challenge. After much trial and error, I simply sorted them into broad themes reflecting aspects of their school experience, for example Being at School, Being a Student, Doing Academic Work, and Dealing with Other People at School. Noting that these same themes appeared in other categories, I separated and read relevant data segments in the Ways of Thinking about Academics (WOT Academics) category and subcategories and then the Ways of Thinking about People (WOT People) and Ways of Thinking about Self (WOT Self) categories. Eventually, I realized I was having trouble discriminating between participants’ attitudes and their challenging experiences and needed to understand conceptual differences more precisely. I decided that if I understood more clearly ways that participants approached challenges, I would clarify this distinction. I set work on attitudes aside and began to explore participants’ similarities in their perceptions of challenging situations.

I had already categorized data segments into 118 different codes assigned to the Adjustments Identified code category. These were all data segments that identified a participant’s specific experience of “facing some sort of challenge—something to contend with.” I read the coded segments in all of the codes in this category. To identify a particular challenge or aspect of a challenge, I rechecked to ensure that code names accurately reflected the essence of what participants had said. When code contents appeared ambiguous, I separated materials and assigned more discriminating code names. In other cases, I renamed or modified code names after reconsidering my original interpretations of participants’ challenges. When I was satisfied with the accuracy of all

code labels in this category. I summarized the general nature of the challenge within each code and included data segments that illuminated this concern. I then sorted and compared Adjustment Identified code summaries to search for common themes.

It took a great deal of time and persistence to configure and then reconfigure code summaries as I attempted to determine common threads beyond the consistently global themes that emerged: *Dealing with School*, *Dealing with Others*, and *Dealing with Self*. Though these broad themes confirmed the thematic nature of participants' challenges at a rudimentary level, to me they did not adequately incorporate the specific natures of participants' concerns. Eventually, after integrating code summaries that I had compiled for relevant codes in other code categories into each of these broad themes (relabelled Academic, Interpersonal and Intrapersonal issues), I gained a sense of more comprehensive patterns. I began to see patterns emerge that captured a sense of the whole yet also included a wide variety of participants' issues. I was also able to gain insight into my difficulty differentiating attitudes and challenges.

I realized that my attempts to separate participants' attitudes were based on unrealistic expectations. I had envisioned attitudes as recognizable theoretical approaches or opinions and expected them to show up as discrete entities. Though I understood that participants' attitudes would influence participants' perceptions of the challenges they experienced, I had expected these attitudes to be distinguishable from challenges. My exploration into their thematic challenges strongly reinforced the closely interwoven relationship between participants' attitudes and challenges. I understood my difficulty in allocating data segments into an "attitude" classification resulted from forcing a separation of natural overlaps. Much of the material I had segregated previously as "attitudes," I now suspected would find a better fit as "meanings" when I conducted the fourth dimension of data analysis. I contemplated abandoning my search for themes reflecting attitudes towards schooling as redundant but persisted on the chance that this topic might later reveal another aspect of participants' ways of knowing. I continued to select materials I considered most expressive of objective points of view towards participants' schooling experience and chose appropriate data segments once I

had concluded findings on their thematic challenges. Analysis of data segments allocated to this topic eventually revealed several loosely related themes describing participants' general approach to their school experience. Most important, however, persisting with this topic and scrutinizing findings from a developmental perspective offered valuable insight into distinguishing differences between materials that suggest developmental structures and materials that actually demonstrate them.

Findings for this second dimension of data analysis are reported as Convergent Attitudes and Thematic Challenges in the next chapter.

c. Recontextualizing for Dimension Three—Developmental Distinctions

The purpose of this third dimension of data analysis was to find out whether participants demonstrated diverse developmental structures at the time of the interview. To determine group variation, developmental assessments were conducted on each participant's transcript. The objective was to assess each participant's developmental structure, according to Kegan's subject-object developmental theory, at the time of the interview.

Finding out how participants constructed their meanings was a gradual process. Working with one transcript at a time, I considered the epistemological structure of each data unit or segment independently and subsequently formed an overall theoretical developmental assessment that identified the most plausible developmental structure or structures each participant demonstrated during the interview.

I followed a uniform process to assess each participant's developmental structure that repeated some of the procedures I have described earlier with regard to subject-object interviewing (see *Facilitating Deeper Exploration of Participants' Perspectives*). The resources I identified at that time again guided me. When I read each data segment, I asked from which subject-object balance or structure this person was primarily operating? This question is fundamental to subject-object analysis. It asks, where in the evolution of subject-object relations does an individual appear to be constructing his or her reality? In order to pursue this question, I engaged in a systematic process of "intellectual detective

work” (Lahey et al., 1985, p 168).

I formed a structural hypothesis or range of hypotheses about the subject-object structure(s) underlying each data segment. I considered what the data suggested about the way participants may be organizing their experiences in terms of structural characteristics. As I assessed each data segment in this way, I considered three questions. First, what structural evidence led to my hypothesis? Second, on what basis was I ruling out other plausible counter-hypotheses? Assessment was as much about determining whether there was not sufficient structural evidence for a formulation as about interpreting structural evidence. Asking myself these two questions helped me to examine my hypothesis carefully and ensured I was not ignoring counter-hypotheses. other possible structures that may account for the same words. If more than one hypothesis appeared to be supported by evidence from the data, pursuing a third question helped me take the process a step further and to attempt to make finer distinctions. This question was what additional information do I need to narrow the range of possibilities? It was important to differentiate between what a participant told me about taking a particular perspective and whether or not they demonstrated this structural capability. “To infer that any structure is a possibility, we must see the speaker actually demonstrate that structure’s capabilities” (Lahey et al., p 204). My focus therefore also included noting if and where I had presented these opportunities to a participant at any time during the interview.

This investigative process was cumulative. As hypotheses and counter-hypotheses were generated and either confirmed or disconfirmed, I accumulated evidence during the interview to support a reasonable conclusion about each participant’s developmental structure. I then carefully considered the extent to which participants demonstrated structures by considering the upper and lower limits of their structural capabilities. This process also helped to demonstrate structural points within developmental transformation, times when a participant appeared to operate between structures. I looked for evidence of structural boundaries. I noted if and when a participant demonstrated cognitive capacity that went beyond the hypothesized structure

or described its structural limits. I evaluated, for example, how participants made and critiqued their choices and demonstrated their capacities and limitations to be the source of current beliefs, values, and actions.

After finishing each transcript, I attempted to reach an overall structural assessment. In most cases, particularly in terms of assessments showing structural transformation, I actively considered the extent of the influence of two structures. I found it challenging to precisely discern where a participant was located within developmental transformation. Two initially competitive endeavours guided overall assessments. As I attempted to gradually narrow my range of hypotheses to one overall structural formulation, I consistently took the part of devil's advocate. I collected evidence that material generated at each data segment illustrated a participant's subject-object construction or range of constructions. I also questioned these conclusions. I created arguments for how the relevant portion of the transcript might also represent constructions I had previously ruled out. The result of this debate was that I became clearer about structural distinctions, about what specifically constituted a particular developmental position for an individual. I also became clearer about materials that had insufficient structural evidence for clear formulations of structures. After reaching a conclusion on one, or sometimes two, plausible structures, I reread transcripts, particularly noting excerpts that were consistent with my conclusion. Again I argued with myself until I was able to convince myself that one conclusion and no other reflected the entire interview. If I was unable to do this, I considered the evidence I needed and reread the transcript once more until I was able to come to what I considered to be the most reasonable conclusion.

Data are usually scored by two raters in order to confirm inter-rater reliability and at least one of the two raters should have previously demonstrated expertise in the subject-object assessment process (Lahey et al., 1985). As discussed earlier (see *Facilitating Deeper Exploration of Participants' Perspectives*), Dr. Nancy Popp conducted independent subject-object development assessments on each of the fifteen transcripts. I asked Dr. Popp to send me copies of her assessment after I had completed the first three

dimensions of data analysis, including my own developmental assessment on all fifteen transcripts. Comparison of the results of both analyses indicated that Dr. Popp and I had agreed on the overall subject-object structures demonstrated in eleven transcripts. Differences between the results of our analyses on the other four transcripts involved a narrow structural range. At Dr. Popp's suggestion, we both reassessed these four transcripts and, during two subsequent communications, reconciled discrepancies. I came to understand the validity of Dr. Popp's conclusions. Lahey et al. (1985) observed that beginning assessors, such as myself, have less difficulty formulating hypotheses than imagining how they could be challenged. "The process of debating is the only way to be clear about how we see a particular excerpt not only as evidence of a particular construction, but also as *not evidence*" (p 199).

The results of participants' developmental assessments and developmental diversity were reported individually, in terms of each participant's overall assessment and agreed upon developmental structures.

d. Recontextualizing for Dimension Four--Developmental Indicators

The purpose of this fourth dimension of data analysis was to respond to the second research question: *how do differences in adult students' points of view reflect their developmental distinctions?* Answering this question required first that I determine and compare meanings participants had attached to the similarities found in the first two dimensions of data analysis. The next step was to consider whether differences between meanings were congruent with characteristics of developmental distinctions (findings at the third dimension of data analysis). I was looking for demonstration of developmental indicators in the different ways participants made meaning of particular issues and experiences.

I first assembled all data segments. This included coded segments and the 436 summaries of codes from all code categories previously decontextualized in preparation for the first, second and fourth dimensions of data analysis and the subject-object data

segments decontextualized in preparation for developmental assessment. I labelled the former emic materials and the latter etic materials.

Emic materials were first sorted to separate coded segments that had directly contributed to findings from the first two dimensions of analysis—Life Context and Attitudes to Schooling and Thematic Challenges. Remaining coded segments and summaries of codes within code categories were read, reread, sifted and sorted until I was able to assign one code summary to either Life Context or Attitude toward Schooling or to one of the themes reflecting participants' perceived challenges. When this time-consuming task had been completed, I reread the contents of summaries within each of these classified topics and, at times, data segments that had originally contributed to these summaries. My focus as I read was on explicating ways participants had attached personal meanings, or ways of knowing, to each of these topics and on collecting ways they had expressed these meanings. I highlighted material that I felt identified these perspectives and again summarized my findings. Perhaps I should note at this point that summarizing periodically was absolutely essential to data management (and probably my own sense of progress) during data analysis because doing so eventually reduced approximately ten thousand pages of material to a more manageable two hundred pages. Summaries identifying the meanings participants attach to life contexts, attitudes towards schooling and each aspect of the challenges they faced included verbatim quotes that I felt illuminated particular perspectives. As I read these summaries, I looked for and highlighted differences that distinguished participants' perspectives and meanings from each other. When this was completed, I turned to sorting etic materials.

I sorted data segments that had been decontextualized for developmental assessments. Working with one transcript at a time, I separated the data segments that had directly contributed to each participant's overall developmental assessment. For example, if a participant had received an overall assessment of structure-three abilities and limitations, I collected data segments that supported this conclusion but not data segments that speculated on other structures. If a participant had received an overall assessment indicating that during the interview they were operating between structures,

for example at a point in the middle of transformation between structures three and four. I collected data segments demonstrating ways of thinking characteristic of each structure. After clearly labelling each data segment with participants' pseudo-names, overall structural assessment and the structure, or structures reflected in this segment, I sorted them according to emic classifications, life contexts, life transitions, attitudes towards schooling and each of themes encompassing participants' perceptions of their challenges. I then began to compare and integrate both sets of materials.

I looked for places within and between classifications where differences in meanings in some way reflected the influence of particular developmental structures. It was important to differentiate between places in which emic materials clearly *demonstrated* that participants were operating from a specific structure or structures and those places that emic materials only indicated *potential* for operating from particular developmental structures. Rather than considering subject-object material in which a participant simply talked about a perspective or way of making meaning, I focused on material in which I could see a participant actually demonstrate that they were expressing the limits and capabilities of a particular structure. In this way, I compared, contrasted and eventually identified areas in which emic and etic materials were congruent. When I identified these areas, I returned to transcripts, developmental assessments and differences in meanings. I rechecked my conclusions on potential developmental indicators and considered differences between participants. Where there was sufficient congruent emic and etic materials, I considered the ways participants expressed their developmental distinctiveness within each topic.

I then considered congruent areas in terms of the salience of specific issues to individual participants. Although this had not been originally specified as an objective of this dimension of data analysis, data and findings indicated that certain issues participants chose to explore were clearly significant to them emotionally. I speculated whether these issues might be "developmental vehicles." I considered emic/etic congruencies in terms of places where participants may be trying, in some cases struggling, to make sense of a situation and, in doing so, perhaps demonstrating their developmental work or tasks.

Findings at this fourth dimension of data analysis are reported in the next section as Developmental Indicators.

CHAPTER IV - FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Outcomes of the four dimensions of analysis conducted on the data in this study are reported in this chapter. Findings and conclusions from the first three dimensions of data analysis—Life Contexts, Attitudes and Challenges, and Developmental Distinctions—responded to the first research question: *how do the attitudes and challenges of adult students converge and their developmental structures diverge?* Findings and conclusions from the fourth dimension of data analysis, Developmental Indicators, responded to the second research question: *how do differences in adult students' points of view reflect their developmental distinctions?*

Dimension of Data Analysis	One	Two	Three	Four
Objective	To consider whether, as a group, participants had diverse life circumstances and if they were similarly experiencing a life transition	To consider whether, as a group, participants had similar attitudes towards their schooling and challenges that were thematic.	To assess each participant's epistemology, at the time of the interview, in order to determine whether, as a group, they had demonstrated developmental diversity.	To consider whether differences in participants' points of view towards similar experiences were sufficiently reflective of differences in developmental characteristics to be useful as a heuristic for discerning developmental distinctions.
Findings	Participants had diverse life circumstances and background yet were similarly experiencing a life transition.	Participants held a number of similar attitudes towards their schooling experience. There were two categories of adjustment challenges. Transitory challenges followed the theme of Beginning a New Experiences and Prolonged challenges were included in the themes of Time and Energy and Campus Interactions.	Participants were developmentally diverse. Individual assessments indicated a range of epistemological structures within the group and also that whereas some participants were experiencing developmental equilibrium, most were experiencing developmental transformation.	Attending to differences in participants' towards some challenging experiences provided insight into ways they demonstrated their developmental differences (see tables 4 and 5).

Table 2. Overview of Findings

Dimension One Findings—Life Contexts

Participants described their life situations at the time of the interview and talked about how making the decision to go back to school was situated within the context of

their lives. Data analysis confirmed that, although their life experiences and situations were diverse, they shared convergent circumstantial rationale for returning to school. They had returned to school in a similar response to life changes. Becoming a student again was, in other words, part of a life transition.

To ensure anonymity I have at times switched potentially identifying characteristics, such as number and genders of children and academic programs, between participants. The summary of participants' characteristics at the end of this chapter, however, reflects the correct total demographic distribution. I have not changed participants' stories in any way and, have used their words to describe their lives.

Audrey

When our interview took place, Audrey was in her early forties, divorced and living with her two pre-teen children. She was enrolled full-time in "an intense communications program." Her previous work had become "a fairly soul-deadening professional pursuit . . . if I'd stayed there I would have died. So much of what I had been doing felt progressively redundant. I had a very nice, safe, job where I'd been able to anchor myself comfortably but I felt really quite stuck, like I was spinning my wheels. I wanted to get into something more challenging."

For Audrey, the test of her decision to go back to school occurred "when I realized how long I hesitated about going into the program and . . . started to wish I'd started months earlier. Not a lot has changed in the past few months in terms of my basic skill set and experience, but what it has helped me to do is to validate those skills. It's already paid off in weeks of more job satisfaction than I've had for years, so I've started to calculate it that way."

On one hand, going back to school meant "more possibilities now than I have before. It's precipitating a whole lot of other ways of thinking." On the other hand, she was also still feeling some ambivalence. She was experiencing the sense of challenge she had wanted: "Emotionally, I love it! It's perplexing. It's challenging. What it's done it's engaged me. There's some neat kind of chomping at the bit kind of thing happening,

which is kind of exciting.” She was also uncertain about the outcome. “There’s some concern whether it will pay off financially. To walk out of it with two or three job offers in the hundred to eighty thousand dollar a year range would give me the external validation I need for the sensibility of my decision.”

Barbara

Barbara, in her late thirties, was married and had two young children. In her interview, Barbara talked at length about her young family. She spoke of encouraging her children’s “sense of self that I so terribly lacked as a child” and was appreciative of the support her husband, also a full-time student, gave her. “We’re best friends and have been since we met at sixteen. I can talk to him about anything.” Both were actively involved in their children’s lives, for example, as scouting leaders.

After finishing high school, she immediately went to work: “mostly accounting. I hated it, basically always.” At that time, continuing into post-secondary school was “never part of my reality. I would have loved to have been able to feel good enough about myself to do that, but I really did not feel that I was able to either through finances or IQ or just support all the way around.”

Two years prior to the interview, Barbara had suffered a severe depression. “I was able to function at home but very mechanically.” In retrospect, she realized, “I think it was what needed to be done. It was like hitting the bottom for so long and there’s nowhere else I can go but up. It caused me to re-evaluate everything. It was time for me. I guess something inside me must have been fighting to get out, saying no, no this isn’t what you want.” She and her husband subsequently “sold everything, house, the majority of our belongings, and went back to school, both of us.” Her depression lifted as they moved towards implementing their decision to return to school: “I remember the more I thought about it the more excited I got thinking wow! I can do it . . . I think the big thing that caused me to be so firm and clear is that you can’t ever take this away from me, just that this is finally for me.”

Originally, Barbara had come to the college to upgrade her math and English.

When she discovered she liked going to school, however, she enrolled in university transfer courses: “I decided to stay for as long as possible. I want to work towards my PhD.” Going back to school meant “learning about who I am and why I am the way I am. It’s been very powerful for me, as a mature student, as a female. It’s an incredible feeling. Being at school has also meant that I am worth it. I am worth getting educated and enjoying it in the process.”

Chris

Chris was in his early thirties. He was divorced and living in a common-law relationship. Chris began college the previous year when he enrolled in an access program. At the time of the interview, he was upgrading his academic requirements for university entrance.

He returned to school as a result of physical and emotional problems. “A year ago, all of a sudden I couldn’t walk, a disability in my lower back. In just two weeks going from jogging to barely getting out of a chair.” At the same time, his marriage also ended. After a period of depression, “I finally bottomed out.” He decided, “Coming to college was gonna be the new chapter of my life. As of September first [six months prior to the interview], my past life is behind me.” Chris has risen from other low points in his life. “I’ve been clean and sober for twelve years now. I have a long history of [self] abuse, so I know about emotionally, physically, mentally, spiritually bottoming out.”

His career goal was to eventually earn a counselling degree: “I’ve always wanted to get involved on that end because it seemed to be so natural for me.” For Chris, this is all part of a life path. “That’s the journey I’m on now, not to save the world, but if I could help one child in that type of career, I’d be happy . . . I have to believe I’m doing all this for a good reason. If I can get that, then it’s all worthwhile and if not, well, it’s a learning experience.”

Darlene

Darlene was in her mid-thirties. She was divorced and lived with her two daughters, both in their late teens. She and her children had recently relocated from another town so that she could attend school: "I waited until the children were older."

In the year before the interview, Darlene had completed an access program at the college and then enrolled in a "demanding" technology program. Returning to school was "actually a long term plan, something I had always wanted to do. But I was working and making good money, and I felt we really needed the income more at the time." When she was unexpectedly laid off her job, she thought her work background would help her find another job in her field: "I had had lots of jobs, seasonal and full-time work." However, she discovered that her experience apparently "didn't count for anything. They wanted the certificate." She reassessed her situation: "I thought about that [getting a certificate to work in the same jobs] and said no that's not what I want to do for the rest of my life." She decided to choose a new career: "It was inevitable."

Moving away from family and friends to go back to school was a difficult step for Darlene. "It was a fairly long process realizing for myself that I actually could do it. When the time came to be on my own, it was like, whoa, wait a minute, can I do this? My confidence level was quite low. But here I am." Taking these steps, however, has been rewarding: "I'm more independent now than I have ever been in my life, and it's getting easier all the time."

Deanna

Deanna was in her mid-thirties. She had left a twelve-year marriage the previous year and was living alone with her three young children. She'd been at school for eight months, working to complete an associate degree in science: "Wow, if I can do that maybe I can do two years at the university and get my bachelor's!" Eventually she hoped to pursue a medical career. "It's a goal that I had from the time I was about fourteen." Her dream was to become part of scientific team researching cancer. "Hopefully, with enough time, they'll have a cure for it—I can cure it. That would be something. It would

be so meaningful for me.”

Three years ago, Deanna was diagnosed with cancer: “It’s a bigger challenge almost than parenting itself because I have to live through all of this. I guess I’m afraid that my future will be cut short, and that’s as simple as it is. I could get quite sick when I’m coming close to the end of it, so I’m trying to stay very aware of my health.” This has intensified her determination to succeed at school: “I guess it’s true, you know, when things like this happen, you have to work with what you’ve got and make it the very best.”

Before returning to school she had worked for several years as a bar waitress but was laid off: “I couldn’t picture myself being in that type of work all my life so it kind of worked out good that I got laid off. The money was good but it was getting very sleazy. I just thought if my kids found out I might feel kind of awkward telling them.” Going back to school to retrain was “always a long term plan, something I had always wanted to do, but I had children that depended on me. I felt I needed the income more than the education at the time.”

She found going to school rewarding. “Coming back to college has opened a door that I didn’t ever expect to be open again for me. It’s a brand new part of my life as this independent person who’s got her kids and who has a future in mind.” Walking through this new door had been “almost like a rediscovery. It’s just exciting, it really is. The longer I’m here, the more comfortable I am with the thought that I’m going to fulfil this goal that I had years ago—but my life got in the way.”

Janice

Janice was in her mid-thirties, single and living alone. Her goal was to become a professional in the social sciences field: “I plan to go for at least my master’s.” Before returning to school to retrain, she worked as a technician in natural sciences and, previous to this, had pursued “a lot of things, pre-trades, oil industry, mainly to make money.” She had found her past work “all just kind of brain dead jobs. It wasn’t me, what I felt I should be doing.” Eventually she reached an emotional limit: “I just said no, I *have* to get

out. I remember I went home one day and knew I can't do this anymore. I was getting skin rashes, I was depressed, I honestly thought it would kill me at some point." For Janice, this was not a practical decision. "I mean I was set. I had my house, my RRSP's, a future. I had everything I needed but no peace of mind. It was like things weren't finished, as if my life would just be missing a whole, huge component."

Choosing a completely new career path, however, was a struggle: "I waffled. Originally [after returning to school] I was still in the mode that it *had* to be money. Then, at some point I just realized, you know your first great love is (social science), let's get back to that again." This career direction had been a dream for Janice: "like since I was six years old." The dream had persisted: "Two years ago, I was standing on the brink of [famous place], like literally I was there and sort of going Ahhhhhh [laughs]. And it was like, you can't go in yet, but one day [laughs] you'll be turned loose down there. Yeah, definitely a vision."

For Janice, returning to school was "like your future is sort of plotted out and it's going into this dark, deep path, but then you make the decision to go and like the whole world is wide open." Choosing to pursue her dream career has been "the best decision. I mean it feels right. Having been around the bend with careers and stuff, I think you have to go with what you like. Now there's no disparity between me and what I'm doing. It's like putting on a shoe that fits. Suddenly you know there's nothing irritating or grating about it."

Josette

Josette, in her mid-forties, had been divorced for over twenty years and had one adult daughter. Until a year and a half before the interview, she had lived all her life in Quebec and spoken only French. She described herself as "the last of a family of eight in a dysfunctional home and a recovering alcoholic for two years . . . still in recovery [laughs]."

She moved west to begin a new life. "I planned to find a job here but found out that I couldn't without the right papers." She returned to school to get the credentials she

needed in order to continue in her previous occupation as a health technician but was now reconsidering her career goals. "I'm open to other possibilities. I don't know where I am heading exactly. I think I am heading for [health technology] but it can change." She viewed her return to school as a life opportunity: "Last year was the most terrible period of my life, but the outcome was good, just a real blessing. It was like life took me here. I mean it's up to me. What can come out of this can be endless."

Marguerite

Marguerite was in her late fifties. She had been divorced for four years after a twenty-eight year marriage but did not see her family: "Because of family garbage I'm estranged from my family." She had lost contact with her four grown children: "They're in their dad's camp, and someday I'm hoping that they'll come back into my life."

She upgraded her math and English the previous semester and had now begun to take university transfer courses. Her plan was, eventually, to complete a degree in a helping profession. "I have to be reasonable about it. I realize that I'll take many years." Her academic progress was limited by physical disabilities: "I have arthritis in my hands and my fingers and fifty percent hearing loss in one ear and twenty-five percent in the other one."

After running a day-care home for twenty-five years, Marguerite trained and then worked as a home support worker for the next four. Unfortunately, physical limitations forced her to leave this occupation: "I had to get out. I finally just couldn't do personal care. I have osteoarthritis and degeneration in my back, and it just got to where I couldn't lift people." She regretted having to leave: "I enjoyed working with seniors. I feel like I can relate to them and they can relate to me," but appreciated being at school. "I had a secret dream all my life of doing something like this, but with four kids you don't have the time. Not only the time, there wasn't the money and you have to think of their future. Now I have the opportunity." Without the financial incentive of a disability pension, she may have never realized this dream: "I would have been scared to take that step. Getting out on my own and supporting myself in the first place was a big step. It took me years

and years to do that.”

She was unclear about a specific occupational goal. “I knew I wanted to work in a job where I was with people. I needed that and testing confirmed it.” She was, however, very clear about wanting to live a productive life. “I have a handicap pension, but I just didn’t want to live on that for the rest of my life. Doing home-care, I saw so many people living on disability, younger women too, that seemed to just feel that they couldn’t do anything else. I felt that maybe they were just accepting things. I just couldn’t stay home and live like that, I’ve got to do *something* [laughs]. And I don’t see myself retiring just because sixty-five comes along.”

Maureen

Maureen was in her mid-forties. She separated from her husband seven months prior to the interview and now lived on her own with her three teenaged children. She was upgrading her math and English in preparation for subsequent entry into a two-year technology program the following year.

In the year before, the effects of severe injuries suffered in a car accident several years ago had forced her to leave long-term employment with the government. “As much as I wanted to work, they said I was off on sick leave too long and there would no longer be a position for me. I thought that I’d be doing it the rest of my life, that I’d have that security.” The accident, however, also left her without transferable job skills. “The only paid work I’d done was clerical and my injuries affected fingers on both of my hands, so typing was something I couldn’t really count on anymore.”

Her life after the car accident unravelled. “It was a shock. Prior to the accident I knew what I wanted. Everything was falling into place. This all changed overnight. One problem led to another and it snowballed, a domino effect, and I had to deal with them on top of trying to recover.” Her physical and mental health deteriorated “to the point where I didn’t know who I was anymore. I felt I couldn’t rely on myself, couldn’t look after myself, couldn’t look after anybody else.”

She had gradually partially regained her health: “My mind used to be three or four steps ahead of whatever I was doing, and now it’s three or four steps behind, but at least it’s working again. My short-term memory is awful and I’m still lacking sleep most of the time, but I’m surprised that I’ve done as well mentally as I have. Physically, I’m not quite up there, but then I was no great athlete before.” She decided she was ready to retrain: “I thought this is probably the only opportunity I’ll ever have in my lifetime to be able to go back to school. I was always hoping that one day I would get a chance, but I was waiting until my kids left home. With the family, I couldn’t just quit my job. It was important to have a steady income coming in.”

Maureen enjoyed being at school: “I don’t want to waste a minute. I’m so happy to be here and for the opportunity to do this. I mean, no matter if I’m sick or not, I’m here.” For her, returning to school has meant taking steps towards survival: “The circumstances made it a necessity, it was something that was done out of urgency and just desperation, but it was the best decision. When you hit rock bottom [laughs] . . . I knew I’d have to fight to get my life back.” She also believed that going to school had ensured a better future. “It’s given me hope. If I hadn’t acted on it, I don’t know what my life would have been like. I didn’t want to sit back on disability all my life and have my kids live in poverty. If you don’t have choices, then you’re stuck in a rut and there probably isn’t any room for change and growth, just becoming a better person.”

Megumi

Megumi was in her early thirties and single. She had emigrated from Japan three years prior to the interview. “I was missing a lifetime job, a job that’s going to be my call[ing]. I chose Canada. The first purpose to come here was to look for quality of life.” She had almost completed the final semester of a three-year technology program and was anticipating her next step, to complete a science degree. Her ultimate goal was to become a specialist in her field. “I want to contribute my energy to improve something not just making money to feed myself.”

For Megumi, vocation is a vital part of her life. “I’m looking for the meaning of

my life. That job has to be my definition. Then I can spend my energy on it.” Finding a meaningful career has been her central focus for many years “since I was nineteen or twenty. I saw the interview of a world famous violinist and she looked really happy when she was playing. I could feel the energy just flowing into the music. That was great. And I thought that’s what I’m going to do. I can’t play the violin, but I can do something else that’s very specific, something only I can do.”

She’s proud, and incredulous, of the progress she’s made towards her goal. “I still can’t believe I’m going to get [a degree] and in English! It’s kind of like a joke [laughs]. But still, I’m *doing* it and it’s *going* to happen. And I have to totally convince myself you *can* do it, because this is my last chance—I can really feel that about my life.”

Myrna

Myrna, a First Nation’s student, laughingly described herself as “fifty-something, an elderly person.” She had been divorced for several years. The previous year, together with her three adult sons, she had moved from her community in northern British Columbia in order to attend college. “I sold some furniture off to move us down here and then tried to get things together again to make a home.”

She decided to go back to school “mainly because my boys are grown now and also what jobs do they have for people with mediocre education? Mediocre jobs, dead-end jobs with no place for advancement.” Initially, she took university transfer courses, “mostly in psychology,” to prepare for a career as a counsellor “with all the young people.” Eventually she changed her mind: “It was going to take too long, so I’m taking a short cut [laughs].” As a result, she enrolled in a diploma program teaching support for First Nations’ families.

“I always wanted to continue my education, but a lot of things prevented me. Going to school at the reserve school was only up to grade eight, so I stayed in grade seven for three years. And every Easter my father took me home. His girls did not need an education. Then, once you start earning a living, who is going to look after you? Didn’t occur to me to go looking for welfare.”

For Myrna, the best part of being at school was, "I don't have to worry about being laid off from a job [laughs]. It's kind of a relief knowing that at least I am going to school and, for the time spent, you're getting educated rather than sitting home and collecting welfare."

Penelope

Penelope was in her early thirties and single. She was completing prerequisite courses for subsequent entry into a college program. Her eventual goal was to work in social services, "perhaps in a communication type job."

Ten years ago she was in a nearly fatal car accident. "My brain swelled up and I lost some (long term) memory. Like, how the hell should I know who I should be when I don't remember who I was, when I don't remember important life things that made me this way? And just having to accept everybody else's word for things." She still hadn't recovered past memories. "I can't remember what are real memories and what are memories I've just made up to fill a blank or a story I've heard from someone else. So, I decided to forget all that and just say this is it [laughs]. I can see how things may have led me here but the reality is now."

Two years prior to the interview, "after ten years climbing ladders, doing all the right things, being successful" in a high profile media job, she quit. "I didn't leave because I was itching for something. I just left. It was fun and paid the most I'd ever made but it wasn't me at all. [What was not you about it?] Like phony name, phony image, pictures of me on billboards and in magazines, all just to play into a marketing scheme. And I'm not part of a marketing scheme. The phoniness was being celebrated and, wow, look at the ratings. They're so good, here's a raise. I just didn't like all that."

For the next two years, "I was just looking for other opportunities, hoping that what I had spent those ten years of my life doing could be applied elsewhere." She was unable, however, to find related opportunities. "I had proven myself, was accepted and respected in one industry. It was frustrating to me I couldn't apply that to other things." Coming back to school "was based on reinforcement of the harsh realization that I needed

some kind of certificate, some piece of paper.”

Being at school fit with Penelope’s approach to life. “I enjoy just not being narrow, willing to have experiences. Like, my whole life is just an experiment. Every activity I get involved with gives me a better understanding of just life [laughs].” It also fit with her plan to eventually integrate different parts of her life. “Ultimately, when I’m finally done all this school stuff, I’d like to be able to pool everything I’ve done, to make it make sense in the end. That’s pretty important to me.”

Peter

Peter was in his early forties and single. He had worked many years in the trades before suffering a back injury at his workplace. He “went through a lot of rehabilitation” before deciding he had to learn a new vocation. “I thought, well, my back isn’t going to take this kind of abuse. I’m going to have to do something more sedentary or easier on my back.”

In the year prior to the interview, he had been taking prerequisite courses to enter a technology program, but “It was becoming an ordeal. I was trying too much to hammer a round peg into a square hole. I had to re-evaluate my goals.” At the time of the interview, he had changed his career plans and enrolled in a trades program that allowed him to protect his back and also develop new skills. “I’ve always liked messing around with mechanical stuff, and I can also explore the creative, artistic aspects of it. That really appeals to me. I like the old-fashioned, hands on aspect of [trade], the old worldliness of it, where it’s a craftsman type of work and you can create beautiful artistic things, and every one is an original.”

He was pleased with this new vocational direction. “Making this decision feels good, and I know I’m not going to regret doing this. I’m feeling significantly more comfortable. It just feels like, hey, I’m in a place finally that I’m meant to be.”

Raven

Raven was in his early thirties and divorced, and he shared joint custody of his

young daughter. He took pride in his native heritage. "I have a spiritual background. I'm talking with my chief to become a medicine man. That's something that greatly appeals to me."

After he left high school, "Instead of going to college, I went to trade school. If I had been guided I would have gone straight to university or college because I had natural abilities and talents, especially in the sciences." Eventually, he worked "all the way up to owning and operating my own business." His business had folded the previous year. He considered finding work in his trade: "I was good at it. It was a natural talent, and I knew I could make money, but I was tired of it. I'd been doing it for fifteen years." He decided to try a new career. "I really liked working with children. I have a lot a patience, and I know from my experience working with eleven to fourteen year old kids [as a scout leader] that there's a lot of kids that get missed."

Changing direction in this way was important to Raven. "It wasn't a matter of making money. It was a matter of doing something I wanted to do, something I enjoyed. Two weeks after I started [school], I turned down a forty thousand a year job. With that job I could have been debt-free again in a matter of six months. But I didn't feel any sorrow or any regrets. It meant that I was doing what I wanted to do, not what I had to. It confirmed to me that I know what I wanted to do." Returning to school had always been a goal. "My plans were for my business to succeed and then put somebody in charge to run it for me. I'd have an income off it, and I could go back to school. But things don't always work out like you planned. Not exactly the route I wanted to choose, but [laughs] I ended up where I want to be anyway."

Stewart

Stewart was in his late thirties and lived with family. He had moved from another province a year prior to the interview after leaving first a recovery house and then a transition house. He talked primarily about how he was changing his life. "Two years ago I was a drunk. There were things I wanted to do, but my drinking got in the way. So I got into AA. I knew how to quit. I just didn't know how to stay off. So I got some

counselling and some foundation and then decided I want to go back to school.”

Stewart was aware of the challenges he was facing. “I’ve got some barriers. I have a criminal record. I didn’t finish high school. My work history isn’t all that great. I’ve been from coast to coast a few times, and I’ve done a lot of different things. A lot of jobs I stuck with for a couple of years. Others were so many gaps in between.” Following through on his plans and dreams has been a problem in the past. “I knew where I would go, what I would do if I didn’t do something. I’ve always wanted to go to school, but I’d set up an appointment and didn’t go. Then I ended up doing nothing. I’d think about the possibilities if I didn’t get into school, wind up getting a job I didn’t really want again.”

Now, he felt he had an opportunity to change this pattern. “God gave me another chance. Now I have a choice and I can take it or not I got a goal in mind. I have my direction and I have the tools to help me—and it turns out that I have the intelligence . . . I’m learning for life, learning something that’s gonna help me for the rest of my life. I’ve just got to apply myself.”

Summary and Conclusions on Dimension One Findings

The eleven female and four male adult students participating in this study had diverse backgrounds and life circumstances. Participants ranged in ages from early thirties to late fifties and described a variety of work experiences and life histories and situations. Six were adjusting to physical disabilities, four were recovering from substance addiction, two were learning in a language other than their native tongue, and three were from outside the mainstream white culture. One was married, one lived common-law, eight were divorced or separated, and five were single. Ten participants were parents. Six were actively parenting two or three children of elementary to high school ages, and four had grown children.

Despite differences in their life contexts, parallel circumstances had led participants to assume a student role. All fifteen participants had returned to school in response to a life transition. In a variety of ways, their life circumstances had changed.

and returning to school was preparation for enhanced or altered vocational directions. Some participants were seeking new career directions by choice because they had reached a personal limit to earlier choices. For others, change had not been voluntary. They had been laid off their jobs or had had to leave because of physical disabilities.

This dimension of analysis additionally revealed that all fifteen participants considered returning to school a personally meaningful life opportunity. They unanimously expressed appreciation for the academic direction that their lives had eventually taken. For most, it was the realization of earlier hopes and aspirations. The next level of data analysis looked at their converging attitudes towards schooling and challenges they experienced adjusting to school.

Dimension Two Findings—Attitudes and Challenges

Analysis of participants' responses uncovered similarities among the attitudes they expressed towards being a student and also between the challenges they saw themselves encountering as they adjusted to the academic environment and to the student role.

In the interests of simplicity and brevity, I have chosen only some of the relevant quotations from participants' transcripts as examples of particular group attitudes and challenges.

Attitudes Towards Schooling

As I concluded in the previous section, Participants' Life Contexts, the adult students in this study considered their return to school to be a meaningful part of their lives. This shared sense of the personal significance of school was further illuminated by similarities in other attitudes they expressed. They also shared an intrinsic interest in learning, a firm commitment to achieve, and a strong determination to persist in their academic endeavors. Reinforcing these attitudes, they also volunteered a collective awareness that they were different from other students, not only in age, gender and culture, but also in their attitudes towards their academic responsibilities.

Learning

Most talked about their fundamental interest in learning, particularly learning that they saw as directly applicable to their lives. To several, returning to school again offered a more personally connected way of learning that they had not experienced during previous schooling.

Audrey I *need* to be in a learning environment. It's so clear now how much I thrive on it. What it's done is it's engaged me. I'm just chafing at the bit. I just love the whole thing.

Barbara People don't understand when I say I'm actually enjoying it. It's fun. Fun? You've got all this homework, all these textbooks to read. You have exams? I say, well, it's obviously what I needed. I'm enjoying learning. It feels great. Like in psych, learning all about who I am and why I am that way. It's fascinating.

Janice I like to learn. That was a big thing in the home A paper is never finished as far as I'm concerned. I like to learn from it. I mean, practically, you must hand it in at some point, but I always feel there's ways you can improve it, but that's more for my own feedback.

Maureen My whole appreciation for education has changed since I was in high school. I never studied, so long as I made a passing grade I was happy, whereas now, I so appreciate the opportunity to further my education I don't want to waste a minute.

Penelope It's all learning [laughing] and I feel like I really, really am learning. I mean, this academic stuff, it's information, certainly knowledge, and this has affected me. I feel like it maybe spun me off in a direction that I wouldn't have gone.

Peter I'm very fond of reading. I like to stimulate my mind and learn new things If I'm taking courses that I'm personally interested in then I'll get a lot more enjoyment out of them. Biology was a lot of work, but it interested me, and English I can do well, I guess, because I've read expansively all my life. But the physics, chemistry and math, none of those appealed to me. They were just hurdles I had to get through. They just felt like in big bold capital letters, this is *not* Peter [laughing].

Raven I never realized how advantageous English was. When I was in high

school I failed English. I just never tried. I did just enough to get the grade and pass. Now I have to take English classes. I find it's fun. I know why I do it now. It makes sense now For me to do something, almost everything I do now. I have to know why I'm doing it.

Achieving

They also talked similarly about the importance of achieving, of reaching high academic standards: "I want to do well. I have great determination when I set my mind to do something" (Maureen). Doing well at school offered them opportunity for personal reinforcement and validation.

Barbara I like to see those marks, to see that *A*. As soon as I know that the marks are posted, I'm up there right away [laughs]! It just reinforces that I'm doing a good job, a pat on my back [pause]. They kind of confirm that I've always been worth it.

Janice This sounds conceited, but I don't fear blowing it. It's more that I really want to do a topnotch job. I mean it's more than say a compulsion. I just want to do a bang-up job. I know that I'm capable of higher level work, and I feel like I made the decision to come back and have taken a risk to do this—like this is your opportunity to really pull out the stops and go for it.

Marguerite I always thought that I was pretty stupid in school, the dummy kid. I just didn't see myself as capable. And it wasn't until I got into adult courses and saw I could get good marks that I realized I could do it.

Megumi I just wanna do my best job. I try to get higher grades. I can just manage to finish my school and finish my degree, but that's not what I want. I need a paper, but I don't only want to have a paper. I want to have context with my paper. As long as I have my life, I have to go higher. It has a lot of meaning to me.

Penelope Nothing turns on me better than an *A*. I like that. If you want me to do well at something, tell me I'm good at it. That's something I've learned about myself.

Peter I try to keep up and maintain pretty high grades. I have pretty high standards for myself, and I don't like to see myself as a poor student or a not very good achiever.

Raven I've set myself up to get *A*'s. What can I say? I strive to better myself. I hold myself up to very high standards, and I set goals for myself that are often

extremely high.

Stewart I did an essay that I got A on. I got the affirmation that I'm okay [laughs].

Persistence

Participants also shared a determination to persist in their schooling, to stay focused on maintaining and completing academic goals.

Barbara My determination will get me through almost anything now I really want this. I want to go to school. This is what I'm doing, and God help anybody who tries to stop me. This is mine. This is finally for me. You can never, ever take this from me.

Chris If I didn't have my goal, that I wanna do this, I could see myself walking right away and saying screw it, I've had enough This is something that's in the pit of my stomach. I really want this. I want to go to school. I wanna go to the university, and I don't even know what the outcome will be.

Deanna I have this thing. Am I gonna quit again? It's still hanging over my head right now, but I have to try not to let it. I'm trying to really stay aware of that and stay focused.

Maureen I guess because of my determination, my drive for accomplishment, I just set my mind that I'm going to get, say, two questions done and go away and feel okay. Didn't get pages and pages of work done today, but I got two questions done and I got them right. I have to do that to keep going.

Megumi I have a purpose which I really want to pursue, so I don't lose sense of purpose. I knew it's gonna be really hard studying in English, but still I'm doing it, and I have to kind of totally convince myself—you can do it.

Stewart Failure isn't falling down. It's not getting back up. I meet up with these things that knock me down, and sometimes they do that, but if I don't get back up then that's a loss. I've wasted so much time getting to where I am to let one little thing, a little mistake maybe on a math test . . . one test isn't gonna ruin my life. This is my warning.

Recognizing Differences from Younger Students

Participants talked about being acutely aware of being different from other students, particularly younger students. As Audrey commented, "There's just a lot of

differences.” Penelope saw clear distinctions, “You’re hanging out with people who are twenty-three and twenty-five and them thinking that I’m a peer. I am, but I’m not really one of them.”

Participants observed obvious differences in age, gender, language, lifestyle and culture and also more subtle differences in orientation towards working and in sense of purpose. They were aware that they had more life experiences than younger students and that they brought different attitudes and approaches to their work.

Age disparities were obvious to all participants and, for some, a source of discomfort.

Stewart My difficulty here is I’m [mid-thirties] and sometimes my age shows.

Marguerite I’m so obviously the oldest one in some of my classes.

Raven It bothers me because I know I’m older. There’s not a lot of them in my age bracket. I sit back from that trying to be unobtrusive as possible. Maybe I’ll be overlooked.

For some, gender, language and cultural distinctions compounded their sense of being different.

Darlene I’m the only female in the whole group [program]. We’ll be sitting in the cafeteria, and they’ll be watching all the females. I just focus through what they’re saying.

Josette I didn’t realize the barrier of the language. Everything was different.

Megumi People just . . . doesn’t know if I understand English and that gives me insult. Like, it doesn’t really respect my existence. My difficulty is not that bad, but sometimes I don’t understand some words and I’m totally disoriented.

Myrna They are all mostly young and white. There’s one other guy [in her classes] who’s not quite as old as I am but I guess is mature too.

They noted that they had different priorities and lifestyles than those of younger students.

Audrey I think we are in such different worlds. I don’t have the same schedule as a lot of the other young people, without obligations. They can blow off for two or three hours after class and stay up to ten o’clock at night. I can’t do that.

Participants, however, spoke primarily of noticing they had different attitudes. They were aware of having had more life experience than younger students had and, consequently, of having different perspectives towards learning and being at school.

Barbara I can't believe all of these young ones here that complain about school. It's got to be lack of life experience, ten or fifteen years *does* make a difference in how you view everything and what is important to you. Go out and work for a few years at a job that you hate or for bosses who have problems and, boy, you'd be running back here so quickly [laughs]! I think that makes your focus so much different.

Marguerite Some of the comments they'll come out with I think, you're going to change your mind in ten years. They're looking at it with blinders, and it's hard for them to project. I can see other sides of the issue that they can't. That gives me another view into the situation they can't see.

Myrna Young people wouldn't use the words I use, mainly because they don't know anything about spirituality. I do, because I am older and a native person.

Janice I think that younger students don't get the same depth. That's where you have the advantage. We get a lot more depth because you've had more experience. You're sort of privileged in that way. Like when they talk about the Challenger disaster or the Kennedys. These are not just textbook references, a book that's dry and you're forcing yourself to read it. I remember exactly what I was doing then, but some of them were just too small.

Raven A lot of times I feel like I'm different from them just because of my life experiences. Sometimes they're more optimistic about things than I am but it's not realistic. They'll be discussing business, and I'm thinking, well, that's not how a business works because I've been there and done that already.

Similarities in their commitments to learning, achieving and persisting, reported in the previous section, again showed up in differences they perceived between themselves and younger students. They saw themselves as having more sense of purpose towards their work.

Audrey I have my own working style, so I'm caught with this feeling of wanting to keep up appearances or keep my end up, but then, by the same token, I watch her spend every spare minute playing video games on her computer. I mean I spend my spare time putting out resumes, doing Net searches for job sites. My orientation is a business and survival orientation. Hers is I'm here just having a good time.

Janice I'm not fast. When we're in the lab, I like to sit down quietly and here are the figures we've collected and what are we doing here? I kinda want to think it through, and I'm not rushing to get out of there right away. My [younger] lab partners are kinda like, come on, come on, we want to get over to Tim Horton's.

Megumi For me, it's totally different than a younger [international] student. I have a purpose, which I really want to pursue. They come here from their parents, take a course, oh that's cool to come to another country and study, but many don't know what they want, so that's a very huge difference.

Challenges Adjusting to School

Participants talked about finding the student role stressful. They recounted times when they had felt pressured, anxious and fearful.

Audrey In my case, there's considerably more [pressure involved in going to school], which I find difficult. A *lot* of anxieties tied to this.

Chris I know that there's a massive fear [being] here. I have a fear of exams, but there is a compound fear on top of that. I have this [pause] pressure that I have to get rid of, and I don't know how.

Janice I have found this term to be just hell, a real bad time. Last term, I had a billion papers, and this term I think I've had an exam or test a week for almost nine weeks straight.

Josette I could talk to them [counsellors], and it was like a pressure cooker letting out a little bit of pressure. It was *such* a relief.

Myrna I ended up with vertigo, and that was partly stress. You couldn't think. You had short-term memory loss. And I didn't realize that until I went to math and tried to write my test. I couldn't remember the formulas which I knew last week. And that was all stress.

One participant recalled experiencing stress to the point of entertaining suicidal thoughts.

Peter This last year was so stressful. I was just pulling my hair and horrible to live with and feeling like some kind of wild animal backed into a corner. By the end, I was exhausted and stressed and a wreck. I wound up with all this worry, and then my stomach started acting up, and pretty soon I made myself sick. I got to that head banging point where I felt like trying to slam through a wall, as far as

getting through math and chemistry or something.

It did reach a point that I was feeling suicidal. I felt so down on myself. I just spiralled into this really black frame of mind. It was just so stressful, just so excruciatingly uncomfortable that something like suicide seemed like a reasonable way out I know it's an irrational way of thinking, but it's something that I guess I've cultivated over the years. When I'm in that frame of mind, all I can do is be negative. So I beat myself up and swear at myself and hate myself and get so caught up in that that I don't see any way out. And then I think it's time to exterminate this excuse for a person.

They attributed their stress to a range of challenges they experienced as they adjusted to the academic context and to a student lifestyle. Findings revealed that, whereas they had a broad array of challenges, there were common themes. All adjustment challenges volunteered by the participants were included in this dimension of data analysis (see Appendix F).

The challenges participants reported were grouped into two categories of themes. The first category, Transitory Adjustment Challenges, shows situations that participants had found to be more challenging in the past than currently. The theme of these challenges, Beginning a New Experience, includes sub-themes relating to participants' recollections of the difficulties they experienced when they began school. The second category, Prolonged Adjustment Challenges, shows challenges that participants continued to view as contentious. The themes of these challenges, Time and Energy and Campus Interactions, include sub-themes relating to participants' perceptions of, and reactions to, challenges involving limited personal resources and other people within the academic environment. Table 3 provides an overview of these categories, themes and sub-themes.

Categories	Themes and Sub-Themes
Transitory Adjustment Challenges	Beginning a New Experience - Starting School - Financing Schooling
Prolonged Adjustment Challenges	Time and Energy <u>Situational Challenges and Responses</u> - Physical Limitations - Learning in a Foreign Language - Other Responsibilities <u>Academic Challenges</u> - Academic Skills - Academic Structure and Pace - Evaluation and Feedback - Self-imposed Pressure - Not Meeting Expectations <u>Responses to Academic Challenges</u> - Managing Personal Expectations - Narrowing the Scope and Slowing the Pace
	Campus Interactions - Instructors - Other Students

Table 3. Overview of the Categories, Themes and Sub-themes of Participants' Adjustment Challenges.

A. Transitory Adjustment Challenges

Participants described issues that they had initially viewed as problematic but now no longer considered challenging. These issues, grouped within the theme Beginning a New Experience, involved their early experiences adjusting to being a student and to finding ways to finance their schooling.

Beginning a New Experience

Some participants recalled starting to attend school as one of their earliest challenge. For many it was a novel environment and social context. They described difficulties becoming acclimated to new surroundings, contending with what Chris called "bureaucratic snags" and, in particular, dealing with their strong feelings of uncertainty.

Starting School

Audrey compared her initial nervousness to skipping ropes. “It was like Double Dutch. Remember how tricky it was to jump in? And then, when you got there, you had to make sure you didn’t step on those ropes. Well, that’s really what this felt like. Sort of doing that feinting thing about needing to get back in, but you gotta gauge it and size it up.” Stewart’s analogy was the sense of being in a dark tunnel: “The tunnel was too dark. [How was school like a dark tunnel?] [pause] It’s not knowing what’s in there.”

Josette I had no comfort zone at first. It was a scary place to be, just the structures, the architecture of the place here was very imposing. I’m not sure where I have to go to find the right room, so I came like maybe a week before to find out where the class was and familiarize myself with the place.

Chris It was a challenge just walking into the college because I have a lot of fear of failure. That’s the biggest thing with me . . . I found it very frustrating. There’s this three miles of collecting paperwork. There’s the political side—make sure it’s done correctly, don’t step on toes or boundaries.

Barbara I was trying to get into math. I kept dealing with this woman. She kept telling me I had to go to another campus, and I kept saying, no, you don’t understand. I’m like ten minutes by bike away. Why on earth would I want to go elsewhere?

Audrey A lot of anxiety. I actually went through a lot of [laughs] not very effective preparation. [What was most anxious for you?] The uncertainty about what I was doing, about could I cut it? It was am I doing the right thing? *That* was a really big issue. I questioned my reasons for doing it. There was a really strong underlying feeling of why am I doing this? Is this an avoidance strategy as opposed to an actual taking charge of something? And is it worth it? At this age and stage will this investment pay off for me in the ways that I need it to pay off—financially, career direction.

Most, however, saw initial nervousness as short-lived and talked about eventually overcoming early uncertainties.

Stewart Now I know the steps. My tunnel has lights in it. I know I gotta go here and I gotta go there. I don’t just look through my tunnel and see a light on at the end. I see lights all the way along.

Barbara Now that I know what to expect, I don’t find it a problem.

Deanna The longer I'm here, the more comfortable I am with the thought that I'm going to fulfil this goal.

Audrey Since I've been here things have been quite fluid. I'm sort of getting some validation about my own skill set and it's already paid off in more job satisfaction than I've had for *years*, so I've started to calculate it that way.

Financing Schooling

Participants also talked about making the adjustment to having very little money: "It's very tight." They talked about their worries about being in debt, about spending and not earning money, and about possibly short-changing their children.

Myrna When I'm broke, I think I should have a paycheque.

Peter I just want to get back into the workforce with a minimal amount of debt.

Marguerite I'm really hoping for some disability money to come through. Otherwise, I think I'll be facing twenty-five to thirty thousand dollars in loans.

Audrey I was afraid it would be a burden on them, financially in particular, and it is [pause], and I'm really aware of it.

Barbara [it means] not being able to give as much to my kids, not being able to provide for them. I mean lots of parents can't, but it bothers me. I'm the Mom. We're the parents. We *should* be able to do this.

Some had taken financial risks in order to return to school. Janice gave up "all kinds of security" and Josette had cashed in her RRSP's: "I lost my instant sense of financial security, my little security blanket." Others talked about having to ask for, or borrow, money.

Penelope I'm [early thirties] and still phoning home for money. It sucks.

Chris I've had to say, hey I don't have any money, I'm not working right now. [What's that like for you?] The pride and ego and self-worth goes right down the drain when I have to say I need financial help.

Darlene It wasn't important to her [mother] that I do it [repay the loan] right away, but I have to, to get it all over with. I don't like owing people, especially family and people that I love. It's a matter of pride.

None talked about having financial regrets. In fact, for Raven and Barbara, changes to their financial situations symbolized beginning a new, more authentic life. In order to finance her return to school, Barbara and her family had “downsized big time. It was very freeing, a release. Like, oh we finally got rid of all that garbage.” Raven had turned down a well-paying job offer: “I didn’t feel any sorrow or any regrets. It meant that I was doing what I wanted to do, not what I had to.” For most participants, although coping with limited finances was viewed as a challenge that was “stressful” and “tough,” one that could “rip you apart if you’re not careful,” it also appeared to be an adjustment they tolerated in order to be at school. As Josette said, “I still have wants but my needs are met.”

B. Prolonged Adjustment Challenges

Participants also talked about challenging issues in a manner that did not convey attitudes of acceptance or tolerance. These were problematic situations, issues involving managing their time and energy and interacting with others on-campus, which still required persistent adjustment

Time and Energy

A predominant theme for most participants’ challenges centered on managing their time and energy. They talked about incompatible situational and academic demands on their resources. In addition to time and energy required for their commitments to other important life roles and for accommodating physical limitations, they were coping with inflexible academic responsibilities and pressures.

They talked about having a sense of depleted energy. Janice stated that she was “mostly just tired all the time” and Peter noted that “this last year I was just exhausted.”

Deanna You’re feeling like you’re always rushing around or you’re doing too much in a day. It takes a lot of [pause] just energy.

Raven Some days I’m drained to be here, mainly a drain on energy and concentration.

Josette For me, it's a lot harder than physical stuff being here. I was making myself tired turning stuff in my head, just mental exercise, writing, doing math.

Janice I find I'm tired an awful lot 'cause I'm getting on and my knees are starting to go.

Marguerite I find that I just can't burn the midnight oil anymore. I just need my sleep now. When I was in my thirties, I could work all night, but I can't do that now. I can't be studying at two in the morning.

They saw themselves as having very little time in an immediate, day to day, sense: "I feel a lot of time pressure" (Marguerite); "There's no time to think" (Barbara). They also felt an overall sense of urgency, of having limited time to reach their long-term goals.

Janice I'm (late thirties), and I have less time, and I'm not prepared to waste it.

Deanna I guess I'm afraid that my future will be cut short. I have cancer. I could get sick when I'm coming close to the end of it, and that's as simple as it is It's had it's positives because it made me really want to go out and achieve these things. When things like this happen, you have to work with what you've got and make it the very best.

Josette The age factor is in the back of my mind because I'm (mid-forties) and not getting younger, so there's only a certain (length of) time For me, what has to come out of this can be endless [pause] and not.

Megumi I don't have enough time. I have to be efficient because my life is not that long. I'm getting older. I want to raise kids, have a baby and a family. I think about all those things This is my last chance. I have to do it before I get really old. That's also very much Japanese way of thinking because once a woman turns thirty it's really difficult to find a job.

Peter I had difficulty returning to school at this age because I'm hard on myself, and I tend to think, well, I'm (mid-forties) and I don't have a whole lot to show for myself. That was a fairly big part of it.

Raven Maybe that's what bothers me the most about being older, the fact that I spent fifteen years doing something I was good at instead of what I wanted to do.

a. Situational Challenges and Responses to Challenges

Participants talked about contending with limitations imposed within their personal circumstances. They were coping with physical disabilities, with learning in a foreign language and, in particular, with other important responsibilities in their lives.

Physical Limitations

As the first part of this chapter—Life Contexts—described, several participants were physically incapacitated. Chris was coping with chronic pain from undiagnosed lower back problems. He had also suffered two strokes earlier in his life and was therefore carefully monitoring a tendency towards high blood pressure. Peter also suffered chronic back pain and was adjusting to diminished physical tolerance and capacity. Penelope was still accommodating her lack of long-term memory. Arthritis in Marguerite's hands and fingers curtailed her writing. A scribe helped her take notes in class. She also suffered a partial hearing loss and, at the time of the interview, was hoping to locate funding for a hearing aid: "I can't pick up the interaction of the class and quite often those comments are vital to hear." She viewed her disabilities as "not something that can't be overcome but something that I had to figure out, work on, get some help with." Maureen described her physical limitations:

Maureen The biggest problem on a daily basis is that my short-term memory is awful now. I'm really frustrated by it. I don't know if that's related to lack of sleep. I usually get three or four hours sleep a night. It's a problem, wondering if I'm going to be able to stay awake and if I'm going to be mentally alert.

Perhaps most compelling was Deanna. She had to make time for ongoing check-ups and consultations with various medical resources to ensure that her cancer stayed in remission. At the point of the interview, no new tumours had developed, but a year previous her cancer had returned. It had metastasized into her chest after a two-year remission.

I'm on medication and I feel really good, but I'm trying to stay very aware of my health. Realistically, it's very possible it's [recurrence] going to happen. I was finally able to stop thinking every day about it then. Just at that point where I thought I was okay and it wasn't in the back of my mind leading me, it came

back. It was a *big* disappointment.

Learning in a Foreign Language

Josette and Megumi both talked about their frustrations trying to learn in another language.

Josette The English is [pause] I keep saying it's hard. I can express whatever I need to express, but the academic writing is something else. The vocabulary, it doesn't read the same 'cause when we speak, we speak [laughs].

Megumi I am very uncomfortable because of the language. It like freaks me out, a nightmare. I'm totally disoriented. I think terminology is totally different. I go to class. I take notes [but] I don't really understand what's happening. I shed tears many times. My fear comes out.

Other Responsibilities

Some were trying to stretch their time and energy to cover other important life roles. Janice and Megumi referred briefly to duties to ageing parents, and Barbara referred to dealing with difficult members of her extended family. Marguerite was an elder in her church: "We're a small church. We all help each other and I really enjoy it. It's sort of like a family." At times she felt conflicted. There was not enough time to act responsibly towards both her church and her academic commitments.

I find that there's just a lot coming at me. I'm just divided up. There's just so much that I have to do. I was studying one afternoon and somebody from the church called and could I come and help. I said yes. I felt like I should. Normally, it just wouldn't bother me, but I thought, I don't have time to do this. I want to do well in my courses, and I think oh, if I had more time to put into this. If I don't get a mark that I think I should, I get very disappointed.

The challenge of finding enough time for parenting responsibilities dominated six participants' interviews. All had two or three children living with them. Audrey, Barbara, Deanna and Maureen's children were young, and Myrna and Darlene's children were in their late teens. Most talked about, as Barbara called it, "the balancing act," juggling the obligations of being a responsible parent and being a responsible student.

Barbara You have the kids going to school and my husband going to school and me doing homework but not letting it affect the kids. You know, the balancing

act, jumping around and trying to keep track of everything.

Audrey My son is at a very vulnerable stage and the sense of who he is.

Deanna I have three kids and very, very, very little time, if any, to study. They have a lot of demands that need to be met when I get home from school I am, first and foremost, a mother to these young children. I have to have a little more for them without feeling that I'm leaving myself behind again because they are a part of what my life is all about. They're not stopping me, but they have to be part of it. In order to have that overall success, I have to keep them both, be balanced.

Sometimes it feels really good because I do a really good job of it. Other times I'm caught up in the rat race. It gets frustrating when you're feeling like you're always rushing around or you're doing too much and, at the end of the day, you're just really not satisfied with anything.

Darlene Studying or doing classes or anything to do with school seems to take up a majority of my life right now. It's always there and I'm always doing it. Exams are coming up real fast, and am I going to make it through? My kids are older, but they still take time. It's not that I don't deserve time to myself. It's losing time that I could be with my children.

Some days it's not very easy doing them both. As a matter of fact, sometimes I feel like, enough, maybe I shouldn't have bothered going back to school. But no, I would never do that. It just hasn't been that great the last few days, trying to deal with the stress of home and trying to study.

Maureen I've always pushed myself before. I was one of these supermums that would handle everything. I was basically on automatic pilot, no time for me [laughing], but that was okay. So long as I kept on going, I was fine. It's almost another trap . . . where life is passing me by In some ways, it was self-fulfilling, but in other ways it wasn't. I was getting fulfilment, but that was out of things and other people. I was completely buried. I hope it won't happen again, that I would have some time for me.

b. Academic Challenges

Responsibility towards academic work persistently competed for participants' time and energy. Participants talked about the challenges of learning or relearning academic skills, about structuring their time and about receiving feedback on their work and being evaluated on their performances. They also talked about the academic

demands they placed on themselves and about the pressure to meet high standards and to achieve their goals.

Academic Skills

Some were challenged to recall skills learned many years ago. Others were learning how to learn for the first time.

Josette It was a big challenge. It wasn't easy because it was twenty-seven years after I'd been out of school, and I only had grade eleven, and in French.

Raven There were some skills I realized I needed to bring back in the focus, that I hadn't used in fifteen years.

Maureen It's certainly difficult doing math again after this many years.

Megumi I don't remember this stuff. I haven't been in school for a long time I was told North American education is much lower than Japanese, and I think that's true maybe for the United States, but Canada's education standard is pretty high, probably higher than Japan.

Darlene With tests, it's my biggest problem. Like I can pass them in labs, and I can't pass them in class. I think what I do is I look at the whole problem, uh-oh, I don't know the answer, and then I panic. I can't do it, so why bother.

Chris I don't really know how to perfect what I'm doing. I don't know exactly what I'm supposed to do to get there. But I know that if I do my English and I do my math, I'll get something out of it—which moves me on.

Stewart Sometimes I'm not sure what I'm doing here so, one step at a time, one math problem, one English test, [laughs], do the draft, do the plan first. Can't break that.

Academic Structure and Pace

In order to comply with scholastic timetables, participants adjusted the ways in which they used their time. They described trying to accommodate inflexible deadlines and schedules that were often incompatible with their learning and lifestyle preferences.

Peter I guess I don't like the treadmill aspect of it or just the pumping 'em out. I like to learn on my own terms I don't like deadlines. I like to be able to do

things at my own pace. I like to know things thoroughly before I go on to the next step.

Marguerite I find that the younger students are used to going to school and used to scheduling. Maybe it's a mindset we have to get into, learning how to schedule our lives again.

Raven Right now, putting the structure in is hard and difficult because I haven't had to have a structure for quite some time. That's something I've gotta learn I don't have the incentive for structure. I can be very impulsive. That's part of me [laughing]. It's like I'll do what I like when I want to do it.

I'm trying to teach myself how to finish a project instead of having to have a deadline hanging over me to keep me there. I'm hoping I'm working towards developing that. This is my warning.

Stewart I've taught myself to do a little bit of structuring and setting my goals and setting deadlines for myself and how to get there. I gotta have a study plan. I have to create a structure for me to get to the next level, for all the stuff that I have to take If I don't learn how to do it properly, I won't know how to do the basics. I might be passing now, but when I get to a harder, next level, then I'm going to run into another brick wall.

Penelope For whatever reason, I do my best at the eleventh hour. I don't know why. It's pretty exhausting coming to school and you've been up all night, writing papers at five in the morning, but I'm proud of the work that I do, so I think what I have to do is trick myself and lie about due dates. It's just knowing me well enough to know what would work. I accept that.

Josette I need to, in order to be satisfied, put in as many hours as I can. I was here early until a month ago. Now I'm not as regular as I was. I'm not too pleased. It's too free. It's not discipline. This morning, for example, I stayed in bed until seven. That's slacking. [What's the worst part of slacking?] It's like you're not behaving and I'm not punished. I'm making it easy for myself. It's hard though being on your own, working at your own pace.

Evaluation and Feedback

Participants talked about the challenge of having their work open to others' evaluation "By going to school, everything you do is gonna be scrutinized and evaluated" (Peter). Also about their experiences with, or need for, feedback, "It would be nice if the teacher could give like a blue star 'cause then you'd feel good about what you did but

[you would know that] you still need more work. That doesn't happen here" (Chris).

Some participants preferred to take personal responsibility for their work and for evaluating their own academic performance.

Audrey I'm more self-motivated, much more individualist in style, the test for my learning is not whether instructors like me or don't like me I count on myself to produce professional quality work I'm the one who suffers if the standard is not acceptable.

Barbara I really don't care what the prof thinks of it. It's what's important to me, that I *can* do this.

Janice To a certain extent, I could care less about the mark it generates, I think the main thing for me is to be satisfied with it because I feel I've done a good job If I'm going to do it, I want to do it well, not because anyone is going to see it but because that's how I want to do it.

Megumi The grade system is not always reflecting my real understanding. Like [course] I got C+, which is my lowest grade ever, but still I'm interested in it. That course really introduced me to new ideas on the beauty of [course content], so it was really successful to me. And the opposite thing may happen. I got a B constantly in [course], but my understanding is not a B. It could be a D, so it [value] doesn't really relate to the grades.

Others talked primarily about having their work and their performance appraised by others and of difficulties coping with this challenge.

Peter There's always gonna be a certain amount of anxiety or stress because whether it's a course you like or don't like, we still have tests, and you wanna keep up, and you *are* being evaluated.

Chris I call it people playing God with my life It's like a nagging person in your life, and you finally just throw up your arms and say what *do* you want?

I believe that as long as I try and I'm doing okay, that's good enough for me because I'm trying, but it's not good enough here in college. They say we're teaching you to do the best. I say the best of my ability? No, they say, the *best*. So I always have to do better than what I think I can possibly do at that time, and there's pressure there instantly.

I'm not saying that I'm scum, that I don't have any expectations of myself, but what if my expectations are the best that I can possibly do? . . . I give what I have mentally, spiritually. I give everything it takes, but I mean I've been spending

thirty-four years of my life *speaking* wrong? I've been incorrectly spelling the word *colour*? I put a comma *where*? These things are just like nit-picks. I think damn, they're just little nit-picks.

Myrna If you forgot to double underline, if you forgot to double space, they put automatic fail, and that to me was stupid. He didn't full[y] explain mechanical errors. Even if I read the essay and looked for how to edit, I couldn't see it. That's where my mark went down. I was too nervous to put down on paper what I knew in my head. The nervousness overshadowed my learning.

They also talked about their experiences of having their work critiqued by markers and instructors. For some, like Barbara, feedback of this nature augmented their learning.

He earned my respect. He definitely knew what he was doing. He would sit down and justify everything properly, professionally. I have to accept when they know what they're doing. That's what I'm paying for. I'm not paying to be pampered. I mean I don't want to be treated like dirt, but I certainly want help to be able to think and do my work.

Others took feedback more personally as criticism and struggled with the perception of being censured.

Peter I'm really sensitive to criticism, and if you're sensitive to that in the educational environment, then you're gonna be pretty uncomfortable.

Chris It's just so hard when you look at that failure part of it, so see it right off the top She didn't even like my title of my paper. It was Building Children. She crossed it off and wrote, "We do not build children," big letters across my paper, and she had these marks all over my paper. I was just furious, like I got a mean streak [laughs].

I know how my anger is. I *have* to step away so I can logically ask, okay, what did I do wrong and how can I possibly deal with this. And that is to me reaching out.

Deanna . . . it was constructive criticism. I could recognize that. I just don't take criticism well [laughs] because it's still a hard pill to swallow . . . so I have this thing with my male teachers. It's hard for me to bend and let the teacher be a teacher. It's the feeling of being a failure, from them. And I know they're not there to make me feel like that or to judge me. It's that I won't be liked if I'm not smart enough and I *should* know how to do it.

Myrna She had these questions. Was that *your* idea? Where was this taken from? Is that your own words? Yes, I told her it's *my* words. She said sounds like you got it from another book. I said, *no!* That is the first thing they tell you when you go to any English class, not to commit plagiarizing. I know enough not to do that. She said she was going to give it a *D* because it sounded too mature for the class. And I said I *am* mature. I talk different. My life experience makes me different. She took it back and is going to re-mark it, but it was upsetting to be thought of as a liar.

I could see where she was coming from. She doesn't realize she has a fifty-plus in her class [laughing]. And I could see that young people wouldn't use the words I use, mainly because they don't know anything about spirituality. I do because I'm a native person, so I feel and know the words for it. So I allowed that, given she doesn't know.

[Regarding her experience with a marker] She changed a few words. She said these statements were too strong. And I asked her do you know the story of The Lottery? [She said] "I read it many years ago, but I don't remember it being like this." And I figure, maybe she may have forgotten or maybe she didn't pick up what I picked up 'cause she didn't understand the dark side that I am talking about. So I never went back.

Stewart Sometimes I look at it as a destructive criticism, not constructive criticism, when they say this is wrong. Do it another way. [To himself] I'm *trying* to do it another way, and I *can't* do it another way. *This* is the way I do it, and I got the right answer. Leave it alone! [laughs] But that's not the way to do it. I mean, you're not gonna be able to do another problem coming up in the future if you don't learn to do it properly.

Self-Imposed Pressure

As I've described in the previous section, Convergent Attitudes, participants set high standards for their academic performances and were determined to achieve and to persist in their studies. They had strong expectations of themselves and, compounding external academic pressures, imposed pressure on themselves to succeed.

Josette I'm not just here to kill time. It's important that the work that I do I do my best. So, it's a big commitment, and I take that seriously. For me to be satisfied, I have to give a certain amount of effort.

Megumi I have to be good. I have to be *really* good. [Otherwise?] I'm not going to be functional I can't fail, because this is my big chance to come here.

I've invested all my energy, all my time, all my savings to live here. to go to school. I just wanna be really super professional. so I don't wanna waste anything. People quite often call me a perfectionist [laughs].

Maureen I'm not there for [only] eight hours. I'm there at eight-thirty in the morning, and sometimes I'll stay there till seven-thirty at night before I give up. Some days I just get to that point and say, well, we're going to stay here until we get something accomplished. all by ourselves [laughs].

Stewart I meet up with these things that knock me down, and sometimes they do that, but if I don't get back up, then that's a loss. I've wasted so much time.

Not Meeting Expectations

When their performances did not match their expectations, they were, in varying degrees, hard on themselves.

Josette I always look at myself as you're not so good, you didn't do well.

Raven I'm just not happy when they drop. I blame myself pitifully for it. C is acceptable but I will *not* accept a D for myself. A D means I'm not doing what I know I can at least do. It just means I've not been doing my job. I've been goofing off. I've been putting my priorities in the wrong place . . . I always try to do the best I can. I do have a sense of what I'm capable of. I can do tremendous, and I often flail myself for not achieving it.

Marguerite I was feeling very upset to think that I had such a low mark, that I couldn't get through a course. I did really study for this, but in the writing of it [test], I couldn't memorize a lot of the points. I felt that I just really shouldn't have been there.

Megumi If I fail, like kind of blow things, I just make a mess out of my confidence level. Just totally disappointed of me, put myself as a low quality person because when I decide to do something I trust myself. [that] I have the capability to go through this.

Peter The experience is humiliating because I have high expectations of myself. I suppose because I grew up in a family that was quite critical. [What happens?] It's not pleasant. I tend to beat myself up. What happens is I start telling myself I'm dumb 'cause I can't handle this or I can't seem to grasp this concept. Because I think I *should* be able to. These others are doing it and I'm not, so what's the problem with me.

I know it's unrealistic to be so hard on myself or to think I should be able to grasp everything. The rational side of me knows that not everybody can know everything about everything.

Chris You're working at it, you're practicing it, you've been doing the work on it, and you think you got it. You feel you got it, and you *know* you got it, and you don't. And that is very, very frustrating. [What's most frustrating for you?] When I try my best and it gets rejected. That's when, well, what am I supposed to do now, and then having to go to somebody else and say, okay, I surrender, show me what I'm supposed to do then if I can't do it right.

Stewart Yesterday, after getting the results of the physics test, I didn't do so good. When the class was over, I went and did something that I know I shouldn't do 'cause it's a negative thing. I slapped on myself and I let it nurture my woes and my self-pity. Why, I *know* I know this stuff. I mean, inside, I beat the crap out of myself for doing poorly on a test.

Barbara I was very disappointed, but it was my first mid-term. Everything was new to me. I kind of a little bit beat myself up about it but not too much. In any test I go, well, I got lots I can catch up on.

c. Responses to Academic Challenges

Participants talked about their efforts to find ways of balancing their time and energy in order to meet the pressures of conflicting demands. As Janice said, "Probably the biggest, single, ongoing battle is to stay sane and have a good life, but still do well at school. That's the balance and that's been the learning experience with school."

Faced with accommodating an uncompromising academic structure and maintaining high personal standards while continuing to respond to other important responsibilities and to physical limitations, resolution for most lay in trying to reduce academic demands. Participants described ways that they placed restraints on themselves and limited the amount of work they handled at one time.

Managing Personal Expectations

They talked of managing personal expectations of themselves and of reducing self-imposed pressures.

Megumi I decided I'm always fighting inside, beating myself. I'm like, oh no I

have to be really hard on me [because] I have to improve. I'm realizing that's not really right. I have to be more gentle.

Josette I'm such a perfectionist that it becomes a weakness. It's never good enough. I keep thinking I should work harder I have to work with that. It's up to me. I can be my best friend and my worst enemy. I will set my goals and will set the barriers also.

Janice I have to sort of watch myself. I know I'm too much of a perfectionist I know the potential is there to go and get really freaked out about stuff. I'll work and work and work. I'm not fanatic about it, but I think I tend to be that way. I could go overboard.

Maureen I've always pushed myself to the point of exhaustion. That's just part of me. A natural part of me. That's how I would handle things, which I think is not necessarily a good thing I'm not going for perfection anymore. I'm more patient with myself now. I'm going for what I consider reasonable for me. I do the best I can and hope to see improvement. I can accept that It's the reality, I guess, of the situation that you can't be something you're not and do something that you're incapable of.

Peter All my life I've been undermining myself, not on a constant basis but too much for sure over the years, so I need to give myself more credit, positive pats on the back, by not, I suppose, setting up too high standards for myself I think I have a better understanding of who I am now and what I can reasonably expect of myself in a school situation. It's like having blinders on and now I can stand back and see the bigger picture.

I'll never reach that point of negativity again where I feel suicidal about my scholastic endeavours. I was pursuing it [his program] just to, I suppose, live up to other people's expectations. But I've since decided that's not what I want. It's more important to be just comfortable and feel happy and reasonably healthy and do the kind of things I like to do.

I have this bad habit of forgetting quite easily where that comfort level is. I'm trying to remember to breathe and relax. I think it's quite important.

Narrowing the Scope and Slowing the Pace

Many described responding to an incompatible institutional academic pace by narrowing the scope of their work—taking smaller bites.

Peter I've reached a point where I realize that I know where my strong points are and my weak points are. So, if I'm gonna tackle something and it's on the weak

side, then I'm gonna take smaller bites of it. I know enough now that if it's something that I'm not comfortable with, then I'll just take one at a time instead of three and finding myself in over my head. 'Cause I've learned that [laughs] it doesn't pay to bite off too much and then wind up being shot down in flames. I think what I did is I basically panic and then I fly at it too fast and furious and basically bite off more than I can chew.

Janice I was trying to do it all. Then somebody said to me that's not what you want to do but what you can do. And I thought yup, that's right. I mean, you can use a lot of energy unproductively. So, I've been sticking with four [courses]. I'd love to be doing more just to make things faster. I could do it. [but] I know that I could go overboard.

Many also described responding to academic pressure by slowing down the pace—considering one step at a time.

Josette I was in a hurry. I wanted to do it in a year, but that's me—my impatience and my insecurities. I'm fighting that because who says there's a deadline, who says there's a limited time? I realize now that I can't.

Deanna One of the challenges, I guess the biggest one that I've presented myself with at this time, is the fact that, as my courses get a little tougher, I have to stay on a part-time basis for at least a year. I have to really accept that within myself, I *do* have other priorities. I can't go as fast, or jump into it as much, as I'd like. So, I'm trying to pace myself. This term I took three courses. A lot of people think that that was a bit much, considering [health and children], and it is, but I'm taking next term off. I need to; I have medical reasons.

Like an outline for a paper, I've got a rough picture of what it's going to be like over the next two years, and I'd like to see myself, without having too high expectations, come to these goals in the order that they need . . . Now I have that control over my life. I should be able to get there. And, although there is a long-term goal, there are short-terms in between. So, I'm taking it as one step at a time.

Josette The twelve-step program has been very important [to] help me to stay in the moment and say, today you have to try to do the best, try not to take everything at once, take one bite at a time. So with the academic part of it, I just do my best and try not to deal with everything at once.

2. Campus Interactions

Participants talked about their expectations towards being instructed and also the

challenges they experienced interacting with instructors and with other students.

a. Instructors

Myrna In college I think the teachers should not be dominating, not be condescending . . . and be more aware of students as people—help them to learn. That's why they are going to school To come to school and live under more stress because of some unfeeling teacher, it shouldn't be that way. They should feel comfortable learning at school. They have all that stress already—they could be the only breadwinners, they could be working, they could be looking after young children.

Some conveyed expectations they had towards instructors when they talked about rewarding situations they had experienced. They expected instructors to be supportive and encouraging.

Chris She was on the same level, didn't talk down to you. Didn't talk *at* you, she talked *with* you, and it was wonderful. She had it with everybody in the class, nobody's better than anybody else even though everybody's from different walks of life. That was just a total link right off the top.

Stewart She had an understanding of how to get people to see where their mistakes were and not to put it in a way that would threaten me. I was doubting myself by being too critical and she said that's a good thing to be a critic, you can criticize your own work but don't be *too* critical [about yourself].

Myrna She was not a condescending person. She was a one-on-one person. Spoke with you I suppose. That made a whole lot of difference. I could open up and express myself With other teachers up north, they took the time to talk to you and say, well, you're such a good writer maybe you should go into this. I really went back to school just to upgrade to grade twelve, that's all, but with the teachers talking to me, I thought maybe I should continue. So I did.

A number of participants, however, talked about encounters with instructors who they viewed as unsupportive and discouraging. For some, this was a challenging experience in itself. For others, the situation required the further challenge of contending with the issue.

Chris When you have somebody a few years younger than you who's more educated telling you that you haven't been doing it right, that this is the way it is, you're wrong, you don't wanna listen to that . . . You don't mind having a

younger boss, but when he doesn't respect you, it's very frustrating and awkward to deal with You get tired of being, excuse the phrase, peed on all your life.

It gets to a point where you either blow up or you make changes to please or accommodate the boss . . . [but] we're trying to accommodate him whereas he's not really trying to accommodate us. That's the way it is.

Myrna I didn't really care for the way he gave lectures or asked a question and then, if somebody dared to answer and he didn't like their answer, he'd just stand there and laugh, literally laugh, and say defend yourself. He'd stand over them like a father would over a child. Then, after a while, whenever he asked for a question, everybody just sat there, nobody bothered interacting with him because they didn't want to be his target. That upset me no end.

[What did you do?] I did not speak with him. Somebody would have to provoke me before I would retaliate. I wouldn't initiate it I stayed away from him. I took a stand. If ever he came towards me to make fun of me, he would have heard a lot more than he expected, but he didn't do that I was wishing I was in a position where I could tell him off [laughs], but because I was the student and he was the teacher, I know enough not to do that. [Why not?] I wouldn't want to be kicked out of school for one thing and I think if I embarrassed him before the other students, it would probably work against me, like blacklisting.

It's an institution and you have to go with the flow. You do have to comply with what the teacher expects. It's like any other institution. You go to work, you have to comply with what the boss wants right? It's the same thing.

Barbara There was one who was on the difficult side. What an idiot. I found him quite a blowhard. I was quite offended with the way he was speaking to the class. He was being very condescending, sort of speaking down to you like you're a child. I just wanted to go up to him and go—whack! Who do you think you're talking to?

I went to his office. I wasn't intimidated I did it in a joking way, but I was. "Let's get the ground rules set right now." Once I sort of felt him out, then it was like, okay, we'll get along, but it's got to be on my terms.

Penelope There is one class which is really frustrating me and eating up a lot of my time. The instructor tricks us. He shows us how to do everything in class, and I take the extra work home, and I do it and I get it, and then we get the test . . . and it always looks just a little different. [What's that like for you?] I feel cheated, like I didn't even have a chance to show you what I really knew.

And the hump is me going on about the fact, not just kind of coming to accept—

look Penny [laughs]. You know this is going to happen. Get through it and be done with it.

Megumi I failed the first test, and I'm disappointed a bit but it happens. So I went to see my instructor and asked him how can I study from this point, and he said, "I don't understand why you are in my course, I really recommend you to drop out, go home and take another course." He's bringing up the stats, like ninety percent of the students like you normally fail the class. But I'm in the *other* ten percent. You can't take out that possibility. I was totally discouraged.

I went back to this instructor to talk to him, not really hostile just calmly, because I thought his attitude may affect other students. He just tried to put me down. He wasn't even listening to me at all. I was really angry at that person's lack of respect. And since then he avoids me That wasn't the first time for me. If I don't like something and don't feel it's right, I always go and ask them to change.

Janice There's been one or two courses where I became aware quite early on that the instructor had a different viewpoint. I just thought—this is going to sound terrible—but I thought I listened to idiots for years. It's not worth my time, and I don't want to listen to this drivel. I paid, and I'm not getting good value and I'm dropping it [laughs]. I don't have time to listen to this, and I'm not going to! I mean I feel that I'm a consumer. I'm not a sucker here [laughs].

b. Other Students

Participants talked about having little time for socializing "Social life almost nil during the course, like I'll see you in four months" (Janice). They also talked about their sense of being alone: "It can be very isolating" (Barbara). As discussed previously, in Convergent Attitudes, participants were aware of being a unique sub-population on campus. In addition to being aware of gender, language and cultural distinctions, they were aware that they were older than their classmates. They also understood the role that school had in their lives, and the way they subsequently approached their schooling was different from the predominantly younger student community.

Most participants talked about their sense of being alone on campus. Some described feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Audrey What I'm aware of is more of my emotional needs being churned up in that [school] environment because I'm aware of feeling lonely. I'm *really* conscious of how lonely I am in that group.

Chris I'm hoping that this mentoring program allows people like myself to meet a group of people, so they don't feel so alone some days because I know what it's like for me when I get confused and rejected.

Darlene There's always those times that I think I don't want to be so alone. Everybody needs somebody right? That will come, though it's hard to keep that attitude at times.

Josette I felt alone being here. It was scary. I always wanted to do everything with other people. I never wanted to do things on my own. That was something I had to learn when I came here.

Megumi Another reason why I decided to go back to Japan to study is the isolation. I felt so isolated and very, very lonely.

And, for some, the sense of feeling alone was exacerbated by their perceptions of being excluded by other students.

Audrey The truth is I'm at risk for being alienated because I don't have much in common with a lot of them. I'm marginalized to start with . . . and in one really specific way which is irritating me to the point where I think I'm going to change seats. I'm placed between two young women, age mates, clearly kind of collegial in one sense or another because of their backgrounds, who spend a fair proportion of the day talking to one another as if I'm not there. Right across me.

There's students who go to [pub] and I don't think they would exclude me on purpose, but they're conscious, though I haven't made a big deal of this, that I have a family and responsibilities, so I'm never normally included . . . I think it accentuated the differences again.

Barbara We feel that we're kind of the odd man out [in student residence] because most people have younger children and there's all sorts of activities for the young mums. They get to know each other, get together for dinner. These are all nice people, but we have nothing in common with them. It can be very isolating.

Megumi In the lab, people don't want to clean up with international students. That's very common. I talk to other international students. And people try to avoid me, even nice people. They kind of [pause] react to me.

Janice I think these lab partners of mine think she's very slow. She's a bit dull. She's not too with it.

Marguerite There was three of us, and I felt very, very uncomfortable. The two younger people were obviously working together, and I felt very left out of this. [What was feeling left out like for you?] Just [sighs] feeling that I was [pause] being patronized by them and that they didn't know what to do with me or know what to say to me. And they did a perfect job, but I really didn't have any input into it. I didn't want to just turn in what others were doing, I wanted to do my share of the work. When I finally talked to them, I told one I felt very uncomfortable. I said, you know the look on your face said, Ugh, dinosaur! What am I gonna talk to this person about?

Raven Some students I'll be studying with, and one week we're studying fine, next week they don't want to talk to me. I like people, and it hurts when you're friendly with somebody and then they're being off to you that day. Sometimes it's an extreme struggle. Whether or not it's a personal attack or whether they're having a bad day, it can still affect you. [What's the struggle like?] The only thing I can put my finger on is my need for wanting acceptance.

Some appeared to have come to terms with being different.

Janice At one time, I would have felt a bit of umbrage, like they don't appreciate my brilliance [laughs], but now it's just okay, whatever. I mean they're young. They have their life and I have mine. If I was their age, I would be doing the same thing.

Making unpopular decisions is not something I'm afraid to do. If you go into non-traditional work, you have to be that way because you run across a lot of disapproval. I guess I'm a bit hardened, I don't worry about it too much.

Myrna They're all just kids in there. When I see them, I just hope that they do a better job than I did. When they become parents, maybe they can offer their kids more.

Others found age differences uncomfortable.

Raven It bothers me because I know I'm older. I just want to back off from it cause I listen to them and it's like okay, I don't really want to hear about ages and all that stuff. I sit back from that, trying to be as unobtrusive as possible so that maybe I'll be overlooked . . . I want to put my input in, but I have a sense it wouldn't be welcome. Like, no thanks, I don't want to lay it out there for you to thrash me. It would be my need to say something, and they wouldn't want the information.

Marguerite I don't want to make them feel put down by [being] patronizing and [saying] hey, I know this and you don't. The age difference makes a difference in

the outlook at things, and you do have to be aware of that. Young people get very easily put down, so I'm just trying to be very careful when I say things.

Several initiated contact with other students, primarily by offering the support they felt they had lacked.

Josette I'm lucky because I'm an extroverted, and I like to be with people. I can talk to people . . . I've volunteered for mentoring new students. I'm sure I'm not the only one feeling that way [alone]. I can help to orient them a bit. That's a little bit of time consumption, but I feel it's important that they have someone.

Megumi I realized I just created the condition by myself, no wonder why I felt so isolated. I can take, like more power. I can always think how to meet new friends. I can organize things. So at the beginning of the semester I was thinking how I can improve my relationships with other students. Maybe I can help other people. So I started to take that kind of position. I gave presentations for other international students, how to study. I tried to share the information which I had.

Chris I spend at least two hours a day talking to people. I ask questions, and I listen to why they came to school in the first place . . . I think as an adult coming back, we have problems in life. We walk into this establishment with low self-esteem, low self-worth. We give each other a little bit of pride, a little bit of self-respect, and that's not there sometimes when you get papers back.

Stewart I'm gonna be a peer math tutor, helping people out. I was doing this kind of stuff anyway. I'd been there, and well this is what happens to me. God gave me another chance. Why can't I give other people a chance?

They also, however, indicated ambivalence towards interacting with other students. "It's a really interesting push me, pull ya. Part of it's okay and part of it's not okay" (Audrey). On one hand, they talked of wanting contact with other students, expressing, as Raven described, a "need for wanting acceptance."

Audrey I'm struggling to find a fit, very much struggling. What I've actually done is analyze my peer group, seen where I can mix with them.

Maureen It's the first time I've been around people in years, other than seeing my kids and doctors and other medical people. It [school] has helped me feel more of a complete person again . . . When I have days that aren't so good, I go for coffee and get help from other students. They haven't been in school for a long time, so they experience it the same way.

Stewart One thing that helps a lot is to know students at the college. We talk and it kinda helps.

Janice To find a group that works together and shares information. I love that [laughs]. It really means a lot to me.

Marguerite I was ready to accept that they are just another peer. I'm just a student here learning the same things you are. I think they saw me as just another classmate after that. It was kind of a relief . . . though it was hard to begin with.

On the other hand, they also sometimes indicated resistance to becoming involved with other students.

Josette There's a lot of social going on. I didn't feel too comfortable with it. It was starting to be quite time-consuming. Where's the balance?

Marguerite I wanted to go home and work on my research paper for English that afternoon, but I got myself into a situation [a younger classmate wanted to come and visit her]. So I'm meeting her at noon and she's coming back to my place for the afternoon, and I think there goes the afternoon. I mean I'll enjoy having the connection and meeting with her, but I wanted to spend the afternoon getting my work done. And I just couldn't come out and explain things to her without making . . . I just would have felt like I was hurting her feelings.

Audrey I have probably adopted the role of being, not the maternal figure in the class, but the reserved professional who's there with a very specific focus in mind. I hope to God that works [laughs], 'cause I'm not sure.

For some, this was expressed as an inner emotional conflict.

Audrey I think what I really resent about this program is that I'm really getting an insight into my need for social contact. Part of it that my survival is self-reliance, usually the illusion of self-reliance. I'm aware of that, and disapproval about myself. The disapproval comes from the fear that if I make myself vulnerable in this situation, I'm going to get hurt. So this is a real challenge for me.

Team building is not my strength and not even my interest. For someone who doesn't consider herself a very strong team player, I get quite motivated by other minds around me. If only it was their minds I had to deal with [laughs].

When I saw the document that was created, I went ballistic and did a whole tap-dance about this is my professional pride. My name is going to be on this report. I won't sign off on it. And I did blow up and I just saw them fall apart. God.

God. [What was that like for you?] I was just struggling like you wouldn't believe. I felt mortified that I had gotten my priorities scrambled. I thought, oh my God, I've come back to school, and I've spent all this money and I've blown it. They're all going to hate me, and I'm going to have a horrible year.

Penelope Ultimately the hardest part was me realizing how much of everything, the situation, the relationship, everything, I gave up to them Shitty life lesson [laughs], but I think I've taken the tack of I don't have to apologize to people for things. I'm clear in my self. In the end, it's just me, whoever me is. It's *my* opinion of me, *my* judgement of me. So I think I took the good spin on it.

Josette Sometimes I'm working and someone will come and want to chat, and I can't tell them to go away [pause] in a polite way. I let them stay, and I [pause] play my part; I respond. And I'm uncomfortable because my work is calling me back. I want to go back to what I was doing. I want to reach that point where I can say, can choose to say, well, yesterday I felt like talking, but right now I'm doing my work and I really need to do this.

Summary and Conclusions on Dimension Two Findings

The participants in this study shared similar attitudes towards their schooling and common challenges adjusting to school. The nature of the attitudes and the challenges participants expressed were similar to those reported in other research studies as being shared by other groups of adult students. Attitudes and concerns expressed by participants reflected general categories of reportedly characteristic adjustment issues (Barkhymer & Dorset, 1991; Cross, 1981; Kerka, 1989; and MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). They were psychological or dispositional issues (attitudes), situational issues (circumstantial barriers arising from personal life situations), academic issues (learning, studying and completing academic tasks) and institutional issues (compatibility with the instructional environment and with institutional procedures and policies).

Also, the participants in this study shared an intrinsic interest in learning, and talked similarly about the importance of setting and reaching high academic standards and about persisting to complete academic goals. They shared the perception that, in addition to having more off-campus responsibilities and consequently different priorities than younger students, they also had more life experience and were more committed to being at school. They also felt more committed to achieving their goals and, as a result,

to their academic work.

The participants talked about experiencing stress, also described collectively as pressure, anxiety and fear, and spoke of their feelings about confronting challenging situations as they adjusted to being at school. Challenges each described individually were similar within the group of fifteen participants. They experienced transitory adjustments, challenges that were initially problematic but, at the time of the interview, no longer considered by them to be stressful. These included financial situations and issues that arose when they started school.

As a group, participants also talked about prolonged adjustments, challenges they viewed as persistent and that, to them, remained unresolved. Central to these issues were challenges in managing time and energy. These included the conflicting challenges of coping with physical limitations, learning in a foreign language, balancing other important roles, upgrading or learning academic skills, meeting deadlines, being evaluated, reacting to feedback, and making adjustments to the academic structure and pace. They also experienced interpersonal challenges. These were issues involving dealing with instructors, with a sense of loneliness and isolation, and with other students.

Given confirmation that participants' attitudes and perceptions of challenges were similar to those reported as common to adult students, I turned to exploring individual differences. The following section, *Developmental Diversity*, reports participants' developmental differences, findings of developmental assessments conducted on each participant's interview.

Dimension Three Findings—Developmental Distinctions

In the interests of brevity, it was decided to offer only a summary of dimension three findings, the outcome of subject-object developmental assessments conducted on each participant's transcript, in this section. Appendix H describes each of these outcomes and offers data supporting the conclusions reached regarding each participant's developmental status at the time of the interview. These conclusions were the result of collaboration between my own subject-object assessments of participants' transcripts and

those done independently by Dr. Nancy Popp. Our decision-making process has been described in the previous chapter and Appendix E. Dr. Popp's credentials and affiliations support her expertise in developmental research.

Developmental assessments were based upon Robert Kegan's (1982, 1994) subject-object theory (see Chapter two), in particular upon Kegan's theoretical concepts regarding discrimination between different developmental structures (see Appendix G). Assessment procedures were guided by steps outlined in A Guide to The Subject-Object Interview: Its Administration and Interpretation (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman & Felix, 1985).

At the time they were interviewed, participants were collectively assessed as operating from varying positions within and between three developmental structures. These were structure two, Kegan's durable or imperial order of consciousness; structure three, Kegan's cross-categorical or interpersonal order; and structure four, Kegan's system/complex or institutional order. In order to simplify descriptions, I have not included the full range of Kegan's designations for levels of cognitive complexity (variously called structures or balances or orders of consciousness) or the formal labels Kegan attaches to these different levels (durable or imperial; cross-categorical or interpersonal; and system/complex or institutional). Instead, in this and other sections on participants' developmental distinctions, I have consistently identified the three levels relevant to this study only as "structures" and referenced particular structures by number. The three levels of consciousness relevant to this study, therefore, are referred to as structures two, three, and four (see Figure 2).

Six participants demonstrated that they were constructing their experiences from developmental equilibrium. In other words, from within one developmental structure. Darlene was assessed as operating exclusively from structure-three thinking and Barbara, Janice, Maureen, Megumi and Audrey from structure-four thinking. Nine participants were assessed as constructing their experiences from developmental disequilibrium, from between two structures, and therefore concluded to be experiencing developmental transformation. Chris and Stewart were operating from between structures two and three

and Josette, Deanna, Marguerite, Raven, Penelope, Myrna and Peter from between structures three and four.

Descriptions of Varying Developmental Structures

As mentioned previously, the following sections briefly summarize conclusions reached on participants developmental status that resulted from subject-object assessments of their interview transcripts (refer to Appendix H for more descriptive substantiation). Also, Chapter two and Appendix G respectively clarify theoretical constructs associated with Kegan's Subject-Object developmental theory and how subject-object structures are differentiated.

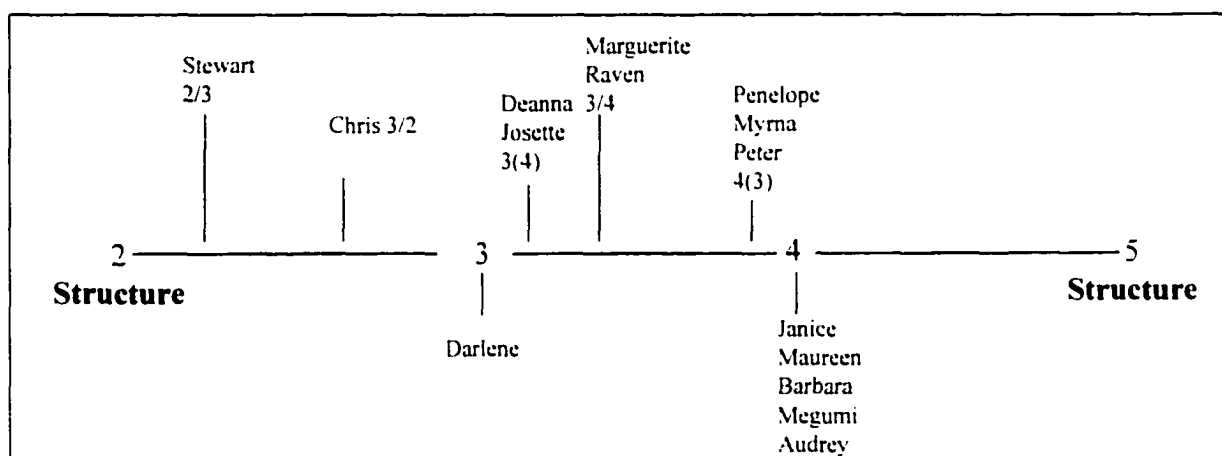


Figure 2. Structural Conclusions on Developmental Assessments of Participants' Transcripts. Assessments above the line show developmental disequilibrium or transformation while assessments below the line show developmental equilibrium. Detailed subject-object assessments of each participant's transcript are included in Appendix H.

A. Transformation between Structures Two and Three

Participants concluded to be experiencing transformation were operating between two developmental structures, at some point of movement from the meaning-making structure of one towards the meaning-making structure of another. Overall, the process of movement from one structure to the next involved a gradual shift from being subject

to, or embedded in, a particular way of constructing reality, to becoming object to or being able to take a perspective on this construction of reality.

Transformation between structures two and three involves the gradual ability to think more subjectively, with an inner sensing of context, and to articulate feelings. Dominance of individual needs gradually gives way to the ability to co-ordinate separate points of view, to include a view of others' needs. "With the emergence from embeddedness in one's needs, a new evolutionary truce is struck. In having them I can now co-ordinate or integrate one need system with another and in so doing, I bring into being that need-mediating reality of mutuality" (Kegan, 1982, p 95). Whereas before, others were instruments by which personal needs were satisfied, they become "the other by whom I complete myself, the other whom I need to create the context out of which I define and know myself and the world" (p 96).

Stewart (2/3) and Chris (3/2) – Middle Phase

Because assessment of Stewart's and Chris's interviews indicated that structures two and three ways of thinking were both operating almost equally, these participants were concluded to be at the middle phase of transformation between these two structures. Stewart's second structure thinking, however, demonstrated a stronger presence whereas, for Chris, third structure thinking showed more dominance. They were therefore seen as operating at different points in this middle phase.

In varying degrees Stewart and Chris's transcripts, at times, revealed concrete and logical structure two thinking. Their interviews also indicated that both were working to incorporate school as another need system and, in doing so, were gaining a structure three sense of mutuality. Because they were influenced by both ways of thinking, though they were clearly gaining perspective on others' needs, this was still from the viewpoint of how others in the academic community affected their own ability to meet their own needs. Stewart demonstrated a stronger focus on how others within the academic context might react to him rather than on perspectives they may hold. Kegan (1994) has written about this as characteristic of this phase. "I am unable to hold the other imaginatively

because, if I do so, I am left having to await or anticipate their movements or happenings in order to keep my world coherent” (p 91). Chris, on the other hand, appeared to have a clearer sense of others’ points of view, particularly expectations he believed they had of him. He also expended strong effort to protect and preserve his sense of independence and personal integrity.

B. Equilibrium at Structure Three

Individuals in equilibrium at structure three have an understanding of (are object to) their needs. They *have* needs. With a structure-three way of thinking, individuals have a shared sense of reality, mutuality towards and with others. The strength of individuals at this structure lies in their capacity to be internally conversational, to construct reality in terms of both their own perceptions and perceptions they perceive in others. They are, however, subject to relationships; they *are* their relationships. “Limits lie in their inability to consult themselves about that shared reality. They cannot because they *are* that shared reality” (Kegan, 1982, p 96).

Darlene (3)

Darlene was assessed as operating fully from structure three thinking. Her transcript did not reflect structure two ways of thinking and, though it occasionally showed Darlene conceptualizing situations at structure four thinking, gave no indication that she was operating directly from this cognitive level. She clearly demonstrated structure three capacity to think abstractly, to identify a complex internal psychological life and to orient to relationships and to the well being of others. “Within this structure the individual can construct values and ideals self-consciously known as such and subordinate one’s own interest on behalf of one’s greater loyalty to maintaining bonds of friendship or group participation” (Kegan, 1994, p 126). In her interview she showed a sense of self that strongly incorporated relationships with others, particularly those with her children. Her feelings, for example, coexisted with her perceptions of their feelings.

C. Transformation between Structures Three and Four

Assessments on seven interview transcripts revealed transformation from structure three thinking to structure four thinking. Consistent with researchers who have observed this developmental shift as the most common in adulthood (Kegan, 1982; Taylor, 1996), over half of the participants were concluded to be experiencing varying phases of this particular inner change process. Kegan (1994) speculated that the post-secondary school environment fosters this developmental transformation in adult students by demanding and supporting self-direction. “With this support, the student who grows at school has experienced the kind of challenge ideally suited to crossing this bridge . . . they are asking many of them to change the whole way they understand themselves, their world and the relation between the two” (p 275).

Individuals internalize critical insights on personal boundaries with movement from the third to the fourth structure. Gradually they no longer *are* (are subject to) relationships but *have* (are object to) relationships as they become increasingly become aware of a reality that isn't constructed by others' experiences and that others' realities are not constructed by their experiences. Transformation between these structures means acquiring not just different ideas but a new way of thinking about one's ideas—about where they come from and about who authorizes them or makes them come about. Individuals are not just gradually becoming independent from someone else's ideas but from any source external to them. “They are separating from previous beliefs and values but not rejecting them. What they are doing is separating the self from being uncritically made up by them” (Kegan, 1994, p 111).

Deanna and Josette 3(4) - Beginning Phase

Deanna's and Josette's interviews were assessed as showing that, while they were operating primarily from structure three thinking, they also indicated that more complex thinking (structure four) was exerting a minimal influence. They were concluded to be constructing reality during their interviews beyond structure three, at the beginning of transformation towards structure four thinking.

They both demonstrated that they were beginning to conceptualize themselves and their own needs. They showed this in their abilities to reflect on their own behaviours and to recognize, as they talked about feeling responsible for others and relying on external guidance, that they were vulnerable to others' influences.

Marguerite and Raven (3/4) - Middle Phase

Marguerite's and Raven's interviews demonstrated that they were operating, almost equally, at both structure three and four ways of thinking. For both participants, structure three thinking still exerted a slightly stronger dominance on their ways of constructing what they knew about themselves and their world than did fourth structure thinking.

They each indicated the influence of structure four thinking by demonstrating a clear sense of themselves and by acknowledging, and following, their own agenda. Structure three vulnerability to the influences of others on this agenda, however, was also still apparent. For Marguerite this showed up in her difficulty saying no when others requested, and were given, time she preferred to give to her work. Raven offered external validation when evaluating the worth of his work rather than reflect on his own sense of its value.

Penelope, Myrna and Peter 4(3) – Final Phase

Penelope's, Myrna's and Peter's interviews primarily demonstrated fourth structure ways of conceptualizing and acting upon their situations with minimal indications of the probability of residual structure three susceptibility to others' influences still operating. They showed the ability to have a perspective on themselves, to take ownership for their decisions and actions and, for the most part, to maintain a sense of themselves as psychologically separate from others. All three participants indicated awareness of the occasional influence of others' perspectives on their own constructions of reality. They recognized when this happened and considered these moments in terms of a former way of thinking. They were able, at these times, to take a

structure four perspective on remnants of an earlier perspective. These observations led to the conclusion that each was coming to the end of transformation into fourth structure thinking.

D. Equilibrium at Structure Four

Five participants consistently demonstrated characteristics of structure four thinking throughout their interviews with no evidence of structure three thinking. They had a clear sense of themselves as separate from (object to) their relationships. They *had* relationships. Not simply just stronger or more confident versions of their former structure three selves, as Kegan (1994) writes, "It's now the same self listening to its own drummer rather than stepping to the beat of another" (p 111). Also characteristic of structure four thinking, they appeared subject to the roles and work of self-authorship. They *were* their work.

Barbara, Megumi, Maureen, Janice, and Audrey (4)

Transcripts of all five of these participants clearly and consistently demonstrated structure four self-authoring capacities. Throughout their interviews they indicated the capacity and commitment to create their own values and ideals rather than have them created for them. They were "no longer taking the social surround as their source of direction and value" (Kegan, 1994, p 168). They showed their abilities to set interpersonal limits and their capacities to identify inner motivations and be self-reflective with regard to emotional conflicts. They firmly subordinated others' expectations to their own ideas of self-governance and organized loyalties, relationships, expectations, values and beliefs within a reality that included a clear sense of who they were and what they needed.

Summary and Conclusions on Dimension Three Findings

Assessments of participants' transcripts revealed that, when the interviews were conducted, the adult students who took part in this study were, as a group,

developmentally diverse. They made sense of their experiences adjusting to school from a range of developmental structures. Also, while some indicated that they were operating from developmental equilibrium—meaning making from within one particular developmental structure, others indicated that they were operating from varying phases of developmental disequilibrium or transformation—meaning making from between two structures.

At the risk of redundancy, I would like to remind readers of important parameters regarding participants' developmental assessments. First, the assessments do not categorize participants' developmental levels as a collection of static end points. Kegan's theory assumes that a given subject-object relationship, demonstrated in this case by each participant's interview, is only part of a gradual unfolding. Thus, participants' responses provided support for assessments that indicated that they were speaking, at the time of the interview, from a structural point—a particular way of knowing at a particular moment in time. Second, these assessments make no attempt to predict direction or changes in participants' developmental processes. Although, in Appendix H I have speculated on a participant's developmental point in transformation or on a plausible direction he or she appeared to be moving towards, these were guesses on my part. Finally, although there was sufficient data to come to conclusions, with confidence, on participants' developmental structures, some interviews did not yield sufficient data to assess, with the same level of confidence, where transformational points were within these structures. Either I did not ask relevant questions (through oversight or tact) or I did not probe salient points sufficiently (for the same reasons) or participants presented only one part of themselves in the interview. In Appendix H I have pointed out where this may have occurred within individual assessments and speculated on other structural possibilities.

Dimension Four Findings—Developmental Indicators

Findings from the fourth dimension of data analysis responded to the second research question: *how do differences in adult students' points of view reflect their developmental distinctions?* Analysis revealed Developmental Indicators—ways

participants' specific points of view towards commonly experienced adjustment challenges demonstrated developmental distinctions and also Developmental Clues—ways participants points of view implied but did not demonstrate developmental distinctions. Developmental indicators were distinct points of view that were sufficiently and consistently supported by structural evidence, subject-object data, to substantiate them as characteristic of developmental structures. Developmental clues were distinct points of view that lacked such empirical confirmation. Though they reflected strong probabilities of structural characteristics, this developmental influence was not adequately substantiated by subject-object data.

Developmental indicators and clues were located within particular adjustment issues shown in earlier dimensions of data analysis to be shared by participants. In the following sections differences in the meanings participants attached to these issues are shown to interconnect with characteristics of varying developmental structures. Participants' developmentally distinctive points of view towards similar adjustment issues are speculated to reveal these differences.

A. Developmental Indicators

Developmental indicators were different points of view identified within the Prolonged Adjustment category of challenges experienced by participants (see Table 3). Participants attached meanings to challenges involving academic and interpersonal issues in a manner that consistently reflected characteristics of specific developmental structures and were identifiable as distinct points of view.

1. Academic Challenges

There were differences in the ways participants made sense of, and adjusted to, being evaluated, receiving feedback and being instructed and also to the structure and pace of academic work. Relevant differences in their points of view towards these issues reflected varying developmental levels with which they understood and managed the college environment.

a. Evaluation and Feedback

Differences in meanings participants attached to being evaluated and receiving feedback on their academic performance produced recognizable differences in their points of view towards these experiences. Some participants relied on internal validation to measure the worth of their work while others relied on external validation. These differences reflected distinctions in assessed developmental structures. Participants experiencing phases of transformation were reconstructing what evaluation and feedback meant to them from the fluctuating influence of varying levels of two different meaning-making structures. These differences showed up in specific points of view.

Points of View of Participants in Transformation between Structures Two and Three

Participants moving from structure two thinking to structure three thinking were reconstructing how they included others' assessments and opinions into their world. Their meaning making was shifting from viewing evaluation and feedback from others within a perspective of meeting their own immediate needs towards a perspective which included a sense of mutuality and integrated an understanding of others' needs. They were beginning to consider two points of view at the same time: what I want and what the academic environment wants from me. Their struggle was learning how to mediate both of these separate perspectives.

Because they were assessed as operating from different points in this phase, being evaluated and receiving feedback took on slightly different meanings for Chris and Stewart. Both demonstrated conflicts between their needs-oriented structure two thinking and their mutuality seeking structure three thinking. Being evaluated and receiving feedback were salient issues for Chris. He was dealing with a confusing mixture of trying to maintain an independent sense of himself yet also allow others the right to evaluate and comment on his performance. He was self-evaluating but from a second structure sense of meeting immediate, needs and, though forming a structure three sense of mutuality, was not yet clear on the context of others' needs of him. "I'm not saying that I'm scum

that I don't have any expectations of myself . . . [but] I guess I'm gonna have to find what works for me, to possibly achieve to that person's standards." He appeared to be pulled towards connection with the academic context and with what it offered him. His conflict, however, was in trying to figure out and to adapt to this new world and, at the same time, resist losing his own sense of his worth. "They say we're teaching you to do the best. I say, the best of my ability? No, they say, the *best*. So I always have to do better than what I think I can possibly do at that time." When he talked of these issues he sounded angry and frustrated.

His sense of the academic evaluation system was, to him, confusing and discouraging. "It's somebody else's expectations I'm trying so hard here to ramrod it to prove a point to somebody that I'm capable of doing it . . . it's like a nagging person in your life . . . and you finally just throw up your arms and say what do you want?" Chris's emerging ability to have an abstract sense of himself and his need for validation in this other context was still structured by a concrete understanding of his circumstances and by a need to defend an independent sense of himself. He resisted conforming. "I think, damn, these things are just like little nit-picks", and perceived problems he experienced as being external to him, as having a dominant perspective imposed on him. "I call it people playing God with my life, right? They have control over me. More control over me than I allow them, than I would like them to have I've lopped off my ego." According to Kegan (1994), "When we are defensive we are constructing the experience of being pushed or pulled upon by the person we are defending against" (p 125). He struggled hard to understand the complexities of this new interpersonal context but still acted on a concrete sense of "being right." For him, this was all "very, very frustrating . . . I believe that as long as I'm doing okay that's good enough for me because I'm trying. [But] it's not good enough here in college."

To Chris, getting disappointing marks and feedback represented failure and giving up his own sense of his work. "Failure is when I try my best and it gets rejected. And then having to go to somebody else and say, 'Okay, I surrender, show me what I'm supposed to do then if I can't do it right.'" The dominance of his third structure thinking,

which had now emerged, however, gave him insight into his feelings and ineffective behaviours. He talked about the impracticality of his emotional responses and about trying to take a more pragmatic approach. He understood that thinking and acting in old ways was not working in this environment.

I know that there's no way I can sit and listen to somebody tell me what's wrong now because I'm too angry. I have to step away from this, so I can logically think about exactly what's written on it, and then go to my instructor and ask, 'Okay what did I do wrong? . . . I'm just kind of exploring this myself because it's so awkward for me, you know.

Stewart demonstrated the conflicts of these two different ways of thinking by resisting in a different way. From a more dominant second structure focus on self-evaluation and on his needs, his challenge was not allowing chronic self-criticism to interfere with external evaluation and feedback: "I'm trying to get the old garbage out of there rather than let it play itself out There's dirty stuff in there that's keeping me from succeeding, self-doubts and the whole over-criticism and stuff." From an emergent sense of mutuality of his third structure thinking, he wanted to give his self over to others' ways of being right. Evaluation and feedback from others, in his case in the academic context, meant help in meeting his need to learn new ways of coping. At times, however, these two perspectives collided.

Sometimes I look at it as destructive criticism, not constructive criticism, when they say this is wrong do it another way. [He thinks] I'm *trying* to do it another way and I *can't* do it another way. *This* is the way I do it. I got the right answer: leave it alone! [Laughs] But that's not the way to do it. I mean, you're not gonna be able to do another problem coming up in the future if you don't learn to do it properly.

He realizes the personal costs to continuing destructive habits, to think in the older, negative ways, particularly in this environment. "Well, that gets to be stupid, that kinda stuff coming in." This is the part of himself he wants to leave behind by moving into what he views as more positive ground, the academic environment. "Replace that negative image with a positive image for a positive outcome." He was clearly motivated to accept external evaluation and feedback: "And that's childish, from what I learned anyway, to isolate myself and wallow around in my own shit I'll find out what I did

wrong [from others] and I'll fix it . . . and before I would have kept on walking, wouldn't have come back."

Points of View of Participants in Transformation between Structures Three and Four

For participants operating at phases of transformation between structures three and four, meaning making appears at varying points of a shift from a mutual sense of reality with others towards a self-defining reality that primarily involved the self. Participants involved in this shift were thus reconstructing their source of reference, from relying on others for evaluation and feedback to relying on themselves. The more structure three thinking prevailed, the more participants took the point of view of external valuation. Deciding whether or not their work was acceptable meant whether it measured up to institutional standards and to feedback given by instructors and academic markers. Because the worth of their work was dependent on others' opinions, this was a personal and vulnerable experience. As Peter said, "I'm quite afraid of being criticized and, of course, by going to school, everything you do is gonna be scrutinized and evaluated." As structure four thinking prevailed, participants took on a more self-evaluating point of view. Deciding whether or not their work was acceptable meant whether it measured up to their own standards. Evaluation and feedback from others gradually took a more objective second place to their own definition of the worth of their work.

Josette, at the starting point of transformation into a fourth structure way of thinking, showed the beginnings of fourth structure influence at a conceptual but not a behavioural level. She demonstrated reliance on others to evaluate her work, to reassure her on its worth. "She made me feel good about myself. I guess I was not conscious of what I was doing. I was minimizing it. And she said, 'Why don't you just take it for what it is?' I just started crying because I thought, well maybe." She also personalized feedback and evaluations from others that were not good. To her, they confirmed a childhood self-evaluation: "When I always look at myself as you're not so good and you didn't do well." She understood that the context for evaluation and feedback was somehow bigger than simply how others saw her, but her criterion for how she judged

herself was still derived from them. “When you get a good mark, you [I] say [hesitantly], ‘Yeah it’s goood,’ where other people would say, ‘Wow that’s great!’” At this point, an emerging fourth structure sense of herself, though hesitant about judging her own work, understood that she had a faulty perception of herself. “I was always taught don’t brag about yourself. Yeah, don’t think you’re too good. Put yourself down.”

Raven and Marguerite were assessed as operating at the middle of transformation to the fourth structure. On the whole they were self-defining, but on behalf of an external standard. Although both participants were still influenced by external standards and evaluations, they were aware of this structure three thinking and resisted allowing it to dominate their actions. Raven pushed himself to take a fourth structure overview of his performance. He used self-monitoring abilities to organize his time and to exercise self-discipline. “If I leave it, it’s more of a mountain; if I start climbing it sooner, it’s not . . . and that’s what I’m trying to teach myself to do—the maintenance along the way, so that I don’t have these large bursts at once.” On the other hand, he used academic marks as the criteria against which he measured how much work to put in and how well he was doing. “I’m just not happy when they [grades] drop I will *not* accept a *D* for myself. I blame myself pitifully for it. A *D* generally tells me I’ve been slacking. It just means I’ve not been doing my job. I’ve been putting my priorities in the wrong place.”

Marguerite also moved between both meaning-making structures as she made sense of a low grade. On one hand, she demonstrated fourth structure understanding that her memory problems had incapacitated her abilities. On the other hand, like Raven, she measured her competence in terms of academic marks. A low mark could therefore undermine her view of her abilities. “I was feeling very upset to think that I had such a low mark I did really study for this, but in the writing of it I couldn’t memorize a lot of the points. I felt that I just really shouldn’t have been here.”

Myrna and Peter were assessed as operating from the final phase of this transformation. They were primarily operating from a fourth structure self-evaluating perspective with the ability to detach themselves from others’ assessments, but were also having to work hard to ensure that they maintained this point of view. Still underlying

their sense of self-authorship was resistance towards being influenced by their perceptions of others' opinions. They recognized when this susceptibility was occasionally provoked and being allowed access into how they viewed their work.

Overall, Myrna demonstrated she was self-evaluating. She considered feedback she received from within this perspective, judging whether or not it was compatible with her own assessment of her work. "She said she was going to give it a *D* because it sounded too mature for the class, and I said I *am* mature. I talk different. My life experience makes me different." She was aware that, sometimes, incompatible feedback meant that the instructor had not understood her individuality: "But I could see from her point that young people wouldn't use the words I use, mainly because they don't know anything about spirituality." At times, however, she also indicated third structure vulnerability to the influence of the instructor's evaluation of her work: "I was so nervous with him that, even if I read the essay and looked for how to edit, I'd overlook it. That's where my mark went down." Fourth structure dominance allowed her to take an overview of her own part in this: "After I finished the semester, *then* I realized how I was doing . . . I was too nervous to put down on paper what I knew in my head."

Myrna also articulated a view of unfair evaluations and feedback at the college that reflected either residual third structure thinking or fourth structure wisdom reinforcing suspicions of prejudice that were based on past experiences.

I still mistrust white people. It doesn't matter what you do. They will find a way to make you work twice as hard to defend yourself. In school, I think they don't expect native people to write well. So when they do write well, you have to prove it.

Although he too was primarily self-evaluating, Peter clearly understood his residual vulnerability to others' opinions when his work was evaluated and he received feedback. When he was in "a really black frame of mind," he evaluated his work in terms of his perceptions of his classmates' performances. "What happens is I start telling myself I'm dumb 'cause I can't seem to grasp this concept because I think I *should* be able to. These others are doing it and I'm not, so what's the problem with me?" Receiving feedback also still sometimes meant feeling criticized. "The experience is

humiliating.” He was aware that he was the source of this perception: “I suppose because I grew up in a family that was quite critical, I’m really sensitive to criticism . . . and if you’re sensitive to that in the educational environment, then you’re gonna be pretty uncomfortable.” He consistently demonstrated structure four awareness of this vulnerable part of himself and caught himself when it emerged. He was able to step back from himself, observe how he had allowed others’ opinions to influence him and then correct it. “I know it’s unrealistic on my part to be so hard on myself or to think that I should be able to grasp everything that I’m confronted with. The rational side of me knows that not everybody can know everything about everything.”

Points of View of Participants in Equilibrium at Structure Four

For participants operating exclusively from Kegan’s developmental structure four, evaluation meant assessing the worth of their work exclusively in terms of whether or not it met with their own satisfaction. Their judgment rested “on an internal standard, a theory or philosophy of what makes something valuable” and their sense of loyalty had moved “from following a value, before determined by their social context, to originating or inventing what is valuable, now determined by themselves” (Kegan, 1982, p 169). Audrey, Janice and Barbara consistently indicated this orientation towards their academic performance: “I count on myself to produce professional quality work I’m the one who suffers if the standard is not acceptable to me” (Audrey); “The main thing for me is to be satisfied with it. I want to do it well, not because anyone is going to see it, but [because] that’s how I want to do it . . . I could care less about the mark it generates” (Janice); and “I really don’t care what the prof. thinks of it. It’s what’s important to me that [I know] I can do this” (Barbara).

Their view rested on a sense of ownership for their work and for their learning. They didn’t rely on external assessments. “The grade system is not always reflecting my real understanding I got C+, which is my lowest grade ever, but still I’m interested in it . . . so it was really successful to *me*” (Megumi). They were also self-correcting and put disappointing outcomes into a self-reliant context. “I kind of a little bit beat myself

up about it but not too much. In any test I would go, well, I got lots I can catch up on” (Barbara). Because they were psychologically separate from external valuing sources, feedback was interpreted objectively. They considered the validity of the source and whether or not other opinions on their work were useful contributions to their learning. “He earned my respect. He would sit down and justify everything properly, professionally. I mean, he was not wrong. I’m willing to say you’re right” (Barbara).

b. Being Instructed

There were differences in how participants saw themselves in relation to instructors and to instructors’ roles within the academic context. These varying points of view, which paralleled their perceptions on being evaluated and receiving feedback, had an impact on how they reacted towards instructors and towards being instructed. In different ways, dealing with instructors was a salient issue for Chris, Barbara, Deanna and Myrna.

Points of View of Participants in Transformation between Structures Two and Three

To Chris, from the point of view of protecting his second structure sense of an independent self, the instructor was “the big guy,” an authoritative and inflexible representative of the academic institution.

The instructor is right. We’re trying to accommodate him whereas he’s not really trying to accommodate us. You stand up on the desk and you want me to grab your hand, and I’m not allowed to stand up . . . that’s the way it is.

From this perspective, this was a relationship that was “so much off balanced” and dealing with instructors was sometimes like dealing with an unfair boss. “You don’t mind having a younger boss, but when he doesn’t respect you, it gets very annoying after a while, very frustrating and awkward to deal with.” Dealing with instructors therefore repeated a lifelong experience of “being peed on.” The exception occurred when an instructor acknowledged his second structure needs for individuality: “My instructor, he gets a feel of who I am so, when he reads my paper, he knows how it should be arranged so that it’s not changing who I am.” At this phase he did not show use of the full

capabilities of third structure thinking to see and understand multiple points of view and in particular, to include the perspectives of instructors or the academic institution. Instead he saw himself without any other choice but to capitulate to their puzzling expectations. "It gets to a point where you either blow up or I guess you make changes to please or accommodate the boss."

Points of View of Participants in Transformation between Structures Three and Four

Participants operating from structure three thinking had very little to say about instructors. They generally referred to them briefly and with acceptance of their place in a hierarchical organization. "They're there. I know that I'm going to be starting at a lower level. They've got themselves in that position, and I'm there to learn from them" (Marguerite). They did not reflect on relationships with individual instructors or on their instructional approaches. From this point of view, instructors appeared to represent the academic "other" that one measured up to.

Deanna, at the beginning point of this transformation, was emotionally dominated by her structure three reactions to the influence of male instructors. "I have this thing with my male teachers . . . I have a really hard time going to them if I need help." When they critiqued her work, she perceived this as criticism:

He's critical. Not in a bad way, but in a good way . . . I didn't do it *right* even though he might have told me or that I *should* know how to do it . . . I just don't take criticism very well; it's still a hard pill to swallow.

From the beginning of a structure four perspective, she was able to step back and recognize that her feelings towards male instructors came from painful prior experiences of mutuality.

It's the feeling of being a failure, from them, because that's the way I was feeling in my marriage . . . and I know they're not there to make me feel like that or to judge me. . . I think I've just set it in my mind not need anyone for awhile . . . because I am a bit of a pushover sometimes.

She also struggled to not allow her structure three feelings to interfere with her school performance.

I feel like I need to overcome that because it sort of has a bit of control over my future . . . I'm aware of it, and I want to come to grips with it so that I can proceed and not have it hold me back. It's . . . a big piece.

She no longer *was* her problem; instead, she *had* a problem. Her new structure four ability to be aware of the situation at a more complex level allowed her to see that she had a personal barrier that she needed to overcome in order to reach her goals.

At this phase, however, she couldn't do more than catch a glimpse of this conception of herself: "[Could you talk more about this holding you back?] I can't say more about it. I don't know."

At the end of this transformation, though Myrna and Penelope could take a perspective on their instructors and on being instructed, they also brought to this way of thinking remnants of structure three thinking. They were not completely able to detach themselves from a view of the instructor as an influential academic authority. They therefore had to struggle to distance themselves from being impacted by instructors' behaviours and, instead, to objectively evaluate those behaviours.

Myrna could view instruction as a reciprocal process. Instructors also needed something she had to offer. "They've never been in the school of hard knocks and I have, so I find there are a few teachers that have learned from me." When instructors did not meet her standards this did not mean to her that her beliefs were faulty; it meant that instructors' behaviours were faulty.

His interaction, if you can call it an interaction, he was just kind of a dictator. It limited everyone from thinking or writing freely . . . so you can no longer think or function and it shouldn't be . . . and I was thinking to myself they paid for this course. They're paying this teacher's salary and they're taking abuse from him.

From time to time, however, she also talked about instructors from either a residual structure-three way of thinking or from her structure four sense of cultural realities. "You do have to comply with what the teacher expects. It's like any other institution. You go to work. You have to comply with what the boss wants, right? It's

the same thing. It is an institution and you have to go with the flow.” Although she was aware of experiencing an injustice from an instructor and was prepared to defend herself, unlike participants who were operating exclusively from structure four thinking, she saw herself as unable to confront this instructor directly and instead preferred strategy to distance herself from him. “I stayed away from him. I just took a stand. If ever he came towards me to make fun of me, then he would have heard a lot more than he expected, but he didn’t do that.” She was unwilling to risk her perceived consequences to confronting someone with more status.

I was wishing I was in a position where I could tell him off [laughs]. I’d be able to tell him what I thought about the way he was and the way he sounded. But, because I was the student and he was the teacher, I know enough not to do that. [What do you know?] I wouldn’t want to be kicked out of school for one thing and I think if I embarrassed him before the other students, it would probably work against me—almost like blacklisting.

Penelope demonstrated similar remnants of structure three thinking by holding an instructor responsible for her feelings of being cheated. “The instructor tricks us. [What’s that like for you?] Feeling cheated, like I didn’t even have a chance to show you what I really knew.” Her dominant fourth structure was also clearly present, however, in the way she talked to herself, about handling the situation in terms of more complex thinking. She challenged herself to take responsibility for the situation and for her own reactions.

And the hump is me going on about that fact. And not just kind of coming down to accept, look Penny [laughs], you know he’s going to do this; you know this is going to happen. Get through it, be done with it, and you never have to look at him again [laughs].

Points of View of Participants in Equilibrium at Structure Four

Participants operating from self-evaluating, structure four thinking took responsibility for their learning, the direction this took them and for their level of productivity. “I don’t follow along word for word with what the instructor says. I’m much more self-motivated, much more individualistic in style” (Audrey). From this perspective, they viewed instructors as learning resources, professional consultants to help them help themselves to learn. “They’re there to help you That’s what I’m

paying for. I mean, I certainly want help to be able to think and do my work” (Barbara). Their points of view towards being instructed, therefore, was of being involved in a collaborative relationship with an instructor within which they worked together to achieve their own academic objectives.

They evaluated the service they received from instructors and did not allow them to interfere with or compromise the standards that they themselves had set for their learning. Janice refused to take classes with instructors whom, to her, “talked driv[er].”

I want to get something out of it I thought it’s not worth my time. I paid and I’m not getting good value and I’m dropping it [laughs]. I mean, I feel that I’m a consumer, not a sucker, here [laughs].

Megumi and Barbara talked about confronting disrespectful instructors. As Megumi said, “If I don’t like something and I don’t feel it’s right, I just always go and ask them to change.”

Barbara’s strong sense of emancipation from reacting to others’ needs, her former structure free thinking, was particularly evident when she talked about contending with an instructor she perceived as condescending. Dealing with the situation, to her, meant confronting the instructor directly and taking charge of the interaction. “I just walked in . . . I was—let’s get the ground rules set right now Once I sort of felt him out and realized who he was, then it was like, okay, we’ll get along just—but it’s got to be on my terms.” For Megumi, confronting instructors who did not meet her learning standards was characteristic of her style. She viewed this step as correcting something that was not working effectively. “I just went to talk to him . . . because I thought that his attitude may affect other students. I told him, you can talk to a student a little differently, so it doesn’t discourage.”

c. Adjusting to the Structure and Pace of Academic Work

Participants talked about adjusting to an academic structure and pace that was incongruent with their own schedules and comfort level. As Janice said, “Probably the biggest, single, ongoing battle is to stay sane and have a good life but still do well at school. That’s the balance . . . and a learning experience with school.” Resolving

conflicting time and energy demands lay in making adjustments to how they performed their work, in particular to how they exercised restraint. Their points of view towards how much or how little they were able to take charge of their situations and subsequently the constraints they used to meet this challenge reflected their developmental status. This issue was particularly salient for Stewart, Raven, Maureen, Peter, Janice and Megumi.

Points of View of Participants in Transformation between Structures Two and Three

For participants assessed as operating between these structures, adjusting to academic structures and pace involved trying to reduce their anxiety towards unfamiliar circumstances by learning the “rules” of the academic context and then cautiously moving forward—step by concrete step. “I don’t really know how to perfect what I’m doing, what I’m supposed to do to get there, but I know that if I do my English and I do my math, I’ll get something out of it which moves me on” (Chris). “Not sure what I’m doing here. So, one step at a time, one math problem, one English test [laughs]. Do the plan first. Do the draft. Can’t break that until you sit down and actually do it” (Stewart).

For Stewart, this was also an opportunity to meet his needs, to learn skills that would help him avoid the “brick walls” he had encountered in the past. “I’m learning something that’s gonna help me for the rest of my life.” He talked of learning a new and better way of organizing his time (structure two thinking) in order to accommodate the external requirements of academic structures (structure three thinking). To survive in school and also to restructure the way he lived his life, he understood that it was important for him to learn more adequate ways of managing difficulties.

I have to create a structure for me to get to the next level. I might be passing now, but when I get to a harder, next level, then I’m going to run into another brick wall. I won’t know how to do the basics. I mean, you’re not gonna be able to do another problem in the future if you don’t learn to do it properly. That’s kinda where I am now. If I skip some places along the way, then it’s gonna be a big hole, and then I’ll have to go back.

Structure three capacities allowed him to articulate what it was like for him to learn a new way of working. Structure two thinking provided the strategies he used to

translate this learning into action. From this dual perspective, he talked about being in charge of his learning schedule in concrete ways: the actual time tasks took and how to fit each piece in. These steps were the lights in his tunnel, indications to him that he was moving forward.

You gotta make your own goals. You have to get yourself going I've taught myself to do a little bit of structuring and setting my goals and how to get there, and I got a study plan. And I set my own deadlines, which is another affirmation. I enjoy setting and meeting deadlines. Now, when I have an assignment, no one tells me when I have to have an essay done. No one tells me when I have to have a math test done. It's not that I absolutely *have* to be in math class at eight every morning. I *make* myself come in.

Learning how to create a structure and to pace himself did not mean taking personal responsibility for his work, nor did it appear to mean wanting this sense of organization in order to feel better about himself or even to get approval from the instructor. It was done more to be able to take care of anticipated events and his need to feel prepared. At times he demonstrated structure three awareness of the rigidity of his organization.

Sometimes I set a deadline that I forget that I can change, that I could move that deadline a little more. I struggle with that 'cause I need it [deadline]. It's [a] lot to getting things done in time so that I'm sticking with my plan *and* leaving some room to be open for the unexpected [laughs].

Points of View of Participants in Transformation between Structures Three and Four

Operating from structure three thinking meant relying on external prompts to guide how to structure and pace work performance. "If I start a project, even something of interest, and I don't have a deadline for it, probably eight out of ten times the project never gets finished I was unable to put more than fifteen minutes at a time studying until I got to when it was absolutely crucial, until the deadline was *forced* on me. *Then* I was able to put in up to an hour" (Raven). "It's important that I make that [time] commitment. It's me owning to my responsibilities. [What responsibilities do you mean?] I'm being sponsored to be here; I think that's a big part of it" (Josette).

Participants experiencing transformation from a structure three to a structure four

way of thinking, in varying degrees, would gradually change their focus from external structures and pace as a source of academic pressure to the self as the source of such pressures. Josette, at the beginning of this transformation, had conceptual awareness that her sense of urgency was self-constructed and therefore within her control: "But that's me, my impatience and my insecurities. I'm fighting that because who says there's a deadline? Who says there's a limited time?" She was beginning to understand another perspective in terms of taking charge of her time: "I'd rather have time to kill than have to rush . . . but I was in bed by 8:30 I felt I had no life anymore, so now I go to bed a little later." She also realized she had self-organized and self-monitoring capabilities and choice. "It's up to me. I can be my best friend and my worst enemy. So I will set my goals and I will set the barriers also." Though she demonstrated understanding that she could *have* an approach to her work by creating her own structure and pace, she was still subject to the direction and expectations of others. "It's hard being on your own, working at your own pace." She was also aware of being sabotaged by self-doubts, yet still allowed them to dominate her actions. "It's never good enough [for me]. I keep thinking I should work harder I have to work with that."

For her, adjusting to structure and pace meant pushing herself to be more self-disciplined and responsible—in order to meet others' expectations. Conceptually, she was aware of her capacity for self-regulation: "I'm not satisfied if I don't have enough discipline. I got to have enough. I have to give a certain amount of effort." She was unsure, however, how to create this and, dominated by structure three thinking, was disoriented when external constraints were absent. "I'm not as regular as I was. I'm not too pleased [laughs]. [What's the most unpleasant part for you?] It's too free It's not discipline, you're not behaving. [What's that like for you?] It's like I'm not punished." She relied on external strategies to keep up with academic structures and pace in order to lower her anxiety and to persist. "With the academic part of it . . . I use that twelve-step program, which has been very important to help me to stay in the moment . . . work on your English; work on your maths. Try not to take everything at once. Take one bite at a time. I would give up if it weren't for that."

Marguerite and Raven, the middle of in this transformation, were still subject to external academic criteria to resolve time and energy conflicts. Marguerite approached the challenge of an overwhelming course load from the assumption that what was required of her was inflexible, that she had no choice in the matter. "I have to take three subjects for student loan and then do my math [but] for me, four subjects is just a bit too much. I feel like if only I had three subjects, I could handle it. After I get my math [sigh], I guess there will be statistics to take."

Raven had more structure four understanding of his capacity to influence and coordinate external academic demands. This, however, competed with a structure three vulnerability to those demands that arose when he acted to deal with them. He demonstrated this when he talked about learning how to structure his time. He had a clear conceptual understanding of why it was necessary to change his approach to time-management and took responsibility for his difficulties without looking to anyone else to share this responsibility. For him, adjusting meant changing personal characteristics and learning how to persist. However, he allowed third structure urges and emotions to dominate when he struggled to carry these intentions out. "I don't have the incentive for structure. I can be very impulsive. I'll do what I like to do; that's part of me. It's fun! Sometimes, it gets in the way, but I still enjoy it." He also understood that this was a conflict. "If I can get them both together, I can do really well."

Raven also talked of needing outside help to provide him with incentive to make these changes. "Putting structure in is hard and difficult right now because I haven't had to have a structure for quite some time. [What do you think might be needed?] My one theory is something more at home. When my daughter is home, I have to build a proper, even schedule because I'm forced to." He was still feeling as though he was at the mercy of his third structure inner process and had not yet worked out effective internal strategies to cope with this. "It's been really irritating. [What's the most irritating part?] It can be overwhelming. When I need the ability to accomplish something, I don't always have the drive to do it. If I can just control the valleys."

Both structures three and four ways of thinking were operating when he talked about trying to move beyond his frustration. "I'm trying to teach myself how to finish a project once I start it instead of having a deadline hanging over me to keep me there. I'm hoping I'm working towards developing that." He was trying, from a structure-four sense of self-organization, to develop a way of being in charge of himself.

In a way, I'm teaching myself I try to learn why I do the things I do or why I act a certain way Things that aren't working for me. . . . Little by little I'm developing a view of myself. It's taken a long time to work on the development of this thing, just ways of understanding myself This is my warning."

In contrast to Raven, Penelope talked of her tendency to procrastinate from a structure four perspective. For her, meeting deadlines did not mean changing her needs: it meant acknowledging and then taking charge of what she knew about her needs. "For whatever reason, I do my best at the eleventh hour. It's pretty exhausting, but I do well in school and I'm proud of the work that I do. So I think what I have to do is trick myself and lie about due dates." Coping with deadlines meant working with what she knew about herself: "It's just knowing me well enough to know what would work. That's all it is you know, a personal tactic. If that's what it is that I dig about it, or feel comfort, or feel inspired, or whatever, this is me. I accept that."

Points of View of Participants in Equilibrium at Structure Four

For participants who were dominated by structure four thinking, adjusting an academic structure and pace usually meant restraining the unreasonable demands of their own expectations for structuring and pacing. "I know I'm too much of a perfectionist, that I wouldn't be able to relax, so I have to watch myself" (Janice). They talked of the challenge of setting limits on pressures they put on themselves.

Janice I mean, you can use a lot of energy unproductively I'm a fairly high-strung individual, so I know the potential is there to go and get really freaked out about stuff I'd love to be doing more just to make things faster, but I'll work and work and work, so it's better that I take four.

Megumi People quite often call me a perfectionist I'm just attempting a major change I decided I'm just beating me so much. I have to be really

hard on me [because] I have to improve. I'm realizing that's not really right.

A salient issue for Maureen, Peter, Janice and Megumi was reconsidering and modifying what they expected of themselves. Maureen, from a structure four perspective on how her accident had changed her life, took responsibility for her choices. For her, adjusting to the structure and pace of academic work meant reconciling demanding inner standards with her diminished physical and mental capacities. "I have been somewhat of a perfectionist in the past and now I'm not so much It's the reality of the situation that you can't be something you're not and do something that you're incapable of." She talked at length about this as an important turning point for her, during which she redefined her own sense of working and achievement.

Her self-modifying capacities allowed her to temper and re-align her expectations of herself. In doing so, she accommodated limits on her ability to work at the same level she had in the past. "I've been easy on myself because I have to recognize my limitations in this. I have to accept that . . . now I'm not aiming so much for perfection, just feeling that I've done the job well." She also re-evaluated her former goals and work practices and acknowledged that her definition of accomplishment had previously incurred the cost of ignoring her own comfort needs. "I've always pushed myself before [to] do everything, handle everything, and I was basically on automatic pilot. No time for me [laughing], but that was okay. So long as I kept on going, I was fine." She was able to reconsider and change her meaning of achievement to include her needs.

I've learned that I'm a different person as a result of all these things that have happened to me. You see things in a different light. [What do you see in a different light?] Not being so hard on myself is the major one . . . I was getting fulfilment and contentment out of my accomplishments, but that was out of things and other people I hope it won't happen again. I kind of ignored myself.

Peter described reaching distressing physical and emotional limits to his academic efforts the previous semester. "I have this bad habit of forgetting quite easily where that comfort level is. I'll never reach that point of negativity again where you feel suicidal about scholastic endeavours." Exercising self-modifying capacities, he took personal responsibility for the despair he experienced. He understood that he was dealing with an

academic pace that was incongruent with his preferred style of learning. "I like to learn thoroughly and on my own terms. I don't like being forced through it at a fast march and stamped at the appropriate points." He also understood that he was striving to fulfill external expectations. "I was pursuing [program] just to, I suppose, live up to other peoples' expectations . . . I've always worried too much about what other people think, even people I don't know. It's not an easy thing to get over because I spent too much of my life [doing it]. It's just become habitual." From a structure four perspective he realized that he himself had precipitated these strong feelings by trying to conform to the structure and pace of a program that was incompatible with his needs. "More along the grounds of it's what I should do because it's more respectable and professional, rather than what I want to do".

He decided instead to act upon his own evaluation of his vocational needs. "And so I was forced to re-evaluate my situation and opted for [trade] because it feels more like who I am. It just feels that I'm in a place, finally, that I'm meant to be, and I think that's important to realize that."

Giving himself permission to change to a program and career he preferred was confirmation that he was now making his own choices.

It feels good to start recognizing that I gotta listen more to my intuition, to have more faith in myself and not jump to conclusions regarding what I should do because this is what other people expect of me I'm starting to realize that it's not that important and it's more important to look after yourself I'm the one living this life.

That's important, is learning to trust myself and I think that a key point is that I have often not trusted myself enough before. Too often I'll trust other people's opinions over my own and then find out that I should've listened to myself in the first place.

From a self-anchored, fourth structure, way of knowing, Peter understood that he was changing his expectations of himself: "I guess all my life I've been sort of undermining myself . . . too much for sure over the years. So I need to give myself positive pats on the back by not setting up too high standards for yourself." He also understood that he was exploring new cognitive territory. "It's like having blinders on

and now I can stand back and see the bigger picture” and was beginning to gain confidence in this new way of thinking, “There’s still a bit of a tentative quality but I feel, I think, more secure about it, considering the past.”

2. Interactions with Others

Participants’ points of view towards being connected to others and the influence that these perspectives had on their thoughts and behaviours regarding interpersonal relationships were developmentally distinctive for those assessed as operating at, and between, structures three and four.

a. Significant Off-campus Relationships

Participants assessed as operating from structure three thinking were responding to two sets of external expectations, the perceived requirements of the academic context and the perceived requirements of other people, particularly those with whom they had significant relationships. Because they *were* their relationships and were not connected in a self-authored way with their academic work, relationships with others took unquestioned precedence for their time and energy.

Participants assessed as operating from structure four thinking, on the other hand, *had* relationships and took personal ownership of their academic work. They therefore balanced a sense of responsibility towards their relationships and towards their work from a perspective that included their own needs. At times work was given precedence and at other times relationships were given precedence.

Point of View of Participant in Equilibrium at Structure Three

Darlene regarded her mothering role as central to how she defined herself: “I think I need them both more, or just as much as, they need me. I don’t know what you’d call it, a need or a desire That’s what it will always be.” From her point of view, balancing her time meant making sure that the external demands of school did not take time away from being with her young-adult daughters. “It’s losing time that I could be with my

children. I feel I need to spend the time with them. They deserve the time, the attention . . . though we're not interacting much, I'm still there."

Darlene did not indicate a sense of self that was independent of other people and consistently focused on the needs of others. Time conflicts, for example, were not conflicts between what she wanted and what others wanted. They were solely a conflict between the needs of others, trying to include what school wanted from her and also what her children wanted from her. She did not appear to question living according to priorities that didn't include a sense of what she wanted.

I find it really hard to study at home . . . just so many things happening. I keep thinking I need to go down to the fire hall because there isn't any distractions. What stops me [going] is my guilt feelings more than anything because when they were younger I spent as much time as I could. But no, no I'm *going* to [laughing]. I just *have* to It's hard. I hope she understands that I *have* to do this.

According to Kegan, "to ask someone at this balance to step back and bring both shared realities before her in order to resolve it, names the limits of this structure. It is just what this balance can't do The other is required to bring the self into being" (1982, p 97).

Points of View of Participants in Transformation between Structures Three and Four

Deanna, beginning this transformation, was aware of trying to balance two important pressures on her time. She was beginning to take a perspective on the demands of her family and school responsibilities that included a sense of her own needs.

In order to have that overall success, I have to keep them both, be balanced I have to have a little more for my children, somehow, without feeling that I'm leaving myself behind again because they are a part of what my life is all about.

She described her process of balancing the two in terms of having, rather than being, a relationship but this was at a conceptual level. Her decisions on where to place her time and energy were based primarily on her perceptions of family needs. For Deanna, balancing responsibilities meant being aware of, but resisting, impulses that included placing any priority on her schoolwork and her career ambitions. She talked of

pushing herself to stay focused on the needs of her children and of viewing the allure of her academic work as having the potential to sabotage adherence to this focus, as interfering with obligation to family. "I have to really accept within myself that I do have these other priorities . . . if I over-devote myself to school, I end up getting frustrated because I am, first and foremost, I am a mother to these young children."

Marguerite, at the middle of in this transformation, was aware of her conflicting loyalties. She talked of the tension of trying to cope with the tension of responding to others' needs for her time and energy. They were often in opposition to her own needs to attend to her work. "Sometimes I just feel like people all want a piece of me [laughs]. Seems like I don't have enough of me to even take care of my own needs." She was caught between two different ways of thinking: being her relationships by consistently placing the needs of others before hers and having relationships by occasionally giving herself priority.

Structure three thinking, at that point, defined her meaning of what was needed of her in order to maintain significant connections to others. She talked about what she *should* do in terms of her perception of their needs. "I felt like I should. I don't want to let my friendships go It's sort of like a church family. I guess I would have felt pretty low life [laughs] if I hadn't said yes, but it's just one more thing that I was asked to do." Fourth structure thinking, however, also created an awareness of her own need, what she *wanted* to do to achieve her goal of independence. "And I thought, oh if I only had more time to put into this. I don't really feel like I have enough. I want to do well in my courses, and if I don't get a mark that I think I should, I get very disappointed."

Kegan (1994) described the emotional conflict of these competing needs at the midpoint of this transformation.

the impossible feeling of having to be in several places at the same time, of being ripped apart, pulled in different directions, of wanting everyone to be happy, of even feeling you could make them all happy if only they would co-operate and somehow didn't send it all at once" (p 117).

Marguerite described similar feelings. “I’m just divided up. There’s just so much that I have to do. I just wish I’d tell me . . . I wish I could send the other part of me there [laughs].”

Penelope, at the end of this transformation, was able to reflect, from dominant structure four thinking, on a distressing confrontation with two off-campus friends who criticized her for neglecting them. As she reviewed the effect this situation had had on her, she clarified and reinforced her own sense of how she wanted to be related to others.

I think it’s something I’ve always known, okay, wait, just wait . . . [long pause]. I think it’s something I’d always *hoped* for but didn’t really know how and when I would see it. I was kinda *hoping* that one day I would feel that strong and sure of myself, that I’m not doubting myself, that I don’t have to apologize to people for things.

From a structure four perspective, she took the point of view that being in a relationship meant maintaining a self-concept that was separate from how others viewed her. “Ultimately, the hardest part was, me realizing how much of the situation, the relationship, everything I gave up to them [before] You can call me pathetic, and by the end of it all I’m calling myself pathetic? No, no, no! That’s not how it is.” She also confirmed for herself that, with regard to relationships, she could maintain these clear structure four boundaries and be self-defining. “You know I *am* clear in myself. In the end it’s just *me*, whoever me is. It’s *my* opinion of me, *my* judgement of me.”

Points of View of Participants in Equilibrium at Structure Four

Barbara and Maureen, in equilibrium at structure four, *had* relationships with their children. From this self-governing perspective, balancing family and school responsibilities meant that the well-being of their children and completing their academic and career goals were both vital to them and that, consequently, time and energy towards one sometimes took precedence over the other. For Barbara, an important part of returning to school was “not letting it affect the kids” or detract from her parenting responsibilities: “I think that’s very important for kids to feel that . . . [parents are] trying their best—you’re clean, you’re fed, you’re clothed and you’re loved.” She also placed

strong value on reaching her academic goals. “Absolutely, school was my primary focus, and it has been. I mean, of course you have family, you have children, all that falls within the realm of the boundaries, but number one is my schooling [at that moment]. I do it and I try hard.” Maureen held a similar point of view. “My kids will always come first but, at this point, just because of these particular circumstances, my career path and my goals have to come first in order to take care of my kids.”

b. Other Students

Participants again demonstrated distinctions at, and between, structures three and four in their different points of view toward their interactions with other students and with feelings of loneliness. Participants operating from structure four thinking maintained a separate sense of themselves when they interacted with other students whereas those in transformation between structures three and four experienced inner conflicts integrating others’ perceived needs with a separate sense of self. This was a salient issue for Marguerite and Josette.

Points of View of Participants in Transformation between Structures Three and Four

Participants experiencing transformation between structures three and four found contending with the social context on campus challenging. They struggled, in varying degrees, with the perception that placing a priority on attending to their work meant jeopardizing being connected with others.

Josette and Deanna, assessed the beginning phase of this transformation, were attempting to reconcile a conceptual understanding of their own needs to do their work with a more dominant need to be responsible for meeting others’ expectations of them. Both talked about their desire to assert their own needs and about reconsidering automatic responses to others. As Deanna said, “I’ve been this little back-in-the-corner kind of a person for so long I am now learning how to be assertive without being defensive or without being afraid of what people are going to think [What does being assertive mean to you?] Being able to go to people and say what I need.”

For Josette, this was a particularly salient issue. Throughout the interview, she spoke of lifelong fears of being alone and of strong needs to be connected with others. "I always wanted to do everything with other people. I never wanted to do things on my own." She also talked about the pride she experienced, when she returned to school, learning to act on her own behalf. "It was a new experience coming here by myself. It was scary, a big challenge . . . [But] I decided I was going to do it. I learned to be on my own, and I felt stronger." Interacting with other students thus presented a challenge to her. From the beginning point of structure four self-resilience she was beginning to take personal responsible for her future by committing time and energy towards her academic work. She had difficulty, however, reconciling these actions with her predominant structure three vulnerability to others. "There's a lot of social going on. It was starting to be quite time-consuming. I didn't feel too comfortable with it. Where is the balance?" Interactions with others still feeling responsible for their well being.

Sometimes I'm working and someone will come and lean on my table and want to chat, and I can't tell them to go away . . . And I'm uncomfortable because my work is calling me back. I want to go back to what I was doing. [You can't tell them to go away?] What's important for me is . . . that they don't feel I want to reject or hurt them.

Conceptually she understood that putting a higher priority on others' feelings than on her own desire to work placed restrictions on her. She wanted to learn a different response that valued her own needs at least as much. In the meantime, however, interacting with others continued to involve putting her own needs aside.

I don't want to hurt people's feelings, so they're more important still. Yeah, their feelings are more important still than my own feelings. I'm still a people pleaser [laughs]. But I'm aware of what I'm doing now. I know I need to practice it. There's a lot of awareness, but the struggle of my old behaviour . . . it's always there.

Raven and Marguerite, at the middle phase of this transformation, experienced conflicting structure three and four perspectives and feelings when they interacted with younger students. Age differences made Raven uncomfortable: "It bothers me because I know I'm older." From his structure four thinking, he separated his experiences from the

experiences of younger students and recognized, from a self-authorizing point of view, that he had information that they might benefit from hearing. "I'm thinking I should really say something and encourage them to do something else . . . I hate to see somebody go make a major mistake if you think you can avoid it." From his competing structure three thinking, however, he was also vulnerable to how others perceived and reacted to him. Being recognized as older, therefore, meant taking the risk of being alienated: "I want to put my input in but I have a sense it wouldn't be welcome and they wouldn't want the information, that they'd soundly thrash me on my predictions. Like, no thanks. it would be my need to say something . . . [can you tell me more about your need?] the only thing I can put my finger to is my need for wanting acceptance." He was able to articulate these two points of view but couldn't distinguish between, or reconcile, inherent conflicts. As a result, he talked of preferring to avoid drawing attention to himself as an older student. "I sit back from that, trying to be as unobtrusive as possible so that maybe I'll be overlooked."

Marguerite also recognized that she had a different perspective from younger students and, similarly, was also reluctant to reveal her differences. "The age difference makes a difference in the outlook at things." From a structure three way of thinking, she was concerned about how they perceived and reacted to her. "They didn't know what to do with me." Dealing with younger students from her point of view meant trying to understand *their* needs. "You do have to be aware of where they're coming from Young people get very easily put down, so I'm just trying to be very careful when I say things."

From a structure four perspective, however, she understood that she was the source of her feelings. "I guess I must have come into the class thinking, I'm older, am I going to fit in? . . . I'm coming into this with past garbage. I've had very a difficult relationship with four kids. I don't want to have another [one]." This way of thinking prompted her to take charge of a difficult situation with younger classmates and, at the same time, of her structure three fears. "I said, 'You know I'm just a student here learning the same things you are.' I think they saw me as just another classmate after

that.” Like Raven, she typically preferred to remain silent about her differences from younger students. In the interview, as she reflected on this uncharacteristic confrontation with younger students in her class, she gained insight into her emerging structure four way of thinking.

[What was that like for you?] Kind of a relief. [What was the most relieving part?] It’s kind of a released feeling being able to go in there [pause] to be able to handle something another time without [pause]. I guess I see myself in a different light. Maybe it cut off some of my inhibitions. Maybe it’s just the inhibitions or my expectations are changing . . . evolving. That’s what [pause] oh. I guess I’m learning an idea, yes. You’re throwing some things at me that I never thought of [laughs].

When she talked about a situation with another classmate, however, her third structure perspective prevailed. Interacting with others during this incident had involved reluctantly, but ultimately, putting the other students’ needs before her own.

So I’m meeting her at noon, and she’s coming back to my place for the afternoon, and I think there goes the afternoon. I mean I’ll enjoy having the connection and meeting her, but I wanted to spend the afternoon getting my work done. [Did you tell her this?] I just couldn’t come out and explain things to her without making [pause]. I was afraid of hurting her feelings and she’s a nice young woman anyway.

Points of View of Participants in Equilibrium at Structure Four

At structure four equilibrium, Janice consistently demonstrated her ability to consider different perspectives and to hold her feelings separate from her experience. She had a perspective on her differences and was able to put them in a larger context.

I think these lab partners of mine think he’s a bit dull. At one time, I would have felt sort of a bit of umbrage [laughs] . . . but now it’s kind of okay, whatever. I mean they’re young. If I was their age and their background, I would be doing the same thing.”

She had come to terms with being different from others. She cared, but this was not enough to stop her from being himself. “Making unpopular decisions is not something I’m afraid to do . . . you run across a lot of disapproval. I don’t worry too much. It bothers me when people are sort of that way, but you have to just do it.”

Possibly demonstrating limits to their structure four ways of thinking, Megumi and Audrey talked, in different ways, of feeling lonely and isolated as a result of social restrictions they had imposed on themselves in order to maintain their self-sufficiency. Both used self-monitoring capabilities to take a perspective that recognized inner emotional imbalances and conflicts.

Megumi I try to observe what is the problem with me, a very important process for me . . . I've been having conflict of my ideal position, how near I am I realized I felt totally uncomfortable and isolated because I never allowed me to have any social time. That was kind of missing I'm always refusing invitations, just studying, even on the weekend, to understand better That's a big piece missing.

Audrey was frustrated by her feelings of loneliness. For her, feeling this way meant she was betraying what, to this point, had worked well for her, her structure four trust and reliance on herself.

What I'm aware of is my emotional needs being churned up in that environment because I'm aware of feeling lonely I think what I really resent about this program so far is that I'm really getting an insight into my need for social contact. Part of it is that my survival is self-reliance, usually the illusion of self-reliance. I'm aware of that.

Audrey was struggling to defend and maintain her self-sufficient sense of herself against what she saw as unwelcome emotional intrusion. She understood that feeling lonely presented an emotional conflict for her: "It's a really interesting push me pull ya [laughs] Part of that's okay, and part of that's not okay." On one hand, she wanted to be connected to others: "For someone who doesn't consider herself a very strong team player, I get quite motivated by other minds around me, by what's coming at me. It's so clear now how much I thrive on it." On the other hand, she resisted being connected with others: "and disapproval about myself." It's probable that Audrey was mentally preparing to begin transformation into fifth structure thinking, however acknowledging dormant inclusion needs meant, at this point, revisiting unpleasant structure three thinking and experiences: "The disapproval comes from the fear that if I make myself vulnerable in this situation, I'm going to get hurt Probably the fear is that I don't

want to face the pain of previous losses.”

For Megumi, dealing with feelings of loneliness meant taking charge of them. In order to take care of emerging inclusion needs she decided to rebalance how she spent her time.

I realize I just created the condition by myself So I was thinking, how can I improve my relationships at school? Maybe I can just help other people. So I started to take that position. I tried to share the information which I had . . . and I get really friendly, and I'm having lots of fun [laughs].

She was prepared to create relationships on her own terms: “I can always think how to meet new friends personally. I can organize things. I can take more power.”

B. Developmental Clues

As discussed earlier, developmental clues were ways that participants *implied* developmental distinctions. The ways some participants talked about how they came to their decision to return to school, about attitudes towards their schooling and about transitory challenges they experienced in the beginning and with learning in a foreign language offered clues to their developmental structures. This information is included as additional orientations towards participants' developmental distinctions.

Experiencing a Life Transition

Participants talked similarly about returning to school within the context of a life transition. There were differences in individual circumstances that led to their decisions to return to school. They “bottomed out,” as Chris put it, in different ways.

Most participants talked about returning to school as realizing earlier hopes and dreams. Some, possibly operating from second or third structure perspectives, did not actively take charge of realizing this personal goal but talked instead of “ending up” at school.. “Things don't always work out like you planned. Not exactly the route I chose, but I ended up where I want to be anyway” (Raven). They had made changes in their lives in response to externally imposed events. Their return to school was therefore precipitated by circumstances that had curtailed a previous lifestyle—being laid off from

work, accommodating physical disabilities, upgrading inadequate credentials and recovering from marital breakdown and substance abuse. According to Stewart, “God gave me another chance.”

Others, possibly operating from a structure four, more self-directed way of constructing their reality, referred to self-initiating influences on their decisions to return to school. Audrey, Barbara, Janice, Megumi and Penelope talked about pro-actively making the choice to change their life directions and about doing so on behalf of their own values and self-knowledge.

Audrey The stronger compulsion, or propulsion, was that I *had* to move on from where I was. It just wasn't very satisfying. I had a very nice, safe, low-paying little job where I had been able to anchor myself comfortably, but if I'd stayed there I would have died.

Barbara I guess something inside me must have been fighting to get out, saying ‘No, no, no, *this* isn't what you want!’ . . . That was it: this [school] is what I was doing, and God help anybody who tries to stop me! . . . This [school] is finally for me, and nobody will ever, ever be able to take it from me It's something I've really wanted to work towards, something I *know* that I needed to work towards—for my own survival . . . doing what I think is right, being me.

Janice Things weren't finished, as if my life would just be missing a whole, huge component . . . I was in absolutely no control . . . security but no control. I mean the security was just becoming a noose around my neck as far as any kind of personal growth or satisfaction goes. I wasn't in the driver's seat. [And now? You feel more in the driver's seat?] Oh definitely; how much success, or lack thereof, that I have at school, I mean, you make it what you will yourself.

Megumi My meaning, part of my existence is working in [field]. I think it's the whole meaning of my life I was thinking, where can I go? Canada, yes, that kind of goes with that kind of thinking process. [You mean you think about what you want and then make it happen?] Yeah, it always works that way.

Penelope I didn't leave radio because I was itching for something else; I just left. It really wasn't me. [How wasn't it you?] They made me change my name . . . all just to play into a marketing scheme. Well, I'm not part of a marketing scheme.

Attitudes Towards Schooling

Participants talked similarly of strong learning values, the importance of finding

personal relevance in their academic work, of achieving high academic standards and of persisting to complete career and academic goals. They also talked similarly of perceiving differences in academic attitude and performance between themselves and their younger classmates. There were very few differences in how participants expressed attitudes towards their schooling and none that indicated substantiated differences in developmental levels. The subtle distinctions in attitudes that I did discern, however, can be viewed as developmental clues in that they foreshadowed other, more clearly defined, differences in ways participants subsequently approached and contended with challenges they encountered adjusting to school.

In contrast to participants who were assessed as operating from structure four thinking, those speaking from a structure three perspective used external references with regard to their attitudes. They talked about events or other people as having precipitated feelings of encouragement or discouragement, or drops in motivation. "When they said you've come a long way; don't give up now . . . it gave me hope" (Josette). These participants also expressed discomfort with being different from other students: "It bothers me because I know I'm older" (Stewart) and referred more exclusively to letter grades when talking about achieving: "It wasn't until I saw I could get good marks that I realized I could do it" (Marguerite). I found these responses, however, to be more developmentally relevant when considered in conjunction with participants' descriptions of their experiences actively dealing with adjustment challenges.

Adjustment Challenges

Challenges participants had experienced early in their schooling, categorized as Transitory Adjustment Challenges (see Table 3) in an earlier section of this chapter, also yielded developmental clues. These were situations they had, in retrospect, found challenging. Differences between participants who were learning in foreign language also indicated developmental clues.

Starting School

Participants talked in different ways about experiencing difficulties when they began school. Those possibly operating from structures two and three ways of thinking focused on contending with external environmental challenges. The source of Stewart's uncertainty was entering new, unknown circumstances. He described his initial anxiety with the analogy of being in a dark tunnel. "The tunnel was too dark." To him this represented not knowing what to expect. From structure three thinking, another source of uncertainty was, "How I thought other people would perceive me." He reduced his anxiety by learning the expectations of his new context. "Now I know I gotta go here and I gotta go there, and I got lights all along. I don't just look through my tunnel and see a light on at the end. I see lights all the way along."

For Josette, possibly from a structure three perspective, beginning school was physically and emotionally overwhelming. "Just the structures, the architecture of the place here was very imposing for me. It was a scary place to be. I had no comfort zone at first." Without internal guidance, an inner resource offering a sense of security and control, she was looking for external supports. Possibly indicating her emerging structure four thinking at the time of the interview, she was able to take a perspective on her earlier thoughts and behaviour. Her memory of riding a bus for the first time, for example, helped her gain insight into how she had experienced beginning school.

I was really afraid. I never, ever, in my life had to commute by bus. It was so scary for some reason. I guess it was the unknown. I knew well if I didn't get to the right place with that bus it didn't matter. I could catch another one. That there's no threats for my well-being like mugging or anything like that. That wasn't the point. I was scared of taking the bus [long pause]. You know what just came [snapping her fingers] to my mind? I never thought of it like that! I guess it's not having *control* [snapping her fingers]. If I don't ring at the right time I might miss my connection. So I'm not in total control of where I'm going, and when I'll get there.

On the other hand, Audrey, operating possibly from structure four thinking, spoke about her anxiety beginning school as an inner provocation. She felt anxious because she was taking a risk on behalf of her own sense of her needs and perception of her abilities. "That's what made it very, very hard. It was so individual, so subjective . . . and working

through whether or not I had it.” She was challenging her sense of self-reliance. “There’s some concern. I’m trusting my own instincts on this, which is always a real strong personal struggle for me It’s investing in me when I have children and I should be investing in them.” She didn’t have a clear sense of the outcome and, therefore, rationale for returning. “It was, am I doing the right thing? At this age and stage, will this investment pay off for me? Nothing was sure.” She eventually reduced her initial anxiety, from inner validation. “It feels like the right thing emotionally. It’s already paid off in more job satisfaction than I’ve had for years, so I’ve started to calculate in that way.”

There were also differences in participants’ points of view towards approaching and contending with institutional procedures. To Chris, possibly from structure two thinking, acclimating to the academic process meant having to follow someone else’s puzzling and inflexible rules. “I find them very frustrating because I have no control over it. There’s this three miles of collecting paperwork. There’s the political side. Make sure that it’s done correctly and don’t step on toes or boundaries.” On the other hand, to Penelope, from a possible structure four way of thinking, rules were exciting learning opportunities and to Barbara, from the same perspective, they represented obstacles she herself needed to circumvent in order to meet her needs.

Penelope It was my first semester ever. I mean it’s like walking into this whole thing and jumping through hoops. It was exciting. I was very cognizant of learning a lesson everyday. Like, okay, a new rule to remember.

Barbara She kept telling me I had to go to another campus and I kept saying, no, you don’t understand. I’m like ten minutes by bike away from [closer campus]. Why on earth would I want to go elsewhere? I finally said that’s it. I found out who the head honcho was and wrote him a letter Within days I got a call from him and his right-hand guy ended up escorting me [laughs] to get registered to go to [closer] campus. He probably thought oh, brother, but I didn’t care. It would be ridiculous when I’m so close.

Learning in a Foreign Language

Both Josette and Megumi talked of the stress they experienced trying to learn in a foreign language. “It’s hard . . . the academic writing is something else. The vocabulary.

it doesn't read the same 'cause when we speak, we speak [laughs]" (Josette). "I almost felt embarrassed because my English is not good enough" (Megumi). Their difficulties, however, had different meanings to them. To Josette, possibly from a structure three reliance on external measurement, her difficulty using English in her work was invalidating. The results negated her sense of her academic abilities: "I thought I guess it means I can't be here." For Megumi, possibly from a structure four self-evaluating ability, experiencing language difficulties did not reflect on her academic capacity. "But if this is in Japanese, not in English, I can *easily* understand that kind of stuff. I'm very capable. That's part of my character really." Her perception of her abilities remained intact.

Summary and Conclusions on Dimension Four Findings

Findings at dimension four indicated that, when synthesized with characteristics of specific developmental structures and phases of transformation, differences in points of view participants showed towards similar issues and situations were reflective of their developmental distinctions. Prolonged adjustment challenges involving academic and interpersonal issues produced Developmental Indicators, differences in points of view that demonstrated substantiated developmental distinctions (see Table 4 on following pages).

Findings also indicated that adjustment issues that were identified as salient to individual participants during their interviews and were also central to findings at the second and third dimensions of data analysis, similarities in participants' attitudes and challenges and assessments of developmental distinctions were again prominent as developmental indicators. This raises the possibility, discussed in the next chapter, that clients are likely to bring developmentally relevant issues to counsellors and are also prepared to articulate characteristics of developmental structures and, in particular, experiences of developmental transformation.

<i>Instructors</i>	- Transformation between structures three and four – Involved gradual movement from consistently defining responsibilities in terms of others' needs; to questioning the dominating "shoulds" of this definition and allocating time and energy according to priorities that didn't include a sense of what they wanted; to having a clear sense of conflicting loyalties towards others and towards themselves; to a view of relating to others that included maintaining boundaries around a self-concept that was separate from relationships with others. Salient for Deanna, Marguerite and Penelope. - Differences in points of view varied according to how participants saw themselves in relation to instructors and subsequently had an impact on ways they reacted towards instructors and towards being instructed. Some saw themselves as dealing with "the big guy" (structure two thinking). Instructors were seen as authoritative and inflexible representatives of the academic context and, from this perspective, participants didn't perceive themselves as having choices beyond capitulating to their puzzling expectations. Other participants rarely referred to their instructors other than to acknowledge their higher status (structure three thinking). They didn't reflect on relationships with individual instructors or on their instructional approaches. Those assessed as operating primarily from a structure four perspective viewed instructors as professional resources, learning consultants to help them reach their own academic objectives. These participants evaluated the service they received from instructors and intervened when it appeared to compromise their own learning standards. (Salient for Barbara and Megumi). - Transformation between structures two and three – points of view reflected inner conflicts between gratifying personal needs and responding to "foreign" expectations that appeared to contradict these needs. Salient for Chris. - Transformation between structures three and four – As structure four thinking emerged, participants, in varying degrees, expressed views indicating gradual psychological detachment from a view of instructors as ultimately influential and distanced themselves from being negatively impacted by instructors' behaviours. As structure four thinking prevailed, they took charge of their interactions with instructors and, when they considered it necessary to their own or to others' learning, confronted instructors directly. (Salient for Myrna).
<i>Other Students</i>	- Differences in participants' points of view towards being connected with others were reflected in ways they talked about their interactions with other students and about feelings of loneliness. Distinctions were demonstrated conclusively by participants assessed as operating at varying phases of transformation between structures three and four ways of thinking and in equilibrium at the latter structure. - Transformation between structures three and four – Involved varying levels of conflict with regard to integrating an outward response to others' requests for their time and an emerging inner response to a separate sense of self that required attending to their own academic work. When structure three thinking prevailed, responding to others' needs predominated. Participants gradually struggled with the perception that placing a priority on their need to attend to their academic work meant jeopardizing fulfillment of their other need, to be connected with others. They coped with tensions arising from acquiescing to others' requests for their time even when they were in opposition to their own needs to work. This was salient for Marguerite, Josette and Raven. As structure four thinking gradually prevailed, participants gained, and then maintained, a separate sense of themselves when interacting with others. They took a perspective that incorporated different sets of needs and put them in contexts broad enough to include separate ways of experiencing situations and a clear sense of choice with regard to their own needs. Possibly demonstrating their experiences of the limits to structure four ways of thinking, Megumi and Audrey talked, in different ways, of feeling lonely and isolated as a result of social restrictions they had imposed on themselves in order to maintain a sense of separateness and self-sufficiency. Both used the self-monitoring capabilities of thinking at this structure to recognize emotional imbalances and inner conflicts.

Table 4: Developmental Indicators

Table 5 shows Developmental Clues, possibilities of developmental distinctions. These were differences in ways participants initiated returning to school, in their attitudes towards school and in points of view towards Transitory adjustment challenges (early

experiences of becoming a student) and towards a Prolonged adjustment challenge (learning in a second language).

Issues	Differences
Experiencing a Life Transition	There were differences in ways participants described being prompted to return to school. For some, possibly indicating second or third structure externally directed perspectives, returning to school was referred to as being precipitated by involuntary circumstances that had curtailed a previous lifestyles—being laid off work, physical disabilities, inadequate credentials, marital breakdown and substance abuse. Others, possibly operating from structure four self-directed perspectives, referred to initiating their return to school on behalf of their own values and inner needs.
Attitudes Towards Schooling	Subtle distinctions in participants' attitudes towards their schooling foreshadowed differences in ways participants approached and contended with adjustment challenges. In contrast to participants who were subsequently assessed as operating from a self-authoring structure four perspective, those assessed as speaking from a structure three perspective referred externally to sources of their attitudes. Particular events or people were described as precipitating feelings of encouragement or discouragement, or drops in motivation. It was also these participants who expressed discomfort with being different from other students and referred more exclusively to letter grades when talking about achievements.
Transitory Adjustment Challenge	<i>Starting School</i> Some, possibly operating from structures two and three ways of thinking, talked primarily about experiencing anxiety towards external, environmental circumstances. The source of their anxiety was entering unfamiliar circumstances. It was also these participants who expressed concerns about understanding and following puzzling and, from their perspective, inflexible institutional rules. Others, possibly from a structure four perspective, talked instead about contending with self-provoked challenges. The source of their anxiety was of having challenged their own perceptions of their abilities and of having taken risks on behalf of their own needs. Also, to them, academic procedures represented learning opportunities and obstacles to meeting personal needs that required circumvention.
Prolonged Adjustment Challenge	<i>Learning in a Foreign Language</i> One participant, possibly from a structure three reliance on external evaluations, perceived difficulties she experienced learning in another language as negating her prior academic abilities. To another, possibly with structure four self-evaluating abilities, language difficulties were seen as separate from her academic capacity. Her perception of her academic abilities remained intact.

Table 5: Developmental Clues

CHAPTER FIVE—DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The findings revealed that the adult student participants in this study shared convergent qualities and were also developmentally diverse. The findings further indicated that it was possible to discern their developmental differences by attending to distinctive, developmentally relevant points of view towards issues that, as a group, they shared in common. Different ways that participants individually made sense of similar situations and expressed these differences reflected varying developmental levels of structural complexity and phases of developmental transformation.

There were four dimensions of data analysis. The first three dimensions sought contextual confirmation that participants, as a group, shared both the similarities and also the differences documented in the research literature as characteristic of adult students. Dimensions one and two explored whether the participants, though different in their life contexts, were similarly experiencing a life transition, had common attitudes towards their schooling and had encountered thematic challenges. The objective of the third dimension was to determine whether participants were also developmentally diverse. The results revealed similarities and differences in these areas.

Findings from these three initial dimensions of data analysis showed that, although participants differed from each other in their life contexts, they did share common attitudes and experiences returning and adjusting to school. Consistent with many studies describing adult students (Fisher, 1997; Kerka, 1993; MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994), the eleven female and four male participants had diverse life experiences and circumstances. Despite such differences, their life directions collectively converged. Also reported as characteristic of many adult students (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Creel, 1996; Cross, 1991; Merriam, 1984), all participants had returned to school in response to personal changes in their lives, a life transition. In a variety of ways, their life circumstances had changed and returning to school was preparation for enhanced or altered vocational directions (Blair, 1993; Kent, 1994; Padula, 1994).

Participants were also found to hold similar attitudes towards being a student and to face similar challenges adjusting to school. The presence of such similarities has been well documented in the research literature on adult students. As other adult students have reported (Kerka, 1995; Padula, 1994), the participants considered their return to school a personally meaningful life opportunity. For most, it was the realization of earlier hopes and aspirations (Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984). In accordance with other studies (Breese & O'Toole, 1994; Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984; Lawler, 1991; Kerka, 1989; Padula, 1994; Vonder Embse & Childs, 1979), participants shared strong interests in learning, on setting and reaching high academic standards and in persisting in school in order to complete their academic goals. They also shared the perception that, in addition to having more off-campus responsibilities and, consequently, different priorities than younger students, they had more life experience and were more committed to their academic work and goals.

Numerous studies have reported the stress that adult students experience adjusting to school (Benjamin & Walz, 1990; Carbone, 1988; Fisher, 1997) and have noted themes in the challenges they describe encountering (Barkhymer & Dorset, 1991; Cross, 1981; Kerka, 1989; MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). Participants in this study as a group echoed these descriptions. They related similar feelings of pressure, anxiety and fearfulness and, individually, described challenges they saw themselves facing that were thematic to the group. Participants reported transitory adjustments, financial and orientation challenges that were similarly perceived as more problematic when they began school than at the time of the interview. They also reported prolonged adjustment challenges, difficulties similarly perceived as persistent and unresolved. Central to such prolonged challenges were themes involving management of their time and energy and engagement in campus interactions. Adult students' difficulties with balancing limited available time and energy between conflicting roles and responsibilities are widely reported in other studies as particularly characteristic of challenges adjusting to school (Kasworm, 1990; Kerka, 1989; Padula, 1994; Wong & Kwok, 1997; Woodley, 1987). Participants in this study spoke of their difficulties integrating their academic responsibilities with those of family

and other significant off-campus roles as well as the added burdens of coping with physical limitations and learning in a foreign language. They were also challenged with upgrading inadequate academic skills, by being evaluated and receiving feedback on their work and with trying to adjust to the structure and pace of the academic environment. Similarly reported in the research literature as characteristic of adult students (Benjamin & Walz, 1990; Cave, 1995; Conrad, 1993; Greenfeig & Goldberg, 1984; Kasworm, 1990; Merriam & Yang, 1996), participants also collectively experienced on-campus interpersonal challenges. They described their difficulties dealing with instructors, with a sense of loneliness and isolation and with other students.

Findings from the third dimension of data analysis revealed that, according to constructs of Kegan's Constructive-Developmental theory, participants as a group were also developmentally diverse. Developmental assessments, conducted on transcripts of participants' individual interviews, indicated that, at the time of the interview, participants made sense of their experiences adjusting to school from seven different developmental levels or ways of thinking. In addition, six participants were assessed as operating from developmental equilibrium—meaning-making from one developmental level—while thirteen were assessed as operating from varying phases of developmental disequilibrium or transformation—meaning-making between two developmental levels. These findings offer empirical support for speculations by theorists and researchers (Creel, 1996; Daloz, 1986; Lyddon, 1990; Merriam & Yang, 1996; Mezirow, 1991; Tennant & Pogson, 1995) on adult students' developmental diversity and for the potential of adult students to be experiencing not only life changes (transitions) but also inner developmental changes (transformation).

Findings that participants, as a group, showed collective similarities and individual differences provided ground for the fourth dimension of data analysis. The objective of this final level of exploration was to consider whether differences in participants' points of view towards issues that they shared in common were sufficiently reflective of differences in characteristics of their developmental statuses to be useful as a heuristic for discerning their developmental distinctions. A synthesis of findings from the

first three dimensions of analysis with additional information on participants' individual points of view towards similar issues, revealed *Developmental Indicators* (see Table 4). These were substantiated indications that participants *had* expressed developmentally relevant points of view towards some common issues. Unique meanings they had, individually, attached to some of the thematic academic and interpersonal prolonged adjustment challenges were consistent with characteristics of their assessed developmental structures.

Findings also revealed *Developmental Clues* (see Table 5), probable but unsubstantiated indications of participants' developmental statuses. Different ways they talked about similar challenges starting school, about similar attitudes towards their schooling and towards younger students, about coping with language difficulties and about making the decision to return to school, suggested characteristics of particular developmental structures. Because these differences were shown to subsequently foreshadow more substantiated developmental indicators, I labeled them "clues." Clues could conceivably be valued as signals, ways of alerting educational practitioners to the possible presence of particular developmental structures. At the same time, they serve as reminders to maintain a cautious attitude about coming to premature assumptions about developmental distinctions.

In this study, it was issues participants had talked about that were subsequently categorized as prolonged adjustment challenges that revealed developmental indicators. It is important to keep in mind that these particular issues served as context for developmental indicators for these participants only and do not, in themselves, indicate more than this. Assessed developmental structures were the principles of organization through which participants constructed their experiences, whereas the issues and situations they talked about were, in this study, different ways they *used* these principles. Developmental distinctions were therefore not related to specific issues but to *how* participants, individually and uniquely, made sense of these particular issues. Within the context of this cautionary note, I offer consideration of the nature of the issues that revealed developmental indicators for participants in this study.

It was prolonged challenges or difficulties participants encountered, a current source of sustained discomfort for them at the time of the interview, that were the context for developmental indicators. There are methodological as well as more speculative interpretations for this outcome. I will discuss the first in terms of the study's method of data collection and the second in terms of developmental implications.

Participants were invited, in recruitment posters and in interview questions, to talk about "their experiences adjusting to school." This was clearly and repeatedly stated as the focus of this study. As discussed earlier in Chapter Three as a limitation to the study, the term "experiences adjusting" to school was deliberately chosen to convey a neutral intention to participants, to invite discussions of either, or both, positive and negative experiences. In their interviews, however, participants unanimously and consistently chose to interpret this invitation in the latter sense. For all individuals, it was their difficulties, or challenges, that were central to their stories about their experiences adjusting to school. Either the term "adjustment" was not perceived as neutrally as it was intended or participants were unanimously developmentally articulate about the prolonged adjustment challenges that were still prominent for them. These same issues also identified, within the interview, as salient to participants were subsequently central to developmental assessments of their transcripts, in dimension three of data analysis (see Appendix H). As I have described in Chapter Three, issues that clearly appeared to be salient to an individual that were explored in more depth in order to uncover their meaning making, how—individually, they were making sense of this particular issue. From this perspective, prolonged adjustment challenges were issues that were more likely to produce substantiated developmental evidence of developmental indicators.

I also speculated on participants' choices of issues from a developmental perspective. I wondered whether challenges that were salient to participants were issues reflective of their current developmental work on, to use Havighurst's term, their developmental "tasks". Participants volunteered their own perceptions of adjustment experiences and understood that they were at liberty to discuss each and any issue for as little or as long as they wished. Most chose to explore in more depth those issues that

were developmentally relevant, issues individual developmental assessments subsequently revealed as demonstrating most clearly their developmental statuses. I was struck by the possibility that issues might be particularly salient to participants because they were vehicles for their developmental work, especially for those participants who were assessed as experiencing developmental transformation. Differing inner points of view, or ways of thinking, about their situation were quite perceptible. Conflicting ways of thinking were accompanied by strong indications of disorientation and confusion. At the same time, however, participants also indicated a strong desire to persist in resolving or "making sense of" these particular situations. It seemed plausible to me that their determination to fulfil their academic objectives included a commitment to negotiating all perceived obstacles. On this basis, I speculated whether, under such circumstances, their efforts led them to consider taking a different perspective on issues that appeared resilient to resolution, using more familiar but clearly inadequate strategies (prolonged adjustment issues). In other words, were issues salient to these participants also, to use Mezirow's (1994) terms, "disorienting dilemmas" provoking transformations of perspectives. An individual's meaning-making framework provides the basis for his or her approach to problem solving (Lyddon, 1990), and transformation takes place within problem-solving situations (Mezirow). According to Mezirow, perspective transformation occurs when individuals recognize limitations to an existing meaning-making structure and strive toward a viewpoint that is more functional and integrative of their immediate experience. With their strong determination to persist at and to achieve academic objectives, are adult student clients likely to recognize inner dissonance and thus bring confusing issues that are developmentally relevant to counsellors for help with resolution? Exploring this avenue of thought, though clearly beyond the scope of this study and the means of the data collected, could yield further understanding of adult students' developmental statuses and needs.

Integrating Developmental Distinctions into Post-Secondary Educational Practice

In my counselling practice I am attuned to the potential of discerning adult students' developmental distinctions. I am alert to discriminating between their points of view, to hearing what the meanings they attach to issues can tell me about their current development status. Kegan wrote, "human being is the composing of meaning" (1982, p 11). I have found that clients often talk spontaneously about how they make, or are trying to make, sense of a situation that's troubling them. If they indicate a willingness to exploring their meaning making more deeply, I use relevant subject-object probes to help them clarify what parts or interpretations of their issue are significant to them and consider how this influences their perceptions of their experience. I have found, for example, that asking "most" questions in response to their feeling statements (what it is about a situation or issue that makes them feel most angry, sad or confused), and "cost" questions (what it is they think they lose by saying or doing something), helps clients clarify vague or conflicting feelings and thoughts. Asking such questions also elicits deeper, often elusive, meanings that they have attached to particular feelings and thoughts and influenced their point of view.

I listen to clients' meanings to hear how they see themselves in relation to their situation, particularly to elements of the situation they consider central—the people, the events and the surroundings. I am listening for how this relationship indicates structural characteristics, the abilities of particular structures and structural constraints, and how this may have influenced ways they approach and contend with their situation. As I listen, I also try to determine whether they are experiencing developmental equilibrium, that one level of complexity is influencing their perceptions of a situation, or whether they are experiencing developmental transformation so that two different levels of complexity are influencing their perceptions.

With the ability to discern an adult student client's developmental distinctiveness, counsellors and other educational practitioners include a context within which it is possible to consider the unique ways their developmental status influences how they approach and contend with issues. Researchers indicate that doing so ensures a more

client-focused and holistic viewpoint (Billington, 1990) and increases understanding of the constraints of adults' cognitive structure on their adaptation (Daniels, 1992). Having such developmental information offers practitioners in education the opportunity to match their service to individual adult student's needs, particularly during developmental transformation. They can thus respond more accurately to each individual's developmental capacities and meet them at their level of understanding (Ivey & Goncalves, 1988). This is one of the most vital ways knowledge of their developmental statuses has positively influenced my own practice with adult students. Understanding their unique developmental distinctions guides me in choosing an appropriate balance of support and challenge relevant to each of their needs.

An appropriate learning environment helps to meet adult students' specific developmental requirements by providing a relationship that forms a base that is both secure and stimulating (Kasworm, 1983). In Kegan's (1982) terms, an environment that "cultures" development is one in which "confirmation of the client in his or her current meaning-making balance is combined with contradiction so that the adequacy of that balance to explain their experience is called into question" (p 118). Providing this setting requires that educational practitioners have the ability to recognize the extent to which adult students require support and the extent to which they require challenge. According to Daloz (1986), not providing appropriate challenges to those experiencing developmental transformation runs the risk of reinforcing inadequate self-constructions and perceptual limitations and of losing a valuable opportunity to empower emergence of a more developed perspective. Taylor (1994) cautioned that "overholding" adults experiencing developmental transformation, offering support without also providing appropriate challenges, is "counter developmental" and can actually "retard" (p 69) personal growth. In the following section, I describe different ways I balance support and challenge relative to whether adult student clients are in a state of developmental equilibrium or experiencing different phases of transformation. Considering these ratios are, I believe, important to all levels of educational practice with adult students.

Developmental Equilibrium

When clients present points of view that appear to indicate the presence of developmental equilibrium, I offer them support and only offer challenges to their perceptions upon their explicit request. Primarily, I create, in Kegan's terms, a "holding environment" (1982, p 262), based on recognition of their concerns and difficulties within respectful acceptance of their existing perceptions of their predicament. I act on the assumption that I have not yet been invited to participate in a change process. From this context, I help them to make choices and decisions to negotiate their situation using combinations of reflective clarification, encouragement, information-giving and, sometimes, coaching in the use of rational decision-making strategies.

I have had little experience with adult student clients speaking exclusively from second structure thinking but feel prepared to recognize and support someone within equilibrium at this level of meaning making. A client at this level, for example, might express frustration, possibly anger, trying to "figure out" and contend with the academic perspective, which contains a sense of reality outside their own. They may describe problems they encounter from a point of view that conveys their perception of being an outsider to unknown expectations and being "intruded" on by others' points of view. I would support their struggle to try to make sense of a situation within a concrete understanding of their surroundings and their own immediate needs and offer information and encouragement to enter a world of bewildering expectations.

I have had more experience with adult student clients that I consider to be speaking exclusively from structure three or four thinking. When I believe I am hearing a client speaking solely from a sense of identification with their relationships to others—family members, classmates or instructors—and, in particular, accepting responsibility for others' thoughts and feelings, I consider the developmental probability of structure three thinking. To confirm equilibrium at this level I probe, tentatively and neutrally, for their perceptions of their own needs. If they appear unwilling to include a conception of themselves as separate from others, I understand that they do not consider this to be an

important element within their definition of their problem. I focus on offering support to resolve their issue from this accepted view of the reality of their situation.

When it appears to me that clients perceive their situations from a clearly defined sense of personal responsibility for their work, their goals and needs, and an assumption of ownership for thoughts and actions, I consider the likelihood of structure four thinking. I focus again on supporting their accepted perceptions of their situations. I find individuals operating from this developmental level often need “reality checks,” reassurance that their perspective towards their work is appropriate to the post-secondary environment. I offer confirmation of their sense of entitlement to self-directed and self-evaluated learning and help them navigate institutional structures and processes that sometimes appear incompatible with their intended actions.

Developmental Transformation

What I have learned about listening for, and hearing, developmental distinctions has been most useful in recognizing when adult student clients are experiencing varying phases of developmental transformation and, consequently, in understanding the level of challenge I need to incorporate in order to meet their developmental needs. When I hear a client talk about a problem situation with conflicting points of view that distinctly include contradictory ways of thinking, I consider the probability that he or she is speaking from some point in a developmental shift towards a more complex way of thinking. If this involves an individual’s struggle with thinking at a concrete level, protecting satisfaction of their immediate needs, and with thinking at a more abstract level, from a reality that incorporates, to them, others’ puzzling points of view, I consider whether I am witnessing transformation from structure two to structure three thinking. Most often, I encounter individuals who are struggling to re-align how they are related to others and, at the same time, to their work. I then consider whether I am witnessing clients in transformation between structure three and four ways of thinking. I understand that their struggle could be to gradually integrate an existing sense of primary allegiance

to others' needs and expectations with an evolving sense, and clarification, of allegiance to their own needs and expectations.

For all clients experiencing transformation, I have a sense of responsibility to share the challenges of an inner journey, their developmental process, as knowledgeable companion and guide. Kegan (1982) has pointed to the "delicacy" of such work. From his perspective, the counsellor "is actually trying to join another person in an extraordinarily intimate way; he or she is trying to become a helpful part of their *evolution* [original emphasis]" (p 278). I now have more confidence in appropriately balancing my roles of supportive companion and challenging guide in their evolving process.

Kegan (1982) wrote, "any movement which sets us against the movement of life of which we are a part, to which we are finally obligated, will cause us pain" (p 266). I have found that clients experiencing developmental transformation very often express feelings of distress, conflict, confusion and disorientation.

There are crucial moments when one starts to see through the old self, when an individual realises "I don't know who I am." It comes at a point when old structures have unravelled and started to collapse and before some new direction has emerged. It's an in-between place. (Weldwood, 1983, p 148)

Clients experiencing developmental transformation clearly require my empathic support to cope with their emotional difficulties. Of vital importance, however, they also require me to challenge them. I challenge clients to become more familiar and comfortable with a new, emerging sense of self and, at the appropriate time, to begin to act on these new capabilities. When appropriate, I offer them the challenge of responding to the broader developmental context for their struggles. I integrate information on adult development, relevant to their situations, within which they can safely examine and evaluate their own concerns and consider their thoughts and feelings from the viewpoint of normal responses to growth and change. The ratio of support and challenge I offer clients experiencing developmental transformation differs according to whether they are at the beginning, the middle or the end of their change process.

At the beginning of a developmental transformation, individuals often talk of experiencing what Mezirow (1991) has called “a disorienting dilemma” (p 224). They start to become aware that their present way of thinking about, or making meaning of, situations they encounter is inadequate to resolving a particular issue. This is when, conceptually, they are considering changing their perspectives. I recognize when I am hearing clients at the beginning of transformation when they seem able to “talk the talk” of a new developmental structure but not yet “walk the walk.” They talk about what an experience means to them and, at times, appear able to use descriptive words from an emerging, more complex, level of thinking. If I probe these meanings in more depth, however, I find that, as yet, these are still concepts to them. They may, as Josette does in this study, talk about having new thoughts or acting in a different way towards a particular situation but do so in a speculative manner, with little proactive movement in this direction. While they express understanding of a new way of thinking, this has not been integrated and, at that point, not yet ready to be translated into action.

At this early phase in their change process, my emphasis is on support for new, emerging, ways of considering a situation and occasional, and tentative, challenges to follow such thoughts through, to try out what it is like to act on them. Some clients express fears, generally, about experiencing “strange” thoughts and of feeling less sure of themselves now than they had previously. I offer empathy towards such disoriented reactions and towards inner pressures to reconsider old, familiar ways of dealing with a particular situation. I acknowledge their confusion as they discover that these usual ways of thinking are now ineffectual. By providing developmental information, I help to normalize the struggle to be open to and learn new, more adequate, forms of thinking. According to Stein (1983), the therapeutic goal of this early phase is to help clients withstand the tensions of transformation and to “contain the space” by assisting them to stay open to change and to “resist premature foreclosure” (p 298). For many, this phase also involves denial and minimizing (Luban (1991). An earlier way of organizing reality is beginning to disintegrate. “An earlier self is now experienced as a lost self and no new contents have yet entered permanently to fill this void” (Stein, 1983, p 130).

Mezirow (1991) recommended that educational practitioners offer adult learners at this phase of transformation opportunities for self-examination and for critical assessment of their earlier assumptions. I challenge clients to begin clarifying a new way of knowing about themselves in relation to their present circumstances. I have used visualizations, for example, to invite clients, in a non-threatening way, to consider how they might act differently based on this new way of thinking and to compare possible outcomes to those of earlier strategies. I also encourage them to begin acting, in low risk ways, on new thoughts in order to test out the validity of emerging ideas.

At the middle of a developmental transformation, as Chris and Marguerite appeared to be experiencing, individuals' points of view towards troubling situations clearly show competitive ways of thinking. Stein (1983) called this middle phase, "luminosity," and he observed that individuals often find themselves at this time "betwixt and between . . . tending to float from one thing to another feeling invisible and insubstantial" (p 132). It is a time of profound inner conflict and emotional distress for many clients. They are still attempting to draw from assumptions of old ways of thinking to make sense of a problem situation and, at the same time, are now more actively considering and trying out assumptions based on new ways of thinking.

The experience can be as confusing to the educational practitioner as it is to the client. Sometimes, both ways of thinking appear separately, with one way dominating at one time and then the other dominating another time. Frequently, however, both ways vie for dominance at the same time and the mind seems homeless or, "lost in the city without a map" (Bridges, 1980, p 112). I have observed that some clients during this phase respond with a sense, and appearance, of being immobilized. Stein (1983) called this experience, "aimless wandering . . . a period to be endured" (p 199). Clients agree when I ask them if it seems like they are stalled with a "foot on the gas, foot on the brake" feeling. Courtenay et al. (1998) concluded that helping clients experiencing conflicting views of reality to substitute words for images can reduce any threatening perceptions and restore a sense of self-control. It is therefore important that adult students at this phase of transformation receive encouragement to talk openly about their

dilemma and about concerns regarding old and new ways of thinking. I encourage them to actively revisit and revise older ways of thinking and to consciously begin integrating them into newer ways of thinking. I also offer challenges to help them consciously clarify and decide on directions they wish to take and, if this is their choice, to find ways to move forward. McAuliffe (1993) similarly recommended presenting challenges at this phase to help clients discover and act on new information about themselves. He suggested asking them to focus on the implications of new abilities, interests, and values. I have found that some adult student clients gain insight into this struggle between the old and new dimensions of their thinking through experiences of visualizations, Gestalt and art therapy techniques. These strategies help them to differentiate, clarify and sometimes prioritize competing inner parts of themselves.

I also help adult student clients at the middle of transformation cope with fears of moving decisively towards, and within, an unknown direction. They grieve losing a familiar way of thinking about important aspects of their lives and sometimes express concerns that they could be leaving behind something of vital importance to them. I have found it useful for some clients, at this point, to offer relevant developmental information and help them reframe eventual outcomes to their change processes. I remind them that they aren't changing their opinions on important issues but are involved in a process of changing the way they understand them. I also reinforce their continuing ability to exercise personal choice in areas of importance to them.

Towards the end of developmental transformation, as Peter and Penelope appeared to demonstrate, the educational practitioner's work is to help adult learners reintegrate their lives "on the basis of conditions now dictated by one's new perspective" (Mezirow, 1991, p 224). I find this work now involves challenging clients to weave another way of thinking more decisively into their existing life circumstances. At this point, I am primarily supporting these decisions and actions. As Stein (1983) has written, "incubation is over . . . the new self that has been born now needs to be tended and nurtured in the outer world . . . the therapist continues only as consultant" (p 299). I see myself also as cheerleader. I understand that adult students at this phase have reached a

new way of understanding themselves and their world. I also know that they have not quite reached developmental equilibrium and have therefore not yet come completely to terms with living comfortably within this new way of thinking. This means that I am not surprised or doubtful when, from time to time, “ghosts” of former ways of thinking visit them. Remnants of an older sense of their reality sometimes manifest themselves at this time as self-doubts, uncertainties and defensiveness. Frequently those at the end of transformation to a structure four way of thinking experience pressure to resolve childhood fears and vulnerabilities, now revealed to be created by the manner in which they interacted with others, in new way. I am aware that, at this phase, adult students may need challenges to reinforce the dominance of more complex thinking when they feel in danger of slipping backwards to the person they once were. Our work together will also involve my support as they eventually bring closure to a former way of thinking.

Beliefs and Values of Educational Practitioners

Informed practice, in general, requires that educational practitioners are conscious of their personal beliefs and values and how these are incorporated into their work with adult students. Integrating a developmental context into practice also requires awareness of the compatibility of one’s beliefs and values with those inferred by the application of developmental theory. Mahoney (1991) wrote, “Our professional aspirations in the realm of human helping and our efforts to facilitate development in those we serve are inseparable from our assumptions about human change processes” (p 16). Implicit in this study and in the way I describe integrating a developmental framework into my own practice with adult students are assumptions on the nature of a helping relationship with clients experiencing developmental transformation. These assumptions stem from particular beliefs and values towards adult development and growth and towards taking a collaborative approach to help adult student clients navigate their change process.

Adult Development and Growth

In her review of the literature on adult students' development, Merriam (1984) concluded that there was an expectation of educational practitioners "to help each individual develop to the highest possible level . . . to challenge the learner to move to increasingly advanced stages of personal development" (p 240). Kegan (1982), on the other hand, cautioned against interventions with the objective of "creating" individuals' developmental growth:

[Intervening] too easily translates into the goal of getting people to advance stages, an extraordinarily reduced (not to mention presumptuous) relationship to the evolution of meaning-making. Stages are only indicators of development. To orient around the indicators of development is to risk losing the *person developing* [original emphasis]. (p 277)

Underlying the focus of this study is a belief in adult development and growth as a natural process. In supporting clients navigate this process is seen as helping to facilitate the unfolding of "natural emergencies of the self" (Kegan, 1982, p 110), the clients' naturally evolving developmental process. To Kegan, this requires that counsellors, "foster or replicate natural therapeutic processess" (p 256). Stein (1983) calls this counselling approach, *psychological maieutics*, or psychological midwifery. Counsellors adopting this approach are seen to, "attend to the birth of a new self" and "assist in the emergence of new psychological structures" (p 297).

According to Courtenay (1994), practitioners assisting adult students who believe in facilitating a natural change process yet also subscribe to educational beliefs that emphasize the role of change-agent and that value students' movement "to increasingly advanced stages of personal development," face an ethical dilemma. Not all adult students are ready to change or seek personal development and growth. Characteristic of individuals at developmental equilibrium, for example, is their lack of inclination to move from their present developmental balance, even if maintaining this way of thinking is clearly problematic to dealing effectively with situations. An example in this study was one participant who experienced a high level of frustration trying to create the time and space for herself to do her schoolwork without changing the amount of time she typically spent

attending to the needs of her two young adult children. She quite clearly wanted to maintain the level of attention she had given them when they were younger and expressed no desire to change this point of view. From the perspective of facilitating development as a natural process, encouraging this participant to develop more complex thinking about her situation, to view it in a different way, would be an intrusion. She did not indicate a need to change her perspective on her situation. From the perspective of the practitioner as developmental change-agent, actively encouraging her to develop more complex thinking about her situation would be considered a worthwhile educational intervention on her behalf. This is reportedly a value resulting from the assumptions of early developmental models that attributed normalcy to growth (Tennant, 1993).

A practitioner who seeks to parallel a midwife role, according to Enns (1991), assists clients with the birth and elaboration of their own evolving ideas and conveys to them that their growth is emerging out of their own efforts and latent knowledge of themselves. Compatible, therefore, with the belief that practitioners help to facilitate clients' natural process of development and growth, is a belief in a collaborative relationship with adult student clients. This involves valuing their abilities to possess sufficient knowledge and understanding of their own change process and to recognize and convey significant aspects of their experiences.

Collaborative Relationship

Sharing developmental knowledge with adult students can lead to a realistic collaboration with them on their immediate situation. Development information relevant to their developmental process provides clients with the sense of a firm foundation on ground that often seems psychologically shaky and, according to Mezirow (1991), gives them reassurance that developmental processes are shared experiences and that others have negotiated a similar change. By collaborating in this way, educational practitioners offer a valuable resource that adult students can use to expand their awareness of their values and choices (Champagne, 1987). It provides them with a way to understand how they interpret their own experiences (Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988), helps them

understand their reactions to their educational experiences (Fisher, 1997), and gives them tools to identify behaviour patterns and constructive ways to maximize success in changed roles (Hughes, Graham & Galbraith, 1986). These aspects of collaboration involve the belief that the educational practitioner's objective is to empower adult students and, ultimately, to become a redundant resource in their lives. As McWhirter (1991) has written, "our goal truly is to enable our clients to live healthy and effective lives without further need of our services."

A collaborative relationship also involves the practitioner's belief that the client "is always his or her own best expert and authority on his or her life" (Bozarth, 1985, p 89). This belief requires that the practitioner be comfortable with ambiguity and can remain open to the unexpected. A practitioner who believes in a client's inner developmental wisdom values their ability to guide how his or her change process will unfold. In other words, although the practitioner is a knowledgeable companion bringing a general map of the human journey and has expertise navigating difficult terrain, it is the adult student client who provides specific guidance on the direction the journey will take. It is the client who determines the timing and the content of his or her developmental experiences. Believing that clients are "the central active agents and experts in organizing, conducting and evaluating their lives" (Avis, 1987, p 20) requires that the practitioner be prepared to let go of taking responsibility for a client's change process. Elements of randomness are inherent in the change process, and events and changes cannot be determined in advance (Caple, 1985). Because clients create new paths from among many possibilities, their developmental process is unique to them.

According to Avis, reinforcing a collaborative partnership and also clients' abilities to collaborate effectively in this relationship clarifies the difference between the educational practitioner as the expert and as a person with professional expertise. "The former contributes to powerlessness and perceptions of deficiency in the client whereas the latter encourages mutuality of influence and perceptions of control" (p 20).

Encouraging clients to contribute their subjective experience of their developmental process and making this a central point of reference for decision making in educational

practice, as this study has suggested, also validates clients' sense of self and ensures that they retain a sense of control over their life choices.

Implications for Further Research

This study explored one way that educational practitioners in general, and counsellors in particular, could determine adult students developmental distinctions. Because it was exploratory, further research is needed both to confirm the existence of developmental indicators and developmental clues in this study and to consider other ways practitioners might discern how adult students demonstrate their developmental statuses. For example, further research exploring implications of the developmental clues found in this study might determine, with sufficient probing, whether the points of view and meanings adult students attach to life changes, attitudes and transitory adjustment challenges could yield valuable information on their developmental statuses. Further research could also clarify the relationship between developmental indicators within the context of prolonged adjustment challenges and the salience of participant's issues, particularly for those experiencing developmental transformation, which so clearly demonstrated their developmental distinctions. Is it possible that, when adult student clients present particular problems, they are demonstrating the tasks of their developmental work?

There was strong support in the research literature on adult students for the concept that attending post-secondary school can be a developmentally transforming experience for adults. This study adds empirical support for this concept. The majority of present participants were assessed as experiencing a developmental change process at the time of their interviews. The focus of this study, however, was on a static point in their transformation experience, a snapshot of one moment within this process. Research exploring their ongoing processes, a series of "snapshots," of their developmental evolution, would be valuable in understanding adult students' experience of transformation in more depth.

I speculated that some participants in the study assessed as operating at developmental equilibrium appeared as though they had undergone change prior to returning to school. Others appeared to have reached structural limits and may have been indicating preparation for a change process. I also speculated that some participants, assessed as operating within developmental transformation, might have experienced developmental shifts while they were attending school. One participant, for example, described experiencing extreme emotional despair the previous semester, which had provoked him into taking decisive action on behalf of his own needs. Differences in his descriptions of prior and present ways of thinking about his schooling and life circumstances indicated the strong probability that he had changed his perspective, his way of thinking about his situation, sufficiently to resolve his emotional, possibly structural, conflicts. Another participant also talked about earlier experiences that had provided her with insights into an emerging ability to speak for her own needs. It would be useful to monitor such developmental shifts, to consider, for example, changes in the points of view an adult student takes towards a particular challenge over time. From an educational practitioner's perspective, it would be useful to understand the value of varying the balance of support and challenge at different phases of developmental transformation and how that relates to client satisfaction.

Researchers exploring more effective ways of delivering service within specialized counselling services may find it useful to build on this study's findings of the developmental differences among students who had physical disabilities and among those from other cultures who spoke English as a second language. Exploring the impact of developmental differences within subgroups of adult students with specific needs was beyond the scope of this research. It is reasonable to assume, however, that, congruent with general findings that students approach and contend with difficulties in ways characteristic of their developmental structures and process, practitioners who serve, for example, disabled and international students would find discerning developmental distinctions beneficial to further understanding of client needs.

A provocative question regarding the developmental assessment of one participant, a member of a cultural minority, emerged from this study. It was not possible to conclude whether her indignant responses to some of her instructors' behaviours demonstrated vulnerabilities to others' perspectives, characteristic of the end of transformation towards the structure four thinking, or whether she was actually operating from full equilibrium at structure four and simply reacting to habitual perceptions (and experiences) of discrimination. My inability to come to clear conclusions on this participant's developmental assessment reinforces concerns of cultural bias in theoretical conceptions of development and growth upon which developmental assessments are generally founded. According to Kerka (1995), the application of Western development theories and norms to non-western persons can lead to erroneous assumptions and ineffective practice. They reflect white, middle-class values that may be incongruent with belief systems of racial and ethnic minorities. Relevant to this particular participant's situation, Lyddon (1995) has pointed out that, because different cultural experiences foster different world views, "contextual influences of discrimination, oppression and poverty must be included in any understanding of the experience of marginalized groups" (p 582). In addition to cross-cultural research on the development of epistemological theories (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997), researchers have called for research in education that investigates the developmental patterns of ethnic groups and addresses developmental diversity within cultures (Imel, 1995; Merriam, 1984). They have also called for research that explores differences in development between multicultural adult students and the white, middle-class adult students who have primarily been studied (Padula, 1994).

Concluding Thoughts

Compatible with a student-centered approach to post-secondary educational practice, this study has offered a sensitizing concept that encourages practitioners to take a phenomenological perspective on becoming developmentally informed about their clients. Findings in this study underscore the central importance to those assisting adult

students of listening to what they themselves can tell us about their own development status. Also important is being prepared, by including a developmental perspective, to be open not only to hearing *what* they have to say but also to *how* they say it. Having the ability to understand each adult student's current developmental status is a natural extension to a fully informed practice in a post-secondary educational setting that seeks to expand understanding of adult students and offers a holistic perspective on the uniqueness of their experiences returning to school.

By focusing on discerning individually distinctive developmental contexts, this study also extends research inquiry on adult students beyond their convergent qualities as members of a subgroup of the student population, and reconnects the scope of research to include their individual differences. It furthers praxis, the effective integration of theory and practice, by bringing at least one counsellor closer to applying what she has learned about adult students development to the specific developmental needs and concerns of individual clients. Understanding structural context for a client's way of thinking is particularly important to serving adult students experiencing developmental transformation. Putting oneself in a position to be able to recognize whether clients are experiencing the beginning, the middle or the end of their developmental transformation provides practitioners with a valuable opportunity to meet them at their level of understanding and offer them what they realistically need.

Stein (1983) has noted the absence of cultural authentication for individuals experiencing developmental transformation in our society. There is a lack of social support for inner development, "a bridge in times of painful change and costly growth" (Kegan, 1982, p 262). Wortley and Amatea (1982) have written that, in fact, signs of inevitable emotional turmoil associated with developmental changes are sometimes viewed as irrational and as indications of pathology rather than of natural characteristics of adult development. The post-secondary setting can be an accepting environment in our culture, within which individuals can expect their developmental change experiences to be accepted and honoured. Because returning to school is reportedly a catalyst for some adults' experiences of developmental transformation, it is important that post-secondary

practitioners are developmentally informed and have the ability to recognize developmental phenomenon in their adult student clients. The results of this study suggest that this is possible.

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Appendix A**Consent Form****CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A STUDY PROVISIONALLY ENTITLED, 'DEVELOPMENTAL TRANSFORMATION: A FACET OF SOME ADULT STUDENTS' TRANSITION ADJUSTMENTS'**

This research study will explore a developmental component to adult students' transition adjustments while returning to school. It is being conducted by Susan Bryant, a counsellor at the college, to complete requirements for her PhD program at the University of Victoria. Information gathered and results concluded will be reported in Susan Bryant's PhD dissertation and in subsequent opportunities to publish or present the findings of the study.

During a ninety-minute interview you will be asked about your past and present experiences adjusting to being a student at Camosun College. Your interview will be audiotaped and a verbatim transcript prepared from your tape. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer and to delete unwanted material from the transcript. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from the interview and the study at any time without explanation.

All data collected in this study will remain confidential. Your anonymity will be protected throughout this research project by using only a pseudonym to identify information you choose to share with the researcher. Your real name will not be attached to any interview data or published results. Anything bearing your real name, for example this signed consent form, will be securely stored separately from research data. Interview tapes and transcripts will also be secured in a locked cabinet.

Your choice to participate or not will have no bearing on your academic or employment involvement, present or future, at the college. Other than the researcher, no member of Camosun College will have access to information collected in this study or knowledge of your participation.

Researcher: Susan Bryant, Phone: 360-0544

Supervisor: Dr. Don Knowles, University of Victoria, Phone: 721-7792

I have read the above and give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant Date

LANSDOWNE CAMPUS

3100 Foul Bay Road Victoria, BC V8P 5J2

**INTERURBAN CAMPUS**

4461 Interurban Road Victoria, BC V8X 3X1

April 22, 1997

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Susan Bryant - Proposal for PhD Dissertation

This is to certify that I have reviewed the research plan contained in Susan Bryant's Proposal for PhD Dissertation, and determined that it complies in full with college policy regarding human subjects research.

Camosun College grants Ms Bryant permission to pursue the research outlined in her proposal during the 1997/98 academic year, and will facilitate her activities in all reasonable ways.

Sincere Regards,

Paul Merner
Director

*Information Support & Planning,
Office of the President*

TEL: (604) 370-3561
FAX: (604) 370-3663

Appendix C**Participant Recruitment Notice**

I would appreciate your help with my research on Adult Students. I am conducting a research study here at the college on Adult Students' adjustments to post-secondary schooling.

If you are thirty years old or over, male or female and have been enrolled at the college for six months or longer, I would appreciate talking to you about your adjustment experiences for approximately 90 minutes. Interviews will be conducted at your convenience in one of the counselling offices on the campus of your choice. All information you share will be held in strict confidence.

If you are interested, please fill in the information below and take to one of the Counselling or Learning Skills reception areas on either campus. I will call you to discuss your participation in the study.

Name.....

Phone Number Age

Length of Time Enrolled at College.....

***Thank you,
Susan Bryant
Counsellor, Camosun Counselling Department
Phone: 370 – 3833***

Appendix D**Letter to Participants**

April, 1998

Dear (participant's real name)

Thanks very much for taking time to talk to me about your thoughts and experiences as an adult student at Camosun. I'm very pleased with what came out of our time together.

As I promised I'm sending you a copy of the transcript from the interview. I hope you enjoy reading it. Please let me know if there are any portions you'd prefer not be included as data in my dissertation and I'll delete them. By the same token, if you would like to add to what you said I'd be delighted to include this. I've left a spacious right margin on the transcript for any additional comments you may have on the topic(s) being discussed on the left-hand side of the transcript. I have also enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope so that you can mail me back any changes and/or additions.

Thanks again, I really appreciated your contribution to my dissertation. Call me any time with comments, questions, etc. My home number is 360-0544 and my email address is bryants@camosun.bc.ca

Sincerely,

Susan Bryant

Appendix E
Dr. Nancy Popp's Credentials and Affiliations

Nancy Popp
21 Arrowhead Trail
Ipswich, Massachusetts 01938

EDUCATION:

Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA

Ed.D. in Human Development and Psychology

June 1993

Concentration in clinical and developmental issues in adulthood

Dissertation: "The Concept and Phenomenon of Psychological
Boundaries from a Dialectical Perspective: An Empirical
Exploration"

Ed.M. in Counseling and Consulting Psychology

June 1984

University of California - Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA

B.A. in Religious Studies with honors

June 1979

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:

The Better Homes Fund, Newton Centre, MA

Field Supervisor

National Institute of Mental Health Grant for research on poverty and homelessness in single-parent families; Ellen Bassuk, Principal Investigator. Manage field operations for large-scale cross-sectional and longitudinal research project, supervise staff of 11 interviewers; oversee collection of data and day to day operations of project, conduct bi-weekly staff meetings and support meetings with interviewers, hold weekly individual supervision meetings with interviewers; maintain relationships with community organizations, homeless shelters, Department of Transitional Assistance; member of Research Team, participate in ongoing planning and management of the project, co-lead Community Advisory Panel meetings.

1993 - 1997

Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA

Research Associate

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Transformational Learning in Adulthood; Robert Kegan, Principal Investigator. Develop and implement research project investigating the learning experiences of adult learners in three different adult education settings. Design study and measures, interview participants, data analysis. Meet regularly with research team including 8 research assistants. Supervise training of research assistants in developmental interviewing and assessment.

1997-present

Co-founder

Research Group on Adult Development; Robert Kegan, Principal Investigator. Collaborate on working papers, design developmental research instruments, develop funding proposals, initiate plans for a Center for the Study of Adult Development.

1990 - 1994

Researcher

Longitudinal developmental study on adults. Assess and evaluate in-depth developmental interviews.

1986 - present

Research Assistant

Projects in the Psychology of Secrecy and Psychological Healing and Cross-cultural Perspectives.

1984 - 1986

CONSULTING EXPERIENCE

Subject-Object Workshop, Cambridge, MA

Consultant and Administrator

Consult to researchers and psychologists in developmental theory, methodology and assessment, evaluate and assess developmental interviews, lead workshops in methodology and assessment, coordinate consulting requests with other members of the workshop.

1989 - present

Leader

One-day Training Workshop on developmental assessment and interview techniques.

May 15 & 29,
1993

Two-day Training Institute on developmental assessment and interview techniques

July 10-11,
1998

One-Day Training Workshop on developmental assessment and interview administration.

January 1991

Subject-Object Scoring Group, Cambridge, MA

Facilitator

Ongoing research group. Train doctoral candidates and psychologists in developmental theory and methodology.

1991 - present

Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC), Boston, MA

Consultant

Male Development Project. Trained researchers in theory and methodology of developmental interviewing, conducted developmental interviews, collected data, assessed and evaluated developmental interviews.

1987 - 1990

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

Northeastern University, University College, Boston, MA

Lecturer

Liberal Arts Program, Psychology Dept. Developed and taught course on "Sexuality and Love."

1990

Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA

Head Teaching Fellow

Participated in development and planning of the course, oversaw operation of course, participated in weekly supervision meetings with teaching staff, served as contact person for students, scheduled and organized weekly seminar sections for 100+ students, facilitated weekly seminar section, responded to and evaluated student papers, consulted with students for final papers, assigned final grades, wrote letters of reference for students.

"Adult Development."

1993

"The Self in Transformation: Constructive-Developmental Personality Theory"

1989 - 1992

Teaching Fellow

Participated in ongoing course planning and development, participated in weekly peer supervision meetings with teaching staff, facilitated weekly seminar meetings, supervised "as if counseling" sessions, taught the administration and interpretation of intelligence tests, evaluated and taught test report writing, responded to and evaluated student papers, consulted to students on final papers, assigned final grades, wrote letters of reference for students

"Listening and the Therapeutic Process: Rewriting Life Stories"

1993

"Counseling and Psychotherapy: Empathic Listening."

1988 - 1991

"Reinterpreting Families: Looking through Multiple Lenses"

1992

"The Psychosocial Life of Families."

1991 - 1992

"The Self in Transformation: Constructive-Developmental Personality Theory"

1987 - 1988

"Individual Personality Assessment."

1985 - 1987

Harvard University School of Arts and Sciences, Cambridge, MA

Head Teaching Fellow

Oversaw operation of the course, served as contact person for students, organized and scheduled discussion sections for 250 undergraduate students, organized the grading of midterm and final exams among teaching fellows, calculated final grades, led weekly discussion section, responded to and evaluated student papers.

"Psychology 1."

1989

Teaching Fellow

Led weekly discussion sections, responded to and evaluated student papers, graded midterm and final exams for 250 undergraduate students.

"Psychology 1."

1987 - 1990

"Human Development."

1988

University of California Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA

Teaching Assistant

Led intermittent discussion groups, served as contact person for students, responded to and evaluated student papers.

"Buddhist Philosophy and Psychology."

1979 - 1980

PUBLICATIONS:

Popp, N. "Dimensions of psychological boundary development in adults," in M. Commons, J. Demick, C. Goldberg, (Eds.), *Clinical approaches to Adult Development..* Ablex, 1996.

Kegan, R., Broderick, M., & Popp, N. "A Developmental framework for assessing youth in programmatic interventions." Monograph prepared for project on youth training, U.S. Department of Labor and Public/Private Ventures, Philadelphia. 1992.

Popp, N. "The Concept and phenomenon of psychological boundaries." Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA. Unpublished Qualifying Paper. 1989.

PRESENTATIONS:

"Transformational Learning in Adulthood." Workshop for adult literacy teachers and administrators on implications and applications of developmental theory, National Institute for Literacy conference, Louisville, Kentucky

February 1998

"Resilience Among Women Living in Poverty." Presentation at American Psychological Association annual conference..

August 1995

Kegan, R., Broderick, M., Guido, J., Popp, N., Portnow, K. "A new model of coping in adulthood: Epistemological demand and capacity in the decade of the thirties." Poster presented at the eighth annual Adult Development Symposium, Society for Research in Adult Development..

June 1993

"Subject-Object Interviewing and Assessment." Guest lecture in "The Self in

Transformation." Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA..

November 1989,

November 1990

"Subject-Object Psychology." Guest lecture to course on "Human Development." Harvard University School of Arts and Sciences, Cambridge, MA..

March, 1988

RELATED EXPERIENCE:

Ward Elementary School, Newton, MA

School Psychology practicum

Obtained supervision and training in diagnostic testing, consultation and short-term child therapy.

1985-1986

Del Mar Middle School, Santa Cruz, CA

Counselor and tutor

For "discipline problem" 6th grade students during spring semester and summer school.

1980

Insight Meditation Society, Barre, MA

Assistant Office Manager

Participated in the ongoing planning, evaluation, maintenance and running of large residential retreat center, coordinated registration, transportation, and housing of retreat participants and teachers. designed and produced brochures and newsletters, coordinated office functions, facilitated weekly staff meetings, participated in interviewing and training of new staff members, was responsible for paying bills and bookkeeping.

1980-1982

HONORS AND AWARDS

Radcliffe Grant for Graduate Women

1992

Qualifying Paper passed with distinction

1990

Appendix F**Complete List of Data Generated Codes**

The numbers enclosed within brackets at the end of each code show the coding activity for that particular code. The first number indicates how many transcripts received this code. The second number indicates, over all transcripts, how often this code was used. For example, (7/20) following the first code on the list. Adjustment Identified – maintaining independence, means that 7 of the 15 participants talked about maintaining their independence as an adjustment to returning to school and that, over all transcripts, this code was used 20 times.

Adjustment Identified - maintaining independence (7/20)
 Adjustment Identified - pressure not to blow my future (7/20)
 Adjustment Identified - what knew doesn't count here (7/16)
 Adjustment Identified - academic work (15/85)
 Adjustment Identified - accepting feedback (12/35)
 Adjustment Identified - accepting the unacceptable (13/85)
 Adjustment Identified - affected by others (11/47)
 Adjustment Identified - asking for help (8/18)
 Adjustment Identified - balancing responsibilities (15/49)
 Adjustment Identified - becoming self-reliant (11/36)
 Adjustment Identified - becoming/maintaining independence (12/38)
 Adjustment Identified - being evaluated (13/52)
 Adjustment Identified – being me (14/58)
 Adjustment Identified - being more assertive (8/23)
 Adjustment Identified - being motivated (9/19)
 Adjustment Identified - being older than others (8/32)
 Adjustment Identified - being one of a kind (6/22)
 Adjustment Identified - being patient with self (12/44)
 Adjustment Identified - being structured (4/6)
 Adjustment Identified - believing in myself (13/75)
 Adjustment Identified - brings up/in baggage (12/41)
 Adjustment Identified - changing (13/89)
 Adjustment Identified - complying (8/14)
 Adjustment Identified - conflicting focuses (13/44)
 Adjustment Identified - confronting (3/6)
 Adjustment Identified - contradicting values (13/42)
 Adjustment Identified - coordinating own needs/ institutional needs (13/28)
 Adjustment Identified - coping with stress (14/57)
 Adjustment Identified - coping with test anxiety (4/9)
 Adjustment Identified - dealing w/peaks and valleys (2/3)
 Adjustment Identified - dealing with guilt (8/19)
 Adjustment Identified - dealing with panic (8/18)
 Adjustment Identified - dealing with perceived psychological barriers (12/47)

Adjustment Identified - dealing with the unknown (11/32)
 Adjustment Identified - dealing with uncertainty (13/76)
 Adjustment Identified - depending on others (9/28)
 Adjustment Identified - depleted energy (11/24)
 Adjustment Identified - disoriented (8/13)
 Adjustment Identified - facing fear (8/38)
 Adjustment Identified - facing perceived limitations (15/109)
 Adjustment Identified - feeling alone/left out (8/22)
 Adjustment Identified - feeling incapable (9/25)
 Adjustment Identified - feeling overwhelmed (13/35)
 Adjustment Identified - feeling patronized (6/12)
 Adjustment Identified - feeling pressure (9/27)
 Adjustment Identified - feeling stereotyped (4/6)
 Adjustment Identified - finding a new self (13/55)
 Adjustment Identified - finding the balance (13/44)
 Adjustment Identified - finishing what I start (8/17)
 Adjustment Identified - fitting in with others' rules/standards (13/55)
 Adjustment Identified - focusing (5/21)
 Adjustment Identified - getting older (4/10)
 Adjustment Identified - giving up financial security (6/14)
 Adjustment Identified - growing up / becoming mature (8/18)
 Adjustment Identified - handling pressure (11/33)
 Adjustment Identified - having to do it their way (12/46)
 Adjustment Identified - dealing with high self-expectations (9/38)
 Adjustment Identified - high striving, sense of vertigo (6/20)
 Adjustment Identified - higher standards now (6/8)
 Adjustment Identified - I can't waste my time (10/31)
 Adjustment Identified - I don't belong here (6/8)
 Adjustment Identified - instructors (11/59)
 Adjustment Identified - integrating into life (14/35)
 Adjustment Identified - just putting myself here (6/18)
 Adjustment Identified - knowing myself (10/34)
 Adjustment Identified - knowing where I stand (11/45)
 Adjustment Identified - learning as nitpicking right' way (1/5)
 Adjustment Identified - learning skills (8/20)
 Adjustment Identified - learning to pace myself (11/28)
 Adjustment Identified - leaving family behind (2/4)
 Adjustment Identified - like a dog in a bowling alley (7/17)
 Adjustment Identified - living arrangements (7/12)
 Adjustment Identified - losing former role/lifestyle (6/14)
 Adjustment Identified - losing time with others (6/8)
 Adjustment Identified - making 'mistakes' (13/54)
 Adjustment Identified - medical/physical limitations (9/30)

Adjustment Identified - memory loss (2/5)
 Adjustment Identified - money (13/37)
 Adjustment Identified - my past record as perceived barrier (2/5)
 Adjustment Identified - nervousness (13/44)
 Adjustment Identified - not being on the same wavelength as others (11/41)
 Adjustment Identified - not being trusted (2/4)
 Adjustment Identified - not enough time (8/22)
 Adjustment Identified - not knowing how/what (12/29)
 Adjustment Identified - not letting myself down (12/59)
 Adjustment Identified - not speaking my mind (7/16)
 Adjustment Identified - overcoming old self-image (14/64)
 Adjustment Identified - overcoming discouragement (15/90)
 Adjustment Identified - overcoming loneliness (7/18)
 Adjustment Identified - overcoming sense of failure (9/44)
 Adjustment Identified - paperwork / institutional bureaucracy (6/11)
 Adjustment Identified - parenting (7/22)
 Adjustment Identified - perceived disrespect (9/33)
 Adjustment Identified - persisting (14/126)
 Adjustment Identified - pressure not to blow investment (9/19)
 Adjustment Identified - establishing priorities (12/38)
 Adjustment Identified - procrastinating (3/3)
 Adjustment Identified - proving I'm capable of doing it (13/43)
 Adjustment Identified - proving/Justifying myself (11/49)
 Adjustment Identified - questioning myself (13/43)
 Adjustment Identified - re-evaluating my future (11/35)
 Adjustment Identified - recovery (2/7)
 Adjustment Identified - relationships (10/37)
 Adjustment Identified - restraining self (14/75)
 Adjustment Identified - rusty skills / little prior knowledge (5/14)
 Adjustment Identified - self-doubts (13/63)
 Adjustment Identified - socially isolating (6/15)
 Adjustment Identified - staying motivated (11/42)
 Adjustment Identified - tempted to socialize (3/5)
 Adjustment Identified - the unexpected (11/23)
 Adjustment Identified - treated differently (6/15)
 Adjustment Identified - unclear boundaries (11/28)
 Adjustment Identified - underestimating academic standards (4/9)
 Adjustment Identified - using a second language (2/16)
 Adjustment Identified - why am I doing this? (5/9)
 Adjustment Identified - working at my own pace (8/24)

 Contend - accepting, being flexible (13/54)
 Contend - accommodating (12/41)

Contend - acknowledge don't know how/what (14/33)
 Contend - acknowledge have problem (15/105)
 Contend - anticipating (12/38)
 Contend - assessing the situation (15/128)
 Contend - attend to health (9/30)
 Contend - balancing responsibilities (11/33)
 Contend - being hard on self (13/63)
 Contend - being realistic (13/91)
 Contend - being reasonable with self (15/118)
 Contend - being sensitive to other's perceived needs (12/39)
 Contend - bending the rules (6/6)
 Contend - complying (12/21)
 Contend - considering my part (15/127)
 Contend - counselling (7/16)
 Contend - need for courage (5/13)
 Contend - cutting back (7/22)
 Contend - dealing with reality (14/31)
 Contend - determination - I'll make this happen! (14/57)
 Contend - displacing tensions (e.g. taking it home) (2/3)
 Contend - doing it my way (13/94)
 Contend - enjoying differences (10/18)
 Contend - establishing boundaries (14/60)
 Contend - feeling defensive (13/51)
 Contend - filling in my own blanks (9/30)
 Contend - filtering out what don't want to hear (9/16)
 Contend - find the learning in this (11/30)
 Contend - finding limits (13/60)
 Contend - finding out (my tunnel has lights in it) (11/47)
 Contend - first step back from emotion (8/11)
 Contend - freezing (4/5)
 Contend - get angry (7/20)
 Contend - get feedback (6/9)
 Contend - get help (13/60)
 Contend - get nervous (6/11)
 Contend - get support (12/38)
 Contend - giving responsibility to others (11/27)
 Contend - giving up (11/30)
 Contend - going up the ladder of command (2/6)
 Contend - health problems (8/22)
 Contend - help others in similar situation (6/16)
 Contend - I'll / did learn how (13/36)
 Contend - it's hard but I'll do it your way (8/17)
 Contend - learning another approach (14/114)

Contend - letting it ride (11/28)
 Contend - listening to instincts (11/60)
 Contend - listening, questioning (12/22)
 Contend - making decisions (13/61)
 Contend - my part in this (15/123)
 Contend - not carrying through with coping strategies (5/11)
 Contend - not doing what know would be best (14/43)
 Contend - not putting up with it (12/31)
 Contend - not worrying/upsetting/irritating others (11/30)
 Contend - one step at a time (12/39)
 Contend - open to other viewpoints (12/39)
 Contend - pacing myself (9/31)
 Contend - panicking (9/20)
 Contend - passing on experiences to others (6/20)
 Contend - persistence (14/125)
 Contend - putting all energies in work or school (6/12)
 Contend - putting on a front (7/13)
 Contend - recognizing high self-expectations (10/32)
 Contend - recognizing choice (15/152)
 Contend - recognizing need for clear boundaries (14/60)
 Contend - referring to goal / responsibilities (11/26)
 Contend - remember long term goal (7/29)
 Contend - seeing the bigger picture (14/77)
 Contend - self-reliance (11/42)
 Contend - shutting down / denying (11/25)
 Contend - stating my terms (12/59)
 Contend - survival (14/95)
 Contend - taking decisive action (13/52)
 Contend - taking responsibility (15/150)
 Contend - talking it out face to face (6/18)
 Contend - using AA strategies (3/12)
 Contend - using affirmations (2/7)
 Contend - using caution (9/44)
 Contend - using diplomacy (9/14)
 Contend - using humour (3/9)
 Contend - using time effectively (4/6)
 Contend - visualizations (2)
 Contend - walking away from it (6/12)
 Contend - with instructor(s) (10/42)
 Contend - withholding my age (2/2)
 Contend - working harder (8/19)

DefSitn - about being an adult student (11/65)

DefSitn - about changing sense of future (14/82)
 DefSitn - about instructors (10/33)
 DefSitn - about marks or being evaluated (13/57)
 DefSitn - about returning to school (15/71)
 DefSitn - about role of school in life (15/96)
 DefSitn - coping with a perceived reality (15/137)
 DefSitn - philosophical orientation (9/42)
 DefSitn - possible outcome (11/27)

Events - conflicted situation (14/75)
 Events - causing high stress (15/118)
 Events - discovering more about me (13/48)
 Events - I'm doing right why isn't it OK (9/22)
 Events - making a salient point (12/35)
 Events - marking a challenge to own way of thinking (15/96)
 Events - putting one's self on the line (14/83)

Life Context - divorce/separation/marital problems (7/15)
 Life Context - how decided (14/54)
 Life Context - balancing (8/20)
 Life Context - changes to lifestyle (15/76)
 Life Context - circumstances provide opportunity (10/20)
 Life Context - current/previous occupation (14/66)
 Life Context - decision outcome (14/31)
 Life Context - decision regarding children (10/20)
 Life Context - demographics (13/29)
 Life Context - different culture (5/25)
 Life Context - difficult decision (6/13)
 Life Context - family background/history (14/49)
 Life Context - financial (10/18)
 Life Context - goals (14/74)
 Life Context - living arrangements (7/16)
 Life Context - making do (7/13)
 Life Context - making it happen (13/36)
 Life Context - medical (9/34)
 Life Context - non home or school responsibilities (5/6)
 Life Context - overwhelming demands (5/14)
 Life Context - parenting (11/57)
 Life Context - partner (6/9)
 Life Context - recovery (addictions) (3/14)
 Life Context - self abuse (3/6)
 Life Context - support (9/17)
 Life Context - this is my last chance (2/5)

Life Context - why made decision (15/73)

WOT Change - self-perceived changes (15/150)

WOT Change - turning points/ benchmarks/ transitions (14/118)

WOT Academic - Dealing with system (7/19)

WOT Academic - having own standards (7/26)

WOT Academic - marks/ being evaluated (13/67)

WOT Academic - physical setting (4/5)

WOT Academic Goal - appreciating the opportunity (9/18)

WOT Academic Goal - I really want this! (10/33)

WOT Academic Goal - A long-term dream (7/22)

WOT Academic Goal - route to complete (14/78)

WOT Academic Goal - this is for me (12/49)

WOT Academic Process - doing the work (13/90)

WOT Academic Process - learning (10/31)

WOT Academic Process - persistence / determination (15/100)

WOT Academic Process - unfolding as I go (8/20)

WOT Academic Tasks - as having an advantage (2/2)

WOT Academic Tasks - work in progress (never quite finished) (4/6)

WOT Academic Tasks - at beginning (9/16)

WOT Academic Tasks - being distracted (9/21)

WOT Academic Tasks - don't know what supposed to do/know (3/6)

WOT Academic Tasks - feeling overwhelmed (9/32)

WOT Academic Tasks - handling pressure (6/23)

WOT Academic Tasks - help for disabilities/disadvantages (7/14)

WOT Academic Tasks - high marks without much effort (4/4)

WOT Academic Tasks - high standards (7/25)

WOT Academic Tasks - losing focus (9/27)

WOT Academic Tasks - moving the goal post (7/11)

WOT Academic Tasks - my way/your way (9/40)

WOT Academic Tasks - nature of (compared to other tasks) (8/15)

WOT Academic Tasks - personal relevance (10/34)

WOT Academic Tasks - procrastinating (2/6)

WOT Academic Tasks - respect/my prior knowledge (6/14)

WOT Academic Tasks - test anxiety (6/11)

WOT Academic Tasks - not understanding (3/10)

WOT People - acceptance (13/27)

WOT People - accepting other's word for things (11/17)

WOT People - acknowledgment (7/12)

WOT People - having a different view from others (12/54)

WOT People - knowing more than them (10/25)

WOT People - being assertive (12/55)
 WOT People - being older than them (9/41)
 WOT People - being social (11/36)
 WOT People - conflicting goals (10/28)
 WOT People - don't change who I am (8/18)
 WOT People - emotional triggers (11/36)
 WOT People - encouragement (12/28)
 WOT People - encouraging teachers (4/10)
 WOT People - feeling disrespected (8/27)
 WOT People - feeling excluded (6/12)
 WOT People - feeling lonely (7/18)
 WOT People - feeling out of the loop (6/15)
 WOT People - feeling respected (8/13)
 WOT People - feeling support (13/36)
 WOT People - fellow students (13/49)
 WOT People - finding a fit (11/31)
 WOT People - giving /getting another chance (5/8)
 WOT People - having a different focus than others (10/32)
 WOT People - having control over me (10/46)
 WOT People - high expectations (4/10)
 WOT People - images of authority (9/38)
 WOT People - impressing them (5/5)
 WOT People - instructors (12/70)
 WOT People - learning from me (5/10)
 WOT People - nature of friendships (10/22)
 WOT People - needing acknowledgment (5/13)
 WOT People - needing other's approval (10/19)
 WOT People - not being a burden to those I love (6/6)
 WOT People - not enough support (6/13)
 WOT People - noticing differences (11/49)
 WOT People - opposing me (10/34)
 WOT People - other adult students (10/25)
 WOT People - perceived status of others (8/18)
 WOT People - priorities (theirs/mine) (12/41)
 WOT People - protecting (me/them) (11/32)
 WOT People - proving a point (6/8)
 WOT People - putting others before self (13/39)
 WOT People - responsibility to parents (4/6)
 WOT People - sorting appropriate feedback (9/22)
 WOT People - stepping out of line (7/9)
 WOT People - surprising them (2/6)
 WOT People - taking on a role (12/28)
 WOT People - they don't like me (5/7)

WOT People - they like me (5/6)
 WOT People - trust (9/22)
 WOT People - ways I affect significant others (9/15)
 WOT People - ways significant others affect me (10/18)
 WOT People - younger students (8/44)

 WOT self - and responsibility (11/37)
 WOT self - identity (15/163)
 WOT self - acceptance (15/136)
 WOT self - am I free to be me here (13/58)
 WOT self - anxiety (14/84)
 WOT self - as competitive (3/13)
 WOT self - as diverse (3/8)
 WOT self - as growing (14/87)
 WOT self - as having valuable ability(s) (8/27)
 WOT self - as learner (10/27)
 WOT self - as learning (14/102)
 WOT self - as motivated (vs. past) (10/38)
 WOT self - as nurturing (8/24)
 WOT self - as perfectionist (5/11)
 WOT self - as seeking self-satisfaction vs. security (10/26)
 WOT self - becoming more/less visible (11/45)
 WOT self - becoming self-reliant (12/57)
 WOT self - being impulsive (4/9)
 WOT self - being in a dark tunnel (9/41)
 WOT self - being inconsistent (6/10)
 WOT self - being practical (9/36)
 WOT self - being understood/misunderstood (11/41)
 WOT self - bottoming out (13/40)
 WOT self - boundaries (14/66)
 WOT self - challenges (15/220)
 WOT self - chapter in book? (2/2)
 WOT self - confidence (15/118)
 WOT self - confusion (13/58)
 WOT self - determination (15/91)
 WOT self - developing new relationship with myself (14/82)
 WOT self - disapproval (14/48)
 WOT self - doing the unexpected (10/20)
 WOT self - drawing attention to myself/ bragging (7/9)
 WOT self - embarrassed (5/8)
 WOT self - failure (8/27)
 WOT self - feeling afraid (9/35)
 WOT self - feeling angry (6/26)

WOT self - feeling comfortable with decision(s) (10/28)
 WOT self - feeling confident (13/61)
 WOT self - feeling controlled (9/26)
 WOT self - feeling discouraged (14/73)
 WOT self - feeling free to be me (14/101)
 WOT self - feeling frustrated (14/85)
 WOT self - feeling humiliated (5/15)
 WOT self - feeling inadequate (12/67)
 WOT self - feeling judged (12/52)
 WOT self - feeling patronized (5/17)
 WOT self - feeling rejected (8/23)
 WOT self - feeling sad for self (10/24)
 WOT self - feeling satisfied with self (14/62)
 WOT self - fighting impatience (12/41)
 WOT self - fighting insecurities (14/94)
 WOT self - financial security (11/20)
 WOT self - finding myself (15/94)
 WOT self - guilt (8/17)
 WOT self - have life experience (8/22)
 WOT self - having control of my life (14/116)
 WOT self - having to prove/justify myself (13/70)
 WOT self - high standards (7/33)
 WOT self - how I operate (15/116)
 WOT self - how I think (11/59)
 WOT self - I'm clear about me (11/41)
 WOT self - I'm defining myself (13/88)
 WOT self - I have a purpose (12/69)
 WOT self - I have to do well (10/34)
 WOT self - in recovery (2/8)
 WOT self - instincts (trusting/not trusting) (14/136)
 WOT self - knowing myself (10/76)
 WOT self - learning about myself (12/77)
 WOT self - letting go (15/82)
 WOT self - like I'm not in control of me (12/42)
 WOT self - living up to my own standards (14/107)
 WOT self - minimizing (6/14)
 WOT self - my future (11/47)
 WOT self - my work is not good enough (11/53)
 WOT self - myself from a new perspective now (13/58)
 WOT self - needing/wanting to be w/people (8/29)
 WOT self - new/old goal(s) (12/67)
 WOT self - not fitting in (11/35)
 WOT self - not knowing how (8/17)

WOT self - not understanding (5/15)
WOT self - patient (10/32)
WOT self - pressured by high academic standards (8/21)
WOT self - priorities (15/97)
WOT self - proving to myself I'm able (14/65)
WOT self - putting self before others (12/53)
WOT self - reaching a limit (15/59)
WOT self - rediscovering myself (14/54)
WOT self - self-doubts (14/65)
WOT self - self-protecting (14/81)
WOT self - self-reliance (10/39)
WOT self - signs of stress (5/8)
WOT self - struggling with self (15/163)
WOT self - surprises (11/35)
WOT self - survival (13/94)
WOT self - trusting myself (12/76)
WOT self - uncertainty (12/78)
WOT self - validation (14/144)
WOT self - values (15/132)
WOT self - what I used to be like (15/142)
WOT self - with/without significant other (6/9)
WOT self - you're not OK (14/110)

Appendix G Discriminating Between Kegan's Developmental Structures and Phases of Transformation

The following is a synthesis of information gathered from Robert Kegan's books, The Evolving Self (1982) and In Over Our Heads (1994), and also from A Guide to the Subject-Object Interview (1985) Lisa Lahey, Emily Souvaine, Robert Kegan, Robert Goodman and Sally Felix (1985). According to Kegan (1982), four of the five epistemological structures typically characterize meaning-making construction in adult years. I have described three that relate directly to this study (structures two, three and four). I also describe phases of transformation between each of these structures. In a later section I describe these different ways of thinking subjectively, in the first person. I found that taking this perspective allowed me to experience the perceptual world of each structure and phase and thus to come to a deeper understanding of, "where an individual seemed to be constructing his or her reality" (Kegan, 1982, p 10). I hope that readers will also have this experience.

Overview of Subject-Object Structures

Each new balance corrects a too-subjective view of myself and allows me to see myself more fully as me. This guarantees, in a qualitatively new way, my integrity. At structure two I have a "theory" of (am object to) my impulses. They are organized or ordered by my needs, wishes, or interests. I am the instrument by which I satisfy my needs and work my will. You are the other half of what, from meaning-making at the next structure, I will recognise as my own projected ambivalence. In the move to structure three I claim both sides of this ambivalence and become internally interpersonal. I have gained a theory of (am object to) my needs. They are now ordered by (subject to) my interpersonal relationships. Structure three thinking brings with it another kind of projected ambivalence. You are the other by whom I complete myself, the other whom I need to create the context out of which I define and know myself and also the world. At structure four I recognise (am object to) this and claim both sides as my own, bringing them into the self. I have come to a theory of my interpersonal relationships. They have now become

rooted in my institution, my self. With movement towards structure five thinking, I will gain a perspective on (become object to) my institution, organization of my self.

Overview of Phases of Transformation

Beginning and ending with equilibrium at the old and the new structures and including the four qualitative movements during transformation from one structure to another, there are six moments comprising transformation. The older structure (X) is the structure being transformed. The new structure (Y) is the structure emerging. During developmental transformation the two subject-object structures operate in relation to one another. The order of the symbols depicting phases of transformation depend upon which structure, at that time, rules an individual's meaning-making. The more dominant structure precedes the less dominant structure. For example, X/Y means X structure meaning-making is more dominant than Y structure meaning-making. At the beginning and end of transformation one structure is shown as dominant at that particular phase with vestiges of the older or newer structures evident ($X(Y)$ and $Y(X)$). At the the middle of transformation, whereas both the old and new structures co-exist, one exerts slightly more dominance (X/Y and Y/X).

The Six Moments of Transformation

Equilibrium at the old structure

X

The individual shows no evidence of more than one structure, way of thinking, operating.

First Phase of Transformation

$X(Y)$

The initial movement towards a new structure. The individual shows the ability to perceive the possibility of a new way of thinking but the inability to do so in any way other than to bend their thinking to the purposes of the old way. He or she takes both perspectives inside so that the new is counselled by the old.

Second Phase of Transformation

X/Y

Full transformation because the old and the new ways of thinking are operating in conjunction with one another. The new way is clearly demonstrated (Y) but characteristics of the older way of thinking still predominate and ultimate resolution to a

given situation is constructed by this (slightly) more developed structure. This phase is demonstrated by, what seems like, “slipping back’ into earlier ways of thinking.

Third Phase of Transformation

Y/X

Full transformation because two (the old and the new) ways of thinking are operating together. This time there is slight dominance by the more developed Y way of thinking. The difference from X/Y is that instead of 'slipping back' to X , the individual now 'steps beyond' to Y . This 'step beyond', however doesn't overcome or cancel the fully operating X structure influence.

Fourth Movement

$Y(X)$

The individual is tenuously operating at full Y way of thinking with little demonstration of X operating in his or her meaning-making. Individuals operating from this new structure (Y), however, are still struggling not to be X . This phase is characterized by what can seem like a strong protest against the residual presence of an X way of thinking. To some extent the Y way of thinking is not exercised freely. Some of its activity must be directed to the work of not giving into impulse, to maintain itself rather than run itself. This is the last step before evolving fully into the new way of thinking.

Equilibrium at the new structure

Y

The individual shows no evidence that more than one way of thinking is operating.

The Subjective Experience of Operating at Particular Subject-Object Structures and Phases of Transformation

Transformation between Structures Two and Three Thinking:

Overview

Evolving from structure two meaning-making to structure three meaning-making involves bringing inside myself others' perspectives which were before considered only from the point of view of my own independent needs. It also involves, therefore, gaining the ability to derive my own thoughts and feelings as a direct consequence of my perception of how you are thinking or feeling and not solely as a consequence of what you will do in response to my actions. I am creating within myself the capacity to consider two points of view at the same time. In doing so, I am also developing the ability to be genuinely interpersonal and to experience ambivalence.

With the emergence from embeddedness in one's needs...I no longer am my needs, rather I have them. In having them I can now co-ordinate or integrate one need system with another and in so doing I can bring into being that mediating reality...mutuality (Kegan, 1982, p 95).

The consequences of moving the structure of my needs from subject to object is that, interpersonally, I can become mutual, empathic and oriented to reciprocal obligation. An internal consequence is that I become able to co-ordinate points of view within myself. This leads to subjectivity, a sense of inner states, and an ability to talk about my feelings. My emerging, new perspective now includes my ability to imagine you taking a perspective on me, and to bring inside myself the mediating of these separate perspectives which were before negotiated as a matter only of social consequences. This will gradually allow other persons' points of view to participate in, or even influence, my own. I can now look at myself through others' eyes and am able to experience what they think and feel.

The Six Moments of Transformation

Equilibrium –[2]

In this stage I am subject to my own needs, interests and wishes. I come to know everything through this subjectivity. I may know *what* I need, want or plan for, but I cannot know that I am embedded in knowing the world through my own needs, wants and plans. "What makes the balance imperial is our sense of the absence of a shared reality" (Kegan, 1982, p 91). I relate to another person by viewing his or her needs, wishes and interests in terms of the consequences for my world-view. Essentially I "know" you in knowing whether who or what you are will help or hinder me in my effort to live my needs, action-oriented goals, plans, or interests. I cannot construct for myself that I actually see others this way, as "suppliers" to my self.

The absence of a shared reality names the limits of structure two. I am embedded in my own point of view and cannot take more than one perspective at a time. I can only take someone else's perspective in the sense of how it affects my ability to meet my needs. Because I cannot take two points of view simultaneously, the kinds of feelings I have involve how I feel about some external obstacle to meeting my own needs. I am therefore at the mercy of needing to predict how others will act in order to negotiate meeting my needs, plans, goals and interests.

I constitute you as that by which I either do, or do not, meet my needs, fulfil my wishes, pursue my interests. Instead of seeing my needs I see you through my needs. You may experience this as manipulation because, in order for me to "keep my balance" I have to actually control, or at least predict, the behaviour "out there" of people who, in carrying around their own agendas separate from me, make it impossible, unless I can exercise such control, for me to gauge reality, the essence of which (at this point) is knowing the consequences of my actions. (Kegan, 1982, p 91).

First Phase of Transformation – [2(3)]

I can bring others' points of view inside myself but only to the extent of constructing that perspective as an "external/internal" source of information for my own efforts to meet my independent needs, wishes and interests. Also, I am beginning to conceptualize taking a perspective on (take as object) my own need-meeting actions. Thus, I can differentiate myself a little from my own perspective such that I can imagine the other's point of view. To me, however, this is still very much a foreign point of view.

I don't really construct others' points of view as a source of own feeling and thinking. I consider these thoughts as "double agents" who can give me advance warning of social consequences. They therefore act like consultants to my primary purposes of protecting my self-interests. My construction of others' points of view doesn't reflect a structure three way of thinking because I don't claim these other points of view as parts of my own way of thinking about the problem. It is still about what the other will do to me. Thus, my structure two ultimate concerns for only my own perspective dominate and structure three meaning-making is bent to this purpose.

A determining factor in my decision-making will still be the external consequences to myself. The concept of "having a conscience" is minimally a structure

three concept because it involves a sort of second voice or perspective within my self that might converse with another part of myself.

Full Transformation – [2/3]

I am now in full transformation because my meaning-making involves full structure three thinking operating in conjunction with full structure two thinking. When I was able to begin to consider another person's independent view at the same time I took my own into account, I moved further from structure two embeddedness in my needs. I am now able to begin to make both points of view (my own and others') part of (internal to) my self. I have begun to impute to myself the responsibility for others' points of view and my own to another. Within this position I also have the capacity to see how others might have a perspective on me but this is only a partial element of structure three meaning-making. I am still vulnerable to a structure two single point of view.

Full Transformation – [3/2]

Again, both structure two and three meaning-making are fully present. Structure three thinking, however, now dominates my meaning-making. I am now able to hold others' points of view internally as the source of their own thoughts and feelings. The difference between this distinction and the previous phase (2/3) is that, for example, whereas before I might attend to friends' feelings so that I could count on their friendship in the future (meet my structure two needs), now my own feelings are partially derived from how they feel.

Final Phase of Transformation – [3(2)]

As in the previous movements, I can hold others' points of view internally. I can derive my own thoughts and/or feelings from others' internalized points of view. For example, I am sad if my friend feels I let him down. I am no longer subject to meeting only my own needs. My interest is no longer to insure how he will behave towards me but to have him want to behave in a certain way. I no longer say or do things simply to make him more reliable to me. However, to avoid "slipping back" to structure two meaning-making, I try particularly hard to value the relationship with another person over

negotiating the fulfilment of my own needs, wishes and interests. At present I'm struggling to get this issue entirely clear. This phase is therefore characterised by my resistance towards falling back into structure two meaning-making.

Equilibrium – [3]

I am now confident in my ability to bring inside my self others' points of view. My capacity to internalize others' perspectives is analogous to how, for example, a particular religious orientation might view my actions, or by how a particular ideology might inform or critique my perspective. The main idea is that an internal conversation between different perspectives becomes possible once I can hold more than one point of view at a time. However, while I have internalized others' points of view, I have not internalized the source and continued generation of those points of view. To me, this still rests with others who must keep making their points of view known and remain psychologically present in order for me to feel whole. There are thus limits to being embedded in (subject to) this stage

I tend to see others as the source of my feelings, or my self as the source of others' feelings. For example, having a different 'take' on a situation from that of another person can be disturbing because it threatens my sense that we are in tune with each other. I might feel bad, even guilty, that I do feel differently. In this stage, having a different way of looking at a situation from others, especially a very close other, becomes a problem for me. I'm concerned that staying with my own point of view would involve a loss of relatedness to this other person and I may take on their point of view to make the difference go away.

What might appear to be intimacy is the self's source rather than its aim. There is no self to share with another; instead the other is required to bring the self into being. Fusion is not intimacy. The other can sometimes feel devoured (Kegan, 1982, p 97)

Transformation between Structure Three and Structure Four Thinking:

Overview

Kegan has reported that transformation from structure three to structure four is the most common in adulthood (1982) and also points out that, "one-half to two thirds of the adult population appear not to have fully reached the fourth order of consciousness" (1995, p 258). The post-secondary school environment, according to Kegan, encourages and reinforces individual development to the fourth structure. He reasoned that this could be due to post-secondary schools' demand on individuals for self-direction and also their support for the transformation of mind required to meet this demand. "the student who grows at school has also experienced the kind of challenge ideally suited to crossing the bridge from the third to the fourth order" (Kegan, 1995, p 297).

Development between these structures entails an increasing ability to take full responsibility for a self-generated viewpoint. The process involves the gradual separation of an internalized point of view from original sources in others and making the self a more coherent system for generating and correlating a point of view of one's own. When this happens we will, for example, stop making others responsible for our own feelings and experience it as a violation when others make us responsible for theirs. Kegan compared leaving third structure thinking to leaving a family or a religion in that it requires us to we construct a new relationship to our family or to religion. Because moving in this direction can cause long-standing vulnerabilities to surface, he called this evolution "a trembling bridge" (1995, p 259).

the trouble here is that, when we are least expecting it, while pursuing the expansion of our present-day life, we find that something we are moving toward in our love life or work life, perhaps brings us perilously close to exactly the place we told ourselves we would never again visit... if we do not turn toward that darkest region instead of away from it, we will block our forward motion on our life path... the transformation to the fourth order will not guarantee that the person will turn to and heal the pain. But the third order contributes to the block because the pain cannot be turned to, or turned on, until the self has become separate from its story (p 259).

Equilibrium – [3]

See earlier description.

First Phase of Transformation – (3(4))

Movement at this phase is structured on behalf of my internalized view of others' perspectives. I am beginning to make my own decisions and have separate opinions but, in reality, this is because someone else wants me to do this.

Full Transformation – [3/4]

I am now operating more from my own internalized point of view. Sometimes this allows me choices that are not influenced by my internalized view of others' perspectives and I can occasionally take responsibility for a decision or opinion that may lead to others' negative responses. I still, however, construct the consequences of doing this from structure three thinking. I am unable to release others as a source of my feelings or release myself from being a source of others' feelings. This means that my feelings are, on the whole, still influenced by my perception of others' points of view.

The threat of the loss of my most important relationships is the precipitating experience par excellence for the crisis of the 3-4 shift. For a self that is derived from interpersonal relationship, it can be experienced as the threat of the loss of the self itself (Kegan, 1982, p 207).

Full Transformation - [4/3]

This phase is similar to the previous phase [3/4] in that I am able to empathetically hold others' points of view and, at least some of the time, able to differentiate myself from this empathic process but to allow others' views can still have an impact on my actions. At this phase, however, this doesn't happen as often as in the previous phase [3/4]. Sometimes I can see both the self-determining qualities of others' points of view and also how I am caught in them.

What is structurally different here is that however powerful the determining hold of my perception of others' views may still be to me, I am not only able to look to myself for decisions which may be contrary to others', I am also able to look to myself as the source

of feelings I have about making a decision contrary to others' views. I can thus now see myself as responsible not only for making my own decisions, but also for the consequences of making those decisions.

Final Phase of Transformation – [4(3)]

I am now able to articulate a theory on (am object to) how I view myself. I have become myself, a whole system. I can talk about my own theory of who I am and how I am which can be compared and contrasted with others. I can generate my own point of view and can differentiate my self, my decisions and my overall character, from internalized points of view of others. I don't give others responsibility for my thoughts and feelings or take responsibility for those of others. I empathise with others in the sense of taking in and registering their point of view but this is now done in a qualitatively different way than before. I no longer give others the job of providing myself-determining points of view. I am able to show respect for both "how I am" and how the another "is". I relate to others as persons whose views and feelings can be cared for and thought about from the perspective of *my* system of meaning, and understood to arise out of *their* system of meaning. I may have bad feeling about some of my choices but I do not feel guilty over making them. My perspective on others' points of view no longer determine myself's organization but are mediated by it.

There is, however, a kind of tenuous quality to how I keep myself from being subject to others' perspectives or from making others subject to own perspective. To some extent my new structure four thinking does not have free rein. Some of its activity must be directed to the work of me not engaging in structure three thinking. I try not to think about or remember my earlier structure three vulnerabilities. However, if another person presses me too strongly, I may feel at risk of losing my structure four perspective. I may feel in danger either of losing my ability to care for myself or of thinking that the only way to continue caring for another person is to take responsibility for his or her feelings. To cope I might avoid considering another person's negative reactions to my choices by keeping a psychological distance between us.

Equilibrium at Structure Four – [4]

The significant feature of this structural way of thinking, “is the person’s new capacity for independence, to own herself, rather than having all the pieces of herself owned by various shared contexts” (Kegan, 1982, p 102). I now have the ability to generate and exercise my own values and standards. I have constructed an internal system, a psychological organization that administers itself by regulating and evaluating my values in accordance with my own standard. I have moved completely from identifying myself through relationships (being subject to them) to having relationships (being object to them).

I am fully aware that my feelings come from me and yours come from you, that we have different “feeling-generators”. I can hold both sides of a feeling simultaneously rather than experience this ambivalence one side at a time as I did earlier. I don’t have a problem, in and of itself, with having a different perspective from others. I know that when I take on others’ frames of reference I’m not abandoning my own frame of reference but exercising it. I understand now that considering others’ viewpoints is not about subordinating what I think or about altering what he or she thinks or about making our differences disappear. I am aware that I am “just visiting” others’ experiences of an issue, that this is their experience and distinct from mine. In fact, I’m not just aware of differences with others in our feelings about a given situation but also of differences between our whole “systems” or “self-organizations” or “frames of reference” which create these feelings. The nature of my relationships has therefore changed.

In this way of thinking I am eventually limited by identifying with the system that generates my values and my goals or by my strong affiliation with the institution which creates them. I do not invite others to question the basic workings of my value-generator. I cannot consult either others or myself about my system in ways that could lead to its modification or transformation because I cannot take my fundamental organizational principles as an object of reflection.

The “self” is identified with the organisation it is trying to run smoothly; it IS this organisation. The self is an administrator in the narrow sense of the word, a person whose meanings are derived out of the organisation, rather than deriving

the organisation out of her meaning/principles/purposes/reality. (Kegan, 1982, p 102)

Appendix H Participants' Individual Subject-Object Developmental Assessments

The following describes and substantiates conclusions reached on developmental assessments (summarized and discussed in Chapter Four) conducted on transcripts of each participant's interview. For further clarification on the principles of Kegan's Subject-Object Theory and also on how subject-object structures are differentiated, please refer to Chapter Two and to Appendix G respectively.

In the interests of simplicity and brevity, I have been selective when including quotations from participants' transcripts to exemplify assessment decisions. These choices are only part of a larger context of data upon which assessments were ultimately based. As such they should be considered as representative of participants' particular ways of knowing.

Stewart

Throughout his interview, Stewart indicated the presence of both second and third structure thinking. His very concrete second structure sense of his situation predominated. He described what had happened to him in event-driven ways—this happened and then that happened—and was clearly guided by steps or rules he had learned externally. “And then the gears start turning, the affirmations started kicking in. Now I’m curious, how can I fix my problem? I have to restructure my study time.” Or, “Sometimes I’m not sure what I’m doing here so, one step at a time, one math problem, one English test, [laughs], do the draft, do the plan first. Can’t break that.”

He also indicated strong, but less dominant, structure three abilities to monitor and reflect on his actions and to have an internal emotional process about what was happening to him. “Yesterday, after getting the results of the physics test, I didn’t do so good. When the class was over, I went and did something that I know I shouldn’t do ‘cause it’s a negative thing. I slapped on myself, wallowed around my own shit.” Thinking in abstract concepts, however, appeared to be new territory for him. He was

learning how to identify and name these concepts, and he usually attributed what he had learned to others. “There was something about falling down. Oh yeah, failure isn’t being knocked down, falling down; it’s not getting back up. If you fall down, get back up.” And “God gave me another chance You could kinda say that’s a miracle ‘cause you’re not supposed to change your perspective.”

His descriptions of his frequent use of affirmations demonstrated his abstract third structure understanding of his internal need to do well. He also described these abstractions in a concrete, second structure, as his way of getting things done and of distracting himself from self-doubt.

Still got that defence mechanism in here, that wedge of doubt. You don’t want me here. Okay, see ya. Maybe I made the wrong choice. But then I have built up some affirmations that I say to myself everyday. I’m trying to put those to work to use more confidence in myself. Now it seems as soon as I get the thoughts, what am I doing this for. I say, ‘cause I want to.

He was able to take a broad perspective of his life, for example, to use analogies as pictures of an abstract inner process. This was inevitably framed by his more immediate need—to move step by step.

Back a couple of years, I didn’t have an idea of where I wanted to go and what I wanted to do, but now I’ve got lights. My tunnel has lights in it I don’t just look through my tunnel and see there’s lights on at the end of it. I see lights all the way along. Not all tunnels are dark if they have lights. [What does the tunnel mean?] The unknown.

Chris

Chris also indicated the presence of both second and third structure thinking. In his case, however, a third structure way of knowing about his situation dominated. Like Stewart, he followed concrete sets of rules, doing what he saw himself as having to do: “make sure that it’s done correctly and don’t step on toes or boundaries. I know that.” Chris had concrete strategies for abstract problems, a combination of his emerging ability to be internally conversational within the limits of tangible, needs-oriented second structure thinking.

I used to be very, very angry. I had enough of feeling that way. I had more things to do with my day, and I wasn’t gonna accomplish those feeling the way I was

feeling. It's best to, like, make the choice. Should I stay angry and do nothing? Or should I get rid of it and say I'll deal with it tomorrow. And that's what I've done. I was angry for three hours yesterday, and I decided on the bus I'd had enough, I didn't wanna be angry anymore.

Sometimes he described events and his inner thoughts and feelings from a second structure way of knowing. "I finally bottomed out, saying, well, I can't stand this. I don't want to do it any more. I don't want to feel this any more. I don't want to go through this any more. I have to do something." This, however, was often integrated into an overall ability to articulate a more abstract sense of self. He clearly demonstrated a third structure capability to understand his inner processes, particularly changes and conflicts: "There's a massive fear. I know I have a fear of exams, period, but there's a compound fear on top of this. I have this pressure that I have to get rid of, and I don't know how."

In his interview, Chris seemed to be struggling to try and integrate his concrete sense of things into his increasingly complex and abstract sense of himself and others. This came out in his efforts to make sense of the academic environment, a new, more abstract context. He was confused by the complexity of others and by academic processes. When others seemed similar to his, his understanding of his context was greater. When others challenged his second structure way of deciding and working, he was baffled and angry. He was willing, however, to look at this discrepancy.

I know how my anger is, and I know that there's no way I can sit and listen to somebody tell me what's wrong now because I'm too angry. I have to step away from this, so I can logically think about exactly what's written on it, and *then* go to my instructor and ask, "Okay, what did I do wrong?" . . . And I don't mind doing that. It's just so hard when you look at that failure part of it, to see it right off the top.

He worked hard to understand how to find himself in this sense of mutuality, how to bring in another perspective that was not compatible with his. Feeling threatened about having to let someone else into the self is a classic characteristic of the shift from structure two to three. According to Kegan (1994), this is sometimes experienced as an unwelcome intrusion upon a more independent world of personal control and agency.

Failure is when I try my best, and it gets rejected. That's when, well, what am I supposed to do now. And then having to go to somebody else and say, "Okay, I surrender. Show me what I'm supposed to do then if I can't do it right." I'm just kind of exploring this myself because it's so awkward for me, you know?

The mutuality of Chris's emerging structure three thinking moves him towards letting others' opinions and experiences inform his sense of himself. This was still difficult for him, and he coped concretely. "I've lopped off my own ego. It just feels that way alright." Letting go of second structure thinking was clearly painful. As Kegan (1982) wrote, "The loss of my self means the loss of the effective prosecution of my own needs, interests, wishes. It is not yet clear that what is being lost is not my needs but my ultimate orientation towards them" (p 171).

Darlene

Darlene was able to reflect on an inner self and to consider, at an abstract level, how parts of her life fit together and probable causes and consequences of past actions: "I guess I never really have had a very strong self-image. I still don't to a certain extent." She did talk, conceptually, about fourth structure characteristics: "I'm more independent now than I have ever been in my life. When I first left, it was like there's no way I'm ever going to survive but now I know I can . . . I am my own person." Third structure thinking includes the capability to discover life patterns and themes "to make connections between past and present and have insight into why we feel as we do" (Kegan, 1994, p 126). Characteristics of individuals constructing reality from third structure thinking, however, are unlikely to *do* something with their insights at that time: "The demand for this construction of the self . . . as author, maker, critiquer, and remaker of its experience. . . is a demand for the fourth structure. The demand that we be in control of our issues rather than having our issues be in control of us" (p 126).

Characteristic of the third structure, Darlene was able to consider and internalize others' points of view: "My daughter says I really like it when you stay home. It yanks at my heart." She also demonstrated the limits of this level of knowing. She *was* her relationships. Her sense of herself and her perspective appeared to be structured by her

relatedness to others. This was particularly apparent when she talked about her children. “I hope she understands that I *have* to do this.” She frequently described interactions with them and their importance to her from within her experience: “What stops me is my guilt feelings more than anything because when they were younger, I spent as much time with them as I could.” Each time I attempted to probe her own needs and emotions, she referred back to her children instead of considering herself separately and distinguishing her experience of herself as separate from her interactions with them.

Deanna

Deanna demonstrated full third structure capacity to reflect on her own behaviour and to describe herself in an abstract psychological way. “I’d like to see myself, without having too high expectations, come to these goals because now I have that control over my life. [pauses] I should be able to get there.” She also demonstrated a third structure vulnerability to her relationships. “There was another part, the moral part. If my kids found out . . . I just don’t think it was that great a thing for them. I might feel kind of awkward telling them. So it kind of worked out good that I got laid off.” Also, “I have this thing with my male teachers. They’re all very nice but I have a really hard time going to them if I need help. It’s the feeling of being a failure, from them, because that’s the way I was feeling in my marriage.”

She was at the beginning point of conceptualizing a distinct sense of herself and her own needs. Her new fourth structure was characterized by the ability to recognize and reflect on her susceptibility to the influence of others. “During the marriage, I thought you were supposed to be, in a sense, dependent on one another and look after one another. And, since that didn’t work, I think I’ve just set it in my mind to not need anyone anymore or for awhile—because I am a bit of a pushover sometimes.”

She was attempting to take fourth structure charge of her feelings rather than let them be in charge of her.

I don’t want to see self-doubt in my face. It’s that part of me that held me back. I feel like I need to overcome that a bit more because it sort of has control over my future, just being wary like that. I’m aware of it, and I want to come to grips with it so that I can proceed and not have it hold me back.

And she was quite clear about her dawning potential to operate from a position of self-governance.

Another thing too about going back to school is it's a brand new part of my life as this independent person who's got her kids and who has a future in mind. It's almost like a rediscovery. I'm only coming into that right now. See, during the first part [of semester] I wasn't confident that I would stay, or fulfil it but now I am.

Kegan (1994) wrote that, although such statements of independence are commonly expressed during the evolution of consciousness between structures three and four, the individual at the beginning of this process "has not yet consolidated this new structure, not yet integrated it into a coherent system, because he or she doesn't yet know the beliefs and needs to educate the self" (p 115). Deanna clearly demonstrated her own understanding of this. When I encouraged her to continue talking about statements that reflected attempts to describe her inner process, she understood she was still dealing with vague instincts. She would typically offer such responses as, "that's a big one"; "I can't tell you more. I don't know"; "I haven't come to that point yet"; "I have no input on it yet."; and "I'm not all there yet. I don't know yet." She was insightful about having a changing inner process but was unable to step back enough to understand it and therefore construct and articulate it, even to herself. She thus exercised vigilance and caution as she moved in this new direction.

I have to prove to myself that I'm able to do it. I have to keep in mind who I was then, who I am now and how much I've grown in all the other things. I think that's part of my life right now too. Just finding out who I am and confirming things again that I've known. Things that I probably knew but I wasn't as sure about before.

Josette

Though third structure thinking dominated Josette's interview, there was clear indication that she had also moved beyond the exclusivity of this influence towards a fourth structure way of knowing.

At times she talked about what had happened to her and about how she managed

her time and energy and her responsibilities with almost, but not quite, the concreteness of the second structure. Inevitably, however, she had a third structure perspective on her experiences. "I was here early until a month and a half ago. That was important that I made that commitment. I was satisfied with that. Now, I'm not as regular as I was. I'm not too pleased. It's too free. I'm not satisfied if I don't have enough discipline. I got to have enough for me to be satisfied."

Because Josette was not yet operating within a fourth structure sense of her own authority, she demonstrated a sense of being responsible for others' feelings and a reliance on external authorities. "The new self moves from being a fragile presence, from that terrifying image of a tiny self struggling against ingestion by the giant, to a more reliable context which places limits on a relationship the termination of which had earlier raised the spectre of annihilation" (Kegan, 1982, p 197).

I found myself in a situation where I was alone. And finally, I didn't have much choice. It wasn't my doing. It was like life took me here.

Sometimes I'm working and someone will come and lean on my table and want to chat, and I can't tell them to go away, you know in a polite way. I want to go back to what I was doing but I let them stay.

She indicated a fourth structure desire to be in more in charge of herself and was able to make distinctions about herself and to understand the need for self-regulation. Similarly to Deanna, she knew that she could do more to be authentically independent and understood that she was not yet ready to clearly construct or articulate this in her mind.

All the little struggles I had to go through, being broke, missing my family. I gained from it. Even when I went through it, I thought there was a bigger picture, but I wasn't seeing it all. It was very scary and disturbing . . . I guess I'm going through changes in my life. I'm always questioning. There's a lot of awareness. But the struggle of my old behaviours, there's new ones I want to bring in, but they're always there.

Demonstrating movement away from embeddedness in third structure thinking, Josette was now able to observe how others influenced her. As she said, she had the awareness but needed more practice.

I want to reach that point where I can say . . . I can choose to say . . . “right now I don’t feel like it and sorry I’m doing my work now and I really need to do this.” I never thought like that. I’m just starting. I know I need to practice it.

She was beginning to envision a different way of being in relationship to others, a way that was more in charge of her own time and energy, but this was still conceptual. Much as she wanted to move in this direction, dominance of third structure thinking prevented this. Kegan (1994) wrote, “With a dominant third structure the individual can neither move against nor accede to boundary violations because they simply don’t have these kinds of boundaries It is my construction of my relationships, the loyalties I feel to these connections that is the source of possible threat” (p 116).

I want to practice assertiveness everywhere. Like even if I dislike someone I can walk away and not have to own their stuff, just own mine. There’s a way, of course that would be good but I think it’s hard for me. It’s important to me to do it with tact, that they don’t feel I want to reject them and might hurt them. I’m still a people pleaser [laughs]. I don’t want to hurt people’s feelings. So yeah, their feelings are more important still than my own feelings. I’m aware of what I’m doing now, before I didn’t know. Where is the balance?

Marguerite

Marguerite indicated her fourth structure influence by demonstrating a clear sense of herself and by acknowledging, and following, her own agenda. “Doing home care I saw so many people, younger women, that were living on handicap pension that I felt maybe they were just accepting things. I just couldn’t stay home and do that, live like that. I’m just not the TV game show person all day long.” She was also able to reflect on her interactions with others and separate herself psychologically. “I can see other sides of the issue that they can’t see, and I think in some ways that gives me another view into the situation. They’re looking at it with blinders ‘cause they can’t see the other sides.”

Her third structure thinking, however, still made it difficult for her to integrate this understanding into her life. This third structure part seemed stronger. Though she wanted to follow her own agenda by creating her own space and time for her work, vulnerability to her dominant structure-three thinking meant it was a struggle to say no to external demands. She still took responsibility for others’ expectations and feelings.

This held more power over her decisions and feelings. Disequilibrium, according to Kegan (1982), “comes from living in, and being in, the category of expectations and finding it impossible to fulfil one expectation without disappointing another” (p 197).

She’s coming back to my place for the afternoon and I think, there goes an afternoon. I mean I’ll enjoy having the connection and meeting her, but I wanted to spend the afternoon getting my work done I just couldn’t come out and explain things to her without making I was afraid of hurting her feelings.

I was studying one afternoon and somebody from the church called and could I come and help. I said yes but I thought, I don’t have time to do this. I felt like I should. I guess I would have felt pretty low life [laughs] if I hadn’t said yes, but it’s just one more thing that I was asked to do.

Third structure dominance also meant that she found it difficult to conceptualize or articulate to herself why she would feel bad saying no. This was evident in her laughing exasperation at some of my probes. She felt pushed to the limits of her meaning-making, and struggled to step back from her experiences to form and articulate her own theory about why or how things were for her.

I can see how I can handle things. I guess I see myself in a different light. Maybe it cut off some of my inhibitions. [Could you tell me more?] It’s kind of a [pause] released feeling being able to go in there and think okay. I think I can be able to handle something another time without Maybe it’s [pause] just the inhibitions or my expectations are (pause) maybe changing, evolving. [What’s that like for you?] It’s kind of a relief. That’s what Oh, I guess I’m learning an idea. You’re throwing some things at me that I never thought of [laughs].

Raven

Although some parts of Raven’s interview sounded very concrete, almost at the second structure, overall, the intuitiveness he demonstrated and the way he described teaching himself new ways to deal with his process, lent support for an assessment of between third and fourth structure thinking. It was difficult to discern with certainty, however, which of these structures dominated Raven’s way of thinking because he shifted back and forth throughout the interview. He may have been in the middle of moving from third (3/4) to fourth structure (4/3) dominance. More information about his relationships and about how he made decisions would have clarified this.

He clearly indicated a third structure ability to reflect on and critique his own process. “If there’s something that needs to be fixed I’ll know. I really like to change things that aren’t working for me ‘cause there’s no point in continuing something that’s not working. I try to learn why I do the things I do or why I act a certain way.”

He demonstrated fourth structure thinking in his preference to be in charge of his life: “It’s good to be in charge, to make decisions.” He also demonstrated this in his ability to set his own standards and to consider, without being embedded in, others’ perspectives.

I hold myself up to very high standards, and at the same time I often do the same with other people without meaning to. I see myself do it and I’m going wait a second, they can’t live up to *your* standards. Your standards might not apply.

While he had the ability to talk about an inner process, his instincts, it was difficult for him to take a clear perspective on it.

I know when life isn’t right for me. I don’t have descriptors to put to this. It’s just a feeling, like this is not working. It can be a discomfort, a gut instinct. For the most part I trust it. Sometimes I ignore it like an idiot, and I find out the hard way I should have listened the first time.

He was knowledgeable about his strengths and yet, demonstrating third structure influence, he did not indicate any sense of ownership or theory about his strengths or himself. He was more likely to offer external validation and to be descriptive rather than reflective of himself and his experiences. “I’m very patient. I heard it a lot from when I was a scout leader. The other leaders would say where do you get the patience from?” Another example of this tendency is found in the following:

I wrote an essay. My mom sent it to one of her friends and it’s now being published in a paper. I felt really good. [What was the best part?] Getting it published. It means somebody thinks my work is valuable enough.

He also indicated his emotional vulnerability to the opinions of others. “I can sense when someone is upset at me even though they may not be showing anything. They may be laughing, and I can still sense they’re, well, pissed off at me right now.”

Penelope

Penelope was tentatively assessed as demonstrating operation from the fourth structure with remnants of structure three still apparent. Without more information on, for example, how she made her decisions, it was difficult to gauge the strength of this remaining third structure. It was unclear whether this structure was operating in a mild way, 4(3), or in a more powerful way, 4/3. Overall, however, she articulated a clearly dominant fourth structure.

Penelope was able to take a perspective on herself and to take ownership for an inner process and for her ensuing decisions. She could therefore take clear positions towards situations in her life. This was demonstrated when she took a clearly self-authored perspective on her long-term memory loss by making a self-initiating, self-regulating decision to re-create herself.

And now it's even more confused. I can't remember what are real memories and what are memories I've just made up to fill a blank or a story I've heard from somebody else. So I decided to forget all that . . . this is me. This is it. I can see how things may have led me here, but the reality is now.

She also indicated a sense of herself as psychologically separate from others. "But I am speaking a truth. Even if it's *my* truth, it's a truth. I *am* clear in myself." Her boundaries extended to close relationships. She saw, for example, that her father had his own way of being that did not implicate her. "I knew he had his own vision of the kind of life I was living and what I was doing. It didn't bother me that much. I *knew* what the truth was."

Her third structure remnant was the part of herself that looked to others for validation: "If you want me to do well at something—tell me I'm good at it." She looked for confirmation of herself in their reactions.

I certainly like it when I surprise people with my diversity, things that I've done. [What is it about surprising people that you like?] I guess, on some kind of level. I can just give 'em one more. You like me 'cause of this? Well, I also did this. Maybe I say it to impress them, as much as myself. Maybe for me to hear it and see the reaction. It kind of reconfirms that it made sense. This person was taken aback by it.

When she talked about a recent confrontation with two friends, Penelope confirmed to herself a self-defining sense of self. She demonstrated how she could, and did, stand up to external perspectives on her that did not match her own.

I'm not doubting myself. You can call me pathetic and by the end of it all I'm calling myself pathetic? No, no, that's not how it is. Ultimately, what it all comes down to for all of us, is me. Whoever me is, it's just me. It's my opinion of me, my judgement of me. I think that's something I've always known [pause]. wait, just wait a minute. [long pause] I think it's something I'd always *hoped* for but didn't really know how and when I would see it. I think it's something that I was kinda hoping that one day I would feel that strong and sure of myself.

Myrna

Myrna's interview, for the most part, demonstrated her fourth structure, strong, independent sense of herself.

She said she was going to give it a *D* because it sounded too mature for the class. And I said I *am* mature. I talk different; my life experience makes me different. Besides, my own thoughts are always a heck of a lot different from somebody else's thoughts. I am not the kind of person that follows the flock.

Also, instead of comparing herself to other students in terms of her own value or worth, she was able to see differences within a larger, systemic context. "When I see them, I just hope that they do a better job of what I did and when they become parents, maybe they can offer their kids more. When I was that age, I had no hope in hell; they never did upgrading in those days."

She had an abstract, fourth structure sense of relationships. She was able to evaluate their quality in a systematic way and to observe interactions as separate from, and not implicating of, herself. "But I could see where she was coming from, saying that the writing was too mature." She had fourth structure ability to distinguish others' perspectives as separate from her own and to separate her sense of self from their voices.

It was upsetting to be thought of as a liar, but I could see from her point though that young people wouldn't use the words I use, mainly because they don't know anything about spirituality. They are all young and mostly white. They don't have that. I do, because I am a native person, so I pretty well feel and know the words for it.

Based primarily on indications that, now and again, she allowed roles to define

how she thought she should act, Myrna was assessed as demonstrating a lingering third structure presence. “Because it is an institution and you have to go with the flow. You do have to comply with what the teacher expects. It’s like any other institution. You go to work; you have to comply with what the boss wants.” She also, however, demonstrated dominance of a very clear fourth structure because she had a perspective on this and could see, or predict, the systemic response.

I was wishing I was in a position where I could tell him off [laughs]. I’d be able to tell him what I thought about the way he was and the way he sounds. But because I was the student and he was the teacher, I know enough not to do that. I wouldn’t want to be kicked out of school for one thing, and I think if I embarrassed him before the other students it would probably work against me. Almost like blacklisting. I don’t think he would go out of his way to look for it but if the opportunity presented itself, then maybe.

She also seemed vulnerable and thrown off balance by unexpected behaviour from others. “The way he treated people, he was just kind of a dictator. I knew there were bad teachers *then*. I was in residential school, and they were automatically biased against native people. But when I come to the college and found another teacher like *that*, [pause] it shouldn’t be.” It was unclear, however, whether Myrna was expressing a residual third structure desire to prove herself to others or, a fourth structure understanding of her need for self-protection from, and resistance towards, the injustice of lifelong racism.

Pardon me for saying this, because you are white, but I still mistrust white people. It doesn’t matter what you do; they will find a way to make you work twice as hard to defend yourself. And you shouldn’t have to defend yourself. In school, I think they don’t expect native people to write well. So when they do write well, you have to prove it. If it was another white person, I am sure they would praise them, give them the deserving mark without question. It doesn’t matter where I go; I still have to fight twice as hard. Yeah, it’s true, all the time. It doesn’t matter, on the job, anywhere. You always have to work twice as hard.

Even in the midst of trying to negotiate what she saw as an unfair educational system that she did not agree with, however, she demonstrated consistent self-authorship.

Teachers do learn from me because they come straight from home up the education ladder to the level they’re at now. They don’t have life experience. They’ve never been in the school of hard knocks and I have. They question me

and I argue back with them, not in a snide way, just conversational. I enjoy it.

Given the biases she saw herself as experiencing, it is plausible that Myrna's vulnerability may have had less to do with the complexity of her understanding and more to do with a learned response that she perceived as necessary to survive in a discriminating world. The fourth structure sometimes requires "the recognition of a group to come into being, a more explicit ideology in support of a disenfranchised social class, gender or race" (Kegan, 1982, p 102). From this perspective, Myrna could be seen as, "defending a threatened balance instead of critiquing it" (p 271). Individuals experiencing this need "to overdefend" tend to "view the world as failing to hold up its end of the bargain, as betraying in that it is not what it appeared to be" (p 271). More information, however, would be needed about how Myrna experienced her own vulnerability in order to make this distinction.

Peter

As with Myrna, I was open to the possibility that Peter may have been operating from equilibrium at the fourth structure. His interview almost consistently demonstrated this fourth structure thinking, but there were also times when the probability of a third structure presence and structural conflict was indicated. There was insufficient information to conclusively make this distinction.

Fourth structure thinking clearly prevailed in Peter's interview. He took responsibility for his own processes and was able to admit his vulnerability to external opinions and expectations. Rather than blaming or holding anyone or anything else responsible, he held himself responsible for trying to meet other peoples' expectations.

I'm hard on myself. I tend to think I'm [early forties] and don't have a whole lot to show for myself. I guess that's part of the thing that led me to go do [technology program]. Because it's kind of more respectable and professional. There's a certain amount of it, I think, that I was pursuing just to, I suppose, live up to other peoples' expectations.

He was also able to see himself from others' possible perspectives. "A few months ago I was just pulling my hair and horrible to live with." He knew his own

preferences, and he knew when they were incompatible with what he was doing or where he was doing it: “but the chemistry, physics and math just feel like, this is not Peter. In big, bold capital letters, this is not Peter [laughing]. They feel foreign, like barriers that I have to somehow get over or through. So I just sweat bullets trying to deal with them.” He was able to differentiate based on the context (fourth structure) rather than take a global sense of himself (third structure) and to take a fourth structure perspective of his limits and abilities and his decision making. He took charge of his own emotional and physical reactions without implicating anyone or anything else in his responses and choices.

I think I have a better understanding of who I am now and what I can reasonably expect of myself in a school situation. I’ve reached a point now where I know where my strong points are and my weak points are, so if I’m gonna tackle something, and it’s on the weak side, then I’m gonna take smaller bites of it [laughs].

I had to sort of re-evaluate my goals, and I decided that I was too much trying to hammer a round peg into a square hole. That perhaps that was an unrealistic goal I was pursuing, more along the grounds of it’s what I should do rather than what I want to do. So I decided to take a different tack on where I was headed goal wise.

Possibly demonstrating an insightful third structure still operating, he also expressed awareness of his vulnerability to others’ perceptions and expectations of him. More information, however, on how he was able to reconcile his own needs with conflicting opinions or perspectives and on what criticism meant to him would have clarified whether this way of knowing was still influential. “I’m really sensitive to criticism See, I’ve always worried too much about what other people think. Even people I don’t know. I mean it’s not an easy thing to get over because I spent too much of my life . . . it’s just become habitual, worrying about what other people think.” This vulnerability was, however, held in a very self-anchored, fourth structure, way. He was able to see and understand that he was, in a sense, fighting himself and demonstrated this ability to observe himself negating himself.

I guess I have a strong rebellious side or something. When it’s something I don’t like, I sort of resist quite strongly. It’s not pleasant; I tend to beat myself up. I know it’s unrealistic on my part to be so hard on myself, or to think that I should

be able to grasp everything that I'm confronted with. Some people are good at one thing, and I'm good at that, so I just have to remind myself of that. [sighs] I guess all my life I've been sort of undermining myself. Not on a constant basis, but too much for sure over the years. I need to give myself more credit.

He was beginning to feel comfortable with his fourth structure way of knowing. He recognized and respected his own sense of his situation: "It's like having blinders on and now I can sort of stand back and see the bigger picture." He was also cautiously allowing this to direct his life.

I'm starting to realize that it's more important to look after yourself, and if other people can't handle it, well it's their problem, not mine. I'm the one living this life.

It feels good to start recognizing that I gotta listen more to my intuition, to have more faith in myself and not jump to conclusions regarding what I should do because this is what other people expect of me. There's still a bit of a tentative quality, but I feel, I think, more secure about it, considering the past.

Barbara, Megumi, Janice, Maureen and Audrey – Equilibrium at Structure Four

These five participants consistently defined their lives on their own terms and demonstrated their abilities to offer clear, self-authorized perspectives on themselves and on their life directions.

Barbara I mean it's something I've really wanted to work towards, speaking up for myself, being recognized as this is who I am. It's something I *know* that I needed to work towards for my own survival It feels great: it's wonderful: it's very freeing being me. Just doing whatever I want, doing what I think is right, saying whatever I want. And it makes such a difference.

Megumi [You seem to set standards for yourself?] Yeah, I always do. I feel much better . . . there [points to heart]. That's my personality. I can just manage to finish the school and I finish my degree, or whatever. That's not what I want. I don't only want to have a paper; I want to have context with my paper. It has a lot of meaning to me. I kind of trust myself.

They were very much in charge of themselves, their feelings, their reactions, their opinions and their decisions, and they took responsibility for their choices and life circumstances without blaming or holding anyone else responsible for their feelings or their difficulties.

Janice My efforts are going to generate my success. I really like that about it. I mean you just know you make what you will yourself.

I think you have to go with what you like. I waffled originally because I was still in the mode that it had to be money, but then I just realized that you know your first great love is [program]—let's get back to that again. And it was the *best* decision. I mean it feels right. There's sort of no disparity between you and what you're doing. It's like putting on the shoe that fits. Suddenly, you know there's nothing irritating or grating about it.

Megumi I have to go higher [laughing]. I mean that I can't consider it more. If I, as a result of pushing, have good quality of knowledge, I can apply good quality of service and good quality of something to other people. That makes me feel so good.

Audrey I see that a lot of people around me are insecure, and I'm not insecure about the same things. I know that I'm the one that makes or breaks it.

They demonstrated fourth structure capacity to separate themselves and their standards from external sources. In their interviews, all five articulated, very clearly, their positions, agendas and goals regarding schoolwork, and the ways that they adhered to them.

Janice I'm here by choice, it's not like somebody's put a gun to my head and said you will do this. This is what I want to do.

I think the main thing for me is to be satisfied with it because I feel I've done a good job. Not because anyone is going to see it, but [because] that's how I want to do it. I just feel it's being done right and I'm happy and I can feel good about it. And it's the same thing if I'm doing a paper; to a certain extent I could care less about the mark it generates. I really want to do a topnotch job.

Barbara I really don't care what the prof. thinks of it. It's what's important to me that [I know] I can do this and I can get good marks.

They evaluated their own work and capabilities and did not rely on others to assess the value of their work. According to Kegan (1994), at the fourth structure, individuals expect themselves to be "self-initiating, self-correcting and self-evaluating rather than depend[ent] on others to frame the problems, initiate the adjustments or determine whether things are going acceptably well. This expectation is an extension of

owning one's work" (p 168).

Audrey I don't feel the need to brown nose or impress the instructor. I count on my own self to produce professional quality work, I'm the one who suffers if the standard is not acceptable.

Megumi Then he says go home, take another course, but I studied hard [laughs]. I'm not gonna fail this course; I'm going to try. He was really annoying, but I got a B+. I'm just stubborn [laughs].

They were also self-monitoring and able to regulate the intrusion of old values and doubts.

Maureen That's what I have to watch, not being realistic and setting myself up for failure. I've tried to look at it from that perspective and sort of reassess things As a result of all these things that have happened to me, I am a different person. I know basically you have the same human nature, tendencies and that, but you see things in a different light. [What do you see in a different light?] Not being so hard on myself is the major one.

Janice You can use a lot of energy unproductively. I know that I could go overboard so I watch it. I think I know the line. I usually can say okay you're being a little bit ridiculous about this, put it aside, and that's been a learning experience with school I am a fairly high-strung individual, so I know the potential is there to go and get really freaked out about stuff. Probably the biggest, single, ongoing battle is to sort of stay sane and have a good life but still do well at school. That's the balance.

Because they were able to have a perspective on their relationships, they could separate themselves from others psychologically and understand both the context and the person within the context.

Audrey I'm not concerned that people will run slipshod over me. If I need to be assertive about something that really matters to me, I know I will defend it.

Barbara With me, what you see is what you get. I'm me; take me or leave me . . . I used to be a lot more concerned about the like thing, you know everybody has to like me and now it's like, well, it's your problem. This is just the way it is. You don't like me? Well, okay [laughs], go like somebody else, I'm not interested.

Janice It was important to me, even at this stage, because your family is a source of support but, I would have done it anyway. I was very gratified that they were behind me, but making unpopular decisions is not something I'm afraid to do.

Maureen I think everybody has to be responsible to themselves I was getting fulfilment out of my accomplishments, but that was out of things and other people. In some ways it was self-fulfilling, but in other ways it wasn't: there's no time for me. I was completely buried.

And their relationships with others were also usually mediated by a sense of their own needs.

Barbara I can't change him; that's just the way he is. Once I sort of felt him out and realized who he was, then it was like, okay, we'll get along just fine but it's got to be on my terms She was angry because I didn't give her enough notice, so she practically booted me out [laughs]. That was fine; I didn't care. It was time for me.

Janice I think if I had been younger I would not maybe feel at liberty to go "that's it, I'm not doing this." It would have been "oh, I don't know, I'll upset people if I do this" and probably just gone through with it. Back then you're afraid to do things because of the disapproval you may get, but now it's just like you just go your own way.

Kegan (1982) wrote, "an individual reaching fourth structure limits becomes weary" (p 225). At this point, individuals begin to take a perspective on their fourth structure system and acquire a dawning recognition of, and questioning towards, its costs. According to Kegan, they "begin to hear a sense of loneliness and dissatisfaction even in its workings rather than concern arising out of its failure to work, which is experiential evidence that the system is no longer completely me" (p 225). In different ways, Audrey and Megumi may have been describing their experience of such limits and costs. Though neither clearly demonstrated fifth structure ways of thinking, both gave strong indication that they were becoming more aware of a sense of their aloneness, their lack of connectedness with others – possibly the beginning of movement to structure five.

Audrey reluctantly acknowledged a painful need to be included that, to her, was a lapse in self-regulation. "I find that in this situation, I'm frustrated by the number of questions that it raises. Like the interpersonal things, ones that I can't answer. And I resent them." Kegan (1994) stated that "at the fourth structure, emotional life seems to be more internally controlled. The immediacy of feeling is replaced by the mediacy of

regulating the interpersonal. A variety of feelings, particularly affiliative feelings or doubts around performance come to be viewed as potential dissidents" (p 197). Audrey spoke of these feelings:

I think what I really resent about this program so far is that I'm really getting an insight into my need for social contact. That's also a bit ambivalent. Part of it is that my survival in this world has been based, usually, on the illusion of self-reliance. I'm aware of that, as long as I can stay isolated, I can be safe. So this is a real challenge for me And also disapproval about myself. The disapproval comes from the fear, which is that if I make myself vulnerable in this situation, of course I'm going to get hurt.

Megumi also talked about realizing feelings of loneliness; however, to her, being disconnected from others was unwelcome. It was the cost of her exclusive focus on achieving and fulfilling vocational ambitions.

I'm just attempting a major change I've been having conflict of my ideal position. I decided I'm just beating me so much, like I have to be really hard on me, I have to improve. But I'm realizing myself, that's not really right I felt so isolated because of course I'm always studying. I'm always refusing any invitations. Just studying, even on the weekend, to get better grade, to understand better I never allowed me to have any social time the last past three years . . . That was kind of missing, that's a *big* piece missing.

At the time of the interview, she was enjoying being socially connected again: "and since this semester is a little slower, I can do some extra playing and I feel so good." Kegan (1994) wrote that a positive feature of beginning to move away from the fourth structure, "an ultimate orientation to one's form," sometimes includes "the relaxation of one's vigilance, a sense of flow and immediacy, an openness to and playfulness about oneself" (p 227).

At the fifth structure, self-agency combines with an authentic connection to others. A general rebalancing characterizes movement towards meaning-making at this structure. The self begins to separate from the institution and thus creates the individual. Gradually, there becomes a self who runs the organization where before there was a self who was the organization. "There is now a self who can reflect upon the regulations and purposes of the psychic administration which was formerly the subject of attentions" (Kegan, 1982, p 228). Structure five brings the opportunity for authentic relationships and intimacy with others. The difference from structure three is that there is now a genuine sense of self to be brought into, rather than derived from, relationships with others. "Where

structure three was a fused commingling, structure five is interindividual in that there is relationship which guarantees distinct identities" (p 227).