A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE VALUES, PERSPECTIVES, AND GOALS OF ADULT STUDENTS IN A JOB READINESS TRAINING PROGRAM

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE VALUES, PERSPECTIVES, AND GOALS OF ADULT STUDENTS IN A JOB READINESS TRAINING PROGRAM

BY

BARBARA MARY BULL CASE

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requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

In order to gain a clearer vision of the effectiveness of programs for disadvantaged adults, I observed a Job Readiness Training (JRT) class which ran for twenty weeks at a community college in Newfoundland. Through participant observation, key informant interviews, and subsequent analysis and interpretation, I addressed the gap between current theoretical assumptions within adult education and effective practice in a classroom of marginalized adult learners. The research revealed a dimension not integrated into the elements of prevailing theory.

It became clear that the culture of the students and that of the educational system were incongruent, resulting in outcomes which did not mirror the course objectives. Additionally, the conventional wisdom of adult education did not fully consider the inclusion of adults lacking in self-motivation and self-direction. These discrepancies were clearly seen in student attitudes towards work and job stations, the students' values interpretations, and the sex, drugs, rock 'n roll culture which formed the social and dialectic context for the classroom. Aspects of adult education practice did provide a climate in which some students began to address facets of work, education, and self-knowledge which they had previously disregarded, although future expectations and planning did not appear to change.

Course length, instructor turnover, and unmotivating work experiences caused some of the practical problems that were observed. Students' lack of internal locus of control and of future orientation, and their experiences with the realities of long term dependence on income security measures, contributed to the variance between student needs and course objectives and outcomes.

A grounded theory framework for ongoing, constant data comparison was used to create a deeper understanding of the social patterns observed in the classroom. Underlying themes emerged which constituted the mid-range theory and provided a better perception of the needs of disadvantaged adult students. These themes - the focused sense of immediacy, the incongruence of values and objectives among students, course and instructors, the language element which reflected the culture of the students, and the lack of future orientation - together identified the gaps in the current provision of programming and accepted practice.

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Thesis writing is a challenging and lonely endeavour. However, it cannot be completed without the support, encouragement and direction of others.

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The students, whose lives and words inhabit these pages, were delightful to work with, answered all my questions cheerfully, and enabled me to become familiar with their familiar. They changed my thinking forever.

My supervisor, Dr. Bob Crocker, always encouraged me to think in new ways about things I had taken for granted and challenged me to reach further than I thought I could. His initial belief in this project, and his subsequent advice, support, and sense of humour enabled me to accomplish the miracle of completion.

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KEY TO JOB READINESS TRAINING (JRT) PARTICIPANTS

All students in JRT are referred to by an initial. The instructors are referred to by names: Len, Jill, Eve, Andrew, Joe, and Terri. This was done so the reader could easily differentiate between the students and the instructors within the body of the thesis, and to avoid undue repetition and explanation. All the names and initials differ from those of the participants in the study. The only exception is the researcher, who is referred to as Barb or B, or as Ralphie, the name that the students called me.

CHAPTER 1

STARTING WITH MYSELF: A PRACTICE/RESEARCH ORIENTATION

Welcome To JRT

I sit in the back of the classroom trying to blend into the wall. Wearing a brilliant yellow shirt was not a great idea. The students start to drift in and find seats at one of the three hexagonal tables which are set up. They look uncomfortable and there is little talking. Len and Jill, the instructors, come in, smiling with first day good-will. The tension in the class suddenly becomes palpable. JRT has begun.

The instructors are well-dressed, but casual; the students are simply casual. The males are wearing backwards baseball caps, sweatshirts advertising beer, and tattoos. The women are more carefully dressed, with make up, and a lot of hair. They all wear very tight jeans.

During the introduction the instructors point me out as an ex-instructor who is at university, but who will participate in the class as part of my course. The students look disinterested. The initial exercise, Reasons for Being Unemployed, is designed to loosen up the crowd, but gets minimal feedback. There is little eye contact and much shifting in the seats. By ten o'clock boredom is setting in, heads go down, and there is a distinct lack of attention. Jill suggests that they can break now and leave at 12, or continue and leave early. The vocal members chorus - "Break" - and off they go. The edginess suggests a need for nicotine to my practitioner eye. My new researcher eye says 'wait'. (Journal entry, February 2)

Practice Wisdom

I remember precisely when I began to question the effectiveness of my practice. I was teaching an assertiveness program to a group mainly composed of young, urban adults. After enduring my lecture, role-play situations, and group discussion, L finally said, "Barb, my dear, the trouble with you is that you're too nice. If I said, 'Excuse me, I'm sorry, but...' out on the street, they'd all think I was a fag!" And he was right. Why was I teaching assertiveness to a group of young men and women who were street smart, and above all who had needs and value systems that I could scarcely begin to comprehend?

So it began - the search for elusive truths within adult education practice. The more I considered the course content, the participants, myself, and the theories operating within the field, the more concerned I became about congruence among the parts. Yet, intuitively, I felt that success existed. I graduated students who felt more self-aware, who were genuinely pleased with their new found sense of direction, and who were considering future-oriented decisions. What I could not know was why these positive aspects kept repeating from class to class. There were still individuals who could not be reached and problems which could not be solved, but something positive was occurring. A further question was whether the positive impacts extended beyond the course to assist the students in dealing with the future that was in store for them. I knew well the stigma which led to a lack of opportunity for those who have not measured up to the standards of a rigid and success oriented world.

In the larger context, I considered the ideas of the self-directedness of adults' personal needs assessment and the peer-relationships of the classroom as espoused by Knowles (1970, 1984). I liked the sound of these ideas but was not convinced that my 26 year old day-release student from Her Majesty's Penitentiary, with the reading level of a Grade 4 student, comfortably fit these pleasant theories. Nor was I ready to admit that I should not base my practice on these ideals. Something about the climate of an adult classroom, the relaxed atmosphere, and the shared responsibility for learning goals seemed to provide an environment in which many of the students thrived. They participated in self-disclosure exercises, they expanded their knowledge base, and generally they liked coming into the classroom. "Goodness of fit" existed even though there were many unanswered questions and evident inconsistencies.

These inconsistencies arose, I thought, because I was not trained as an adult educator. As a result, I felt I did not understand the theory base of my practice. This felt inadequacy was matched by a sense of frustration caused by gaps in the curriculum, coupled with a changing student population. The course objectives remained the same, yet technology, society, employment potential, and student profiles were shifting.

The longer I worked in JRT, the more I became convinced that the goals of the students, the course, and the facilitation were too far apart to encompass the needs in a realistic fashion. There were many factors to be considered. First of all, I was dealing with the non-educational ethic of Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) in a decidedly educational environment. EIC is responsible for getting people back to work, while the community college I worked with had a stated educational goal, so a mismatch was evident even at the administrative level. To further confound the situation, the students seemed to need the allowance which was paid to them for attending the course, hence their attendance could be more related to immediate financial situations than to future job prospects. Additionally, I realized that I was observing JRT from my viewpoint without a clear understanding of the very different perspective of the students. The recognition of these issues provided a strong motivation to examine JRT from a research orientation.

Towards A Research Perspective

Thus, this thesis evolved from a practice perspective. As an instructor, I had begun to question the conventional system: the orthodoxy of adult educational thought, the social value system which pervaded the delivery of pre-employment programs for disadvantaged adults, the long term benefits of short courses, and the congruence of course and student objectives. As an instructor, I had supported the benefits of the course, at least in terms of the obvious results of improved self-esteem and more positive attitudes towards work. These beliefs were tempered though by the knowledge gained through course follow-up: that many of the students returned to the street, the unemployment lines, social welfare rolls, or dead end jobs. As a researcher, I wished to reflect on these issues and to view afresh the long term effectiveness of the program.

In order to discover the invisible truths behind the visible, I approached the task from the phenomenological philosophy of research inquiry. This enabled me to illuminate the "slippery phenomena of everyday life" (Erickson, 1986) while investigating, from the participants' viewpoint, their meaning of the course.

In retrospect, it becomes clear that I approached the research from the perspective of my practice wisdom, thus my ideas and "foreshadowed problems" (Malinowski, 1922) were provided by my experience. This enabled me to enter the field with some clear notions of what to expect, and with a practical idea of the peculiarities of the system. Conversely, it immediately established me as a researcher with a bias, albeit one which was immediately recognized and addressed. This recognition made it possible to confront the subjective "I" (Peskin, 1988) early on and to identify the intrusions it made on my more objective research self. As I struggled with this conflict, both in the research setting and during my periods of analysis, a curious shift in thinking began to emerge. Upon reflection, I saw the subjective "I", the ex-instructor, not only as a intruder, but also as a touchstone. My practical experience enabled me to view with appreciation and warmth the group which I was observing. My research role forced me to view the perspective with new eyes, to make "the familiar strange" (Erickson, 1986), and to question why. In time I realized I also had to make the strange familiar, because the surface interaction was not a mirror of the underlying truth. These dual perspectives enabled me to challenge my intuitive assumptions with the hard-hitting reality that evolved from the research efforts.

As an example, I had initially focused my attention on adult education theory, feeling that the suspected problems lay in inappropriate delivery methods. Plausible as that seemed, however, it soon became obvious from the field observation that this was far too narrow a view. In the end, an understanding of sociological context, along with a recognition of the practical forces of the students' basic needs played key roles in coming to an understanding of the issues of the study.

An Introduction To JRT

Job Readiness Training was a work preparation program designed for adults who for a wide variety of reasons found employment difficult to access and/or a job difficult to maintain. The students were often young offenders, recovering alcoholics, parolees, or school dropouts. All suffered from social dysfunctions of some form. From the beginning, as a group, they aroused my interest because their life histories were so different from my own that I felt we were strangers at almost a cultural level. Each student I met through JRT was a tragedy - abused, distressed, failed by the social system of which he or she was supposedly a part, and consequently viewed as a failure by that system. I, on the other hand, was a motivated, supported, university educated, middle-class example of success in western society. My concern as an instructor centred around the question of "How do we fit together"? I continually wondered if my hard work as a facilitator in the classroom was useful, or was JRT just another way the system has to "blame the victim" (Ryan, 1971) or offer social welfare money. This dichotomy between socially acceptable values and student reality became more obvious to me as a researcher as it presented a disturbing reflection of the incompatibility between student needs and course purpose and goals.

As professionals we tend to take for granted that everyone yearns to emulate our middle class notions. Teaching JRT made me recognize that this is not necessarily so. The very fact of identifying people as "disadvantaged" emanates from our frame of reference, it mirrors our value system. How, then, could I be a responsible educator and yet provide a learning climate in a classroom in which student expectations and needs were secondary to my ideas of their expectations and needs? It was the ethical question which lay at the root of this research.

It is a widely held belief (though not well documented) that work experience programs have positive effects upon the clients they reach (Conti & Fellenz, 1983; Latour, 1977, 1978). I reflected upon this belief and my own experience in a more formal way, while examining the theory upon which my practice in the classroom had been based.

The Dilemma Of Theory In Adult Education

Adult education has traditionally been viewed by practitioners as a humanistic enterprise dedicated to the task of meeting community needs in second chance, leisure, and remedial education. This view hints at its social orientation and its underlying purpose as an instrument of social change. Research conducted in the last two decades, however, has challenged this view. Results of research in the areas of participation in adult education courses, needs assessment, and self-directed learning have pointed to a dichotomy between assumption and practice. Far from involving the undereducated with a view to improving their academic and work skills, the picture shows that typical participants are "relatively affluent, well-educated, white, middle-class individuals" (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965). This picture has not been changed by the studies completed since (Brookfield, 1986; Keane, 1992; Valentine & Darkenwald, 1990). Much has been said about participation and barriers to it (Cross, 1982; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Nordhaug, 1987a), but little, it seems, has been done in practice to change the set patterns. In programs designed to accommodate the needs of groups at social, educational, or economic disadvantage, we utilize the same theory base and principles as we do for well-educated, personally motivated individuals who wish to improve their present status. I was forced by the knowledge gained from practice to question that provision and to begin to reflect upon those differences.

Work done by sociologists in the area of education and class mobility seems to support the notion that a contradiction does exist between objectives and outcome (Parkin, 1971; Ryan,1971). Some socialists in adult education have expanded upon this conclusion and argue that the goals of adult education are not obtainable within a capitalistic society because those humanistic objectives are in opposition to the goals of the social system (Elsey, 1986; Youngman,1986). Others point out that adult education with its individualistic emphasis can promote "a social pathology which separates the problems presented by the individuals from the social and political order which creates those problems" (Keddie, 1980, p. 57). Further confounding the picture was the intuitive knowledge, from my viewpoint as a practitioner, that the students I met in my work were individuals with a work ethic and value system clearly different from my own middle-class standard. Thus, the contradiction in the participation data in the adult education research, the inconsistency between the reality of needs for JRT students and the conventional wisdom of adult education philosophy, and the perceived cultural and value differences in a JRT class presented a challenge to me as an adult educator trying to find a route to success for the students I met in my work.

Setting

The setting of the study was a Job Readiness Training (JRT) class which ran for 20 weeks from February 2 until June 19. I acted as a participant observer in the classroom and initially spent five half-days per week on site observing the interactions. This level of intensity is consistent with Erickson's (1986) stricture that:

> In order to determine the full range of variation in social organizational arrangements, meaning-perspectives, and connections of influence within and across system levels in the setting and its surrounding environments, it is necessary to begin observation and interviewing in the most comprehensive fashion possible. (p. 143)

The broad general perspective achieved through extensive observation at the outset enabled me to become more focused, as the study progressed, on specific patterns and themes as they emerged from the observations. As time went on I decreased my observation time to three or four half-days, with the exception of the last two weeks when I was in the classroom full-time in order to chart changes in attitudes and behaviours of the group as a whole.

The observation was augmented by interviewing five key informants, chosen for their unique roles in the group. These roles were identified as group leader, outsider, trouble maker, or dropout. The key informant role offered a perspective on the class interaction which helped me to understand the interaction from a personal view point. A follow-up of this group was done several months later through interviews aimed at clarifying client participation. The key informants and their reactions served to keep me honest, on track, and well grounded in reality.

The study was done from three aspects - participant, observer, and interpreter. The first two roles were part of the initial study within the classroom, while the interpretation was part of a reflective, ongoing process from the start to thesis completion.

The field work itself was recorded on site in field study notes and diagrams. The interviews were conducted using audio tapes which were permitted by the participants.

Objectives Of The Study

The overall purpose of this study was to use the key assumptions in adult education tradition as a lens, and through observation, attempt to relate participant interpretation of the course experience to these assumptions. Therefore, the principles of personal acceptance and mutual respect, individual needs orientation, the relationship of learning to learner experience, and self-directed programming (adapted from Knowles, 1980), provided the basis for the observation. The questions which developed from this line of investigation were:

1. Do students perceive their individual needs as being met?
2. Do they perceive the atmosphere of the classroom as one of mutual respect?
3. Do they feel a shared responsibility for their learning?
4. Is individual experience a learning deterrent or a positive feature?
5. Are these students self-directed or dependent?
6. What values to work and to self do we see displayed?
7. Are these values congruent with the course objectives?

8. Is the course successful in the eyes of the students? To what do they attribute that success?

9. What, if any, change results in their attitude towards themselves, work, and academic achievement after a JRT course?

These questions arose over the course of the observation and evolved from the experiences and insights gained during the study. I revised my thinking and focus many times as I began to see with fresh eyes the reality which was coming to light within the classroom. I started out with a practitioner's perspective, I developed the researcher's eye and ear as I moved through, and to be sure, part of me began to feel as the students felt. It was both perplexing and enlightening, but the experience led me in the direction of theory development as I began to grapple with the inconsistencies which I kept encountering.

The whole aspect of learner attitudes kept recurring. The students puzzled me both in their entry outlooks and their lack of future goals. The task of instilling middle class values in people who have in the main a totally different attitude and perspective on life seemed awkward and unethical, yet reflected course expectations and proposed outcomes.

Initially my thinking was simple, though broad and undisciplined - to discover why, how, or even if JRT worked. Subsequent thought and critical analysis with my supervisor helped me narrow my subject somewhat, and a focus emerged:

1. To gain an understanding of how students in JRT think and how this affects the way in which they act in the world.
2. To develop an understanding of the interactive effects of social background, previous academic experience, and work attitudes upon participation in and impact of a JRT course upon students.
3. To ascertain the viability and usage of adult education principles in a JRT class.
4. To examine the level of congruence of student attitudes and expectation with instructor/course goals and objectives.

Need For The Study

A careful perusal of adult education literature initially led me far afield in my attempts to arrive at an understanding of my questions. Research in the field has, in effect, quite ignored these students. The work of Knowles (1970), Tough (1971), and Bates (1979) on self-directed learning and learning projects is based on middle-class, professional, or university student clientele. Qualitative field work with illiterate adults has been done by Fingeret (1983); Bogdan (1971) and Whelan (1993) examined programs for disenfranchised learners; and studies examining training opportunities for inmates, re-entry women and Adult Basic Education (ABE) students proliferate (Clayton and Smith, 1987; Fox, 1991; Highet, 1986; Keaton and Parker, 1986; Parkison, 1983). However, few directly address the broader issues pertaining to motivation and subsequent change in a class for socially disenfranchised adults. Even less in evidence were studies identifying value perspectives and real needs for this group.

The arguments presented by participation research, educational sociology, class mobility theory, and socialist adult educators tend to identify adult education as an ineffective enterprise, reflective of a social system which promotes class inequality. Qualitative research studies, appropriate investigations of the impact of programming on disadvantaged students, and the recognition that adult education reflects social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of society are the areas which need further consideration in order to more clearly discover the reality of practice in the profession.

Besides identifying a scarcity of literature in the area, I also was interested, though somewhat alarmed, to note a distinct lack of what one would like to call theory. I tended to agree with Brookfield (1984) that adult education seemed to be a reactive enterprise resting upon a pre-agreed orthodoxy which characterizes all adult learners as self-directed and eager to engage in learning activities. Therefore it seemed critical to look beyond the existing orthodoxy to identify deeper relationships which might establish a well grounded rationale for programming for adults whose previous educational experiences had often been minimal and disengaging. Theory base, as it existed, did not provide a sufficient explanation for utilizing adult education principles for disadvantaged students.

Towards Theory Definition

So it seemed there existed a lack of compatibility between theory and practice in adult education in its offerings to disadvantaged adults. For the purposes of this discussion, "disadvantaged adults" refers to those "...less educated [who] slip below an indefinable economic line ...and special programmes are directed towards them with the explicit purpose of bringing them up to some desirable norm" (Collins, 1984, p.33). The existent literature indicated serious gaps in the research around this group, and even where existent, identified adult education practice as being an ineffective enterprise, reflective of a social system which promoted class inequality. The following questions initially guided the investigation around this problem:

1. Do adult educational practices and philosophy currently in vogue provide a useful framework for a JRT classroom?
2. Does the setting provide insight which would allow an elaboration of adult education theory, or suggest alternative theoretical frameworks?

I used these questions as guidelines to observation, discussion, and reflection in order to discover the true meanings of the course for the students, and thus to discover a theoretical paradigm as it related to this group. The daily observations provided the basis of the social patterns which I began to recognize as being peculiar to this setting, while the key informants began to clarify the patterns for me. I kept going back and forth from early questions to observation data to the tapes of the interviews in order to find their familiar, make it mine, and then decipher it.

Grounded theory, as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), provided the framework for this clarification which led me towards the establishment of clearer definition.

The answers didn't appear as answers to problems, but rather as gaps in previous knowledge and understanding. It became evident that my initial fears about theory gaps and lack of understanding were all too real. In order to respond to students who have a multiplicity of problems, the standard adult education methods are necessary but not sufficient. The need exists for programming which has different goals and objectives, which values the social stratum of the student, which supports students through long term transition phases, and which recognizes success in a variety of forms.

Relevance

Within the field of adult education, there exists a number of unanswered questions concerning theory, viability of the discipline, and credibility. These questions exist largely because of its reactive nature, resulting in pragmatic approaches to social change and social issues. Adult education has not, in its time of evolution, managed to establish a sound theoretical base, particularly around programming for disadvantaged students. The current literature on the subject is in agreement that, although adult education can claim success, there exists no sound basis on which to explain and justify its practices for disadvantaged adults. The primary emphasis which has emerged has concentrated on characteristics of learners rather than investigating other avenues such as social contexts. This study is an attempt to investigate an adult learning process within the social context of both the classroom and client interaction.

In order to chart success in an adult program, it seemed critical to investigate and understand client perceptions of the situations set in the context of previous experiences and social expectations. Thus, the sociological and psychological perspectives can be viewed in an holistic manner. The process of inquiry chosen for this thesis facilitated the explication of these perspectives.

It was not the purpose of this research to evaluate the roles of the participants or to make any judgments. The study was seen as an opportunity to look at particular dimensions of life within a classroom of adult learners, thereby becoming aware of their views of the process and product of adult education. At the end, I desired to be more enlightened as to the needs of the students, as they saw them to be, and to better understand those needs. More generally, I hoped to be able to contribute to theory development in the field of adult education.

Outline And Organization

This thesis deals with life within a JRT classroom and as such is a living document reflecting the daily interactions of the individuals who were part of it. The immediacy of the action and the spontaneity of the players provided a fascinating context which I have attempted to reflect in the written account. Each chapter begins with a piece from the data or from my personal journal of reflections. These tableaus serve as introductions to the interweaving of theory base and course reality which follow.

Chapter 1 charts the initial concerns which motivated the study, identifies the practitioner perspective, and provides an overview of the issues surrounding programs for disadvantaged adults. Chapter 2 presents a review of adult education literature as it relates to general principles of the field and to programs for the marginalized learner. Chapter 3 provides the background for the methodological underpinnings of the study, and examines in greater detail my role as the participant observer with foreshadowed knowledge. Chapters 4 through 8 present in narrative form the findings culled from the data. The chapters are based on the following themes: adult education within JRT, studentspeak - the linguistic context of the classroom, the values orientation of the group, attitudes towards work, and future expectations. These themes provided the unifying elements for the analysis of the accumulated data, and seemed to best reflect what I saw and felt as a researcher. The final chapter examines the findings as they relate to the explication of mid-range theory in teaching adults in this and similar classrooms, and suggests directions and caveats for program planners.

CHAPTER 2

ADULT EDUCATION THEORY AND PRACTICE: FRAMEWORKS FOR ANALYSIS

The Sweat Hogs

"Hey, Ralphie - if you keep comin' here you're gonna be like us!"

"What's that like?" I ask.

"Foolish!" "Crazy!" "Mental!" they yell.

Is this their true self-image? I don't think so, but I do think they have some pride in themselves as sweat hogs, the outcasts of the world. This fact seems to have a unifying effect on the group, or at least on those who see themselves this way.

The class is going crazy - they have been in a First Aid course for the past day and a half, so the classroom is hopping. D grabs W and issues an invitation to make passionate love, T bangs a ruler on the table, C1 comes over, leers at me and says, "How's it goin' Ralphie?" K3 and P seem to hold themselves above all this - not participating but not judging either. K1 is also an outsider but his posture indicates criticism. C and K2 do not participate, but ignore the whole racket. Jill comes in, hand on her hip, grins: "Okay, feet off the chair, settle down!"

Self-motivated? Goal setters? Eager learners? I think not, and yet they seem to like the respect for them that is part of the atmosphere here. They appear to be so vulnerable, caught between what they know and how they have always viewed themselves, and the knowledge that to move beyond means to challenge their familiar. (Field notes and journal entry, March 19)

Perplexing Beginnings

A serious obstacle to furthering research in adult and continuing education has been the failure of the traditional ideas and concepts to generate an adequate theory for the field (Brookfield, 1992; Griffin, 1983; Suttle, 1982). The assumptions and procedures currently in vogue have grown out of attempts to identify characteristics of adult learning, largely from a quasi- psychological perspective, followed then by efforts to fit these prescriptions to practice. Sociological perspectives have received short shrift, and classroom practice and effective teaching methods have remained largely untouched by critical research examination (Spear, 1986). Hoghielm and Rubenson (1980) explicate this difficulty further:

> The lack of and need for an established theoretical framework in adult education is becoming more and more obvious as adult education has come into the public zone. Knowledge production in the discipline has been bound to or reduced to phenomena concerning the acts of learning and cognition. One consequence of this perspective has been the lack of adequate conceptualization of adult educational phenomena, which links explorations of economic, social and cultural factors in society to the explanations of the nature of method, context, techniques, devices, and processes in adult education. (p. 1)

An additional problem, which limits the generalizability of adult education endeavours is the preponderance of studies which use university students, professional workers or mid-life career changers as the target group (Brockett, 1985; Brookfield, 1984, 1985). Studies related to disadvantaged groups have generally concentrated on barriers to participation (Cross, 1982; Mezirow, Darkenwald & Knox, 1975) and generally use demographic description to address who participates. The impact of programs is largely ignored with the exception of some descriptive overviews (Samuels, 1981). In order to gain a general vision of adult education this review will investigate some of the basic difficulties that are evident due to lack of clear definition and theory. It will also look at some of the sociological and liberal adult education literature which addresses issues of participation and equality. Finally, it will examine some of the more recent international efforts which are beginning to confront the social and educational inequities which exist in traditional programming.

Problems Of Definition

One of the more perplexing aspects of studying and working within the field of adult education is the lack of definition. It is the "poor cousin" of the education world and has persistently been viewed as both marginal (Rubenson, 1982) and emergent (Lawson, 1985) for at least two decades. Little (1980) wrote that "adult education is an emerging discipline that is characterized by a lack of agreement concerning fundamental concepts and terminology" (p. 3). Plecas and Sork (1986) go further and assert that the cumulative knowledge and theory building characteristic of an emerging discipline has not taken place (p. 48). This they too attribute to problems of definition and to the lack of focus from within the profession itself.

Because of its multi-dimensional nature, adult education tends to be viewed as an "undisciplined discipline" (Plecas and Sork, 1986), free ranging and with a practical orientation rather than one based soundly on theoretical ideas. It becomes evident from the literature that the breadth of the field contributes to its being both chaotic and misunderstood. It is, after all, difficult to reconcile that such diverse learning experiences as literacy classes, fly-tying courses and Danish folk-schools are all part of the same discipline. And yet they do share many critical features which set them apart from the more traditional pedagogical system of education.

Brookfield (1985) suggests a conceptualization of adult education "be elaborated so that practitioners possess a clear bench mark against which they can judge the extent to which their activities exemplify adult education purposes and principles of practice" (p.46). To this end he suggests a definition that has "at the heart the fact of critical reflectivity and which develops in adults a sense of their personal power and self-worth ...as a fundamental underpinning" (pp. 46-47). Adult education then is equated with a sense of autonomy and control within the individual. This definition, which encompasses the "conscientization" of Freire (1970), the learner experience and self-directedness of Knowles (1970), the humanistic qualities suggested by Rogers (1969), as well as the factor of change, seems to be a strong foundation upon which to build a dynamic, professional philosophy. It also provides a guiding principle to work toward in the JRT classroom.

Towards A Theory Of Adult Education Which Includes JRT

Over the past several years a number of researchers and practitioners in the field have begun to debate the issues of the lack of definition, direction and theory formulation (Brookfield, 1985; Little, 1980; Ohliger, 1980; Plecas and Sork, 1986; Rubenson, 1982). This debate is causing current thinking in adult education to move beyond the orthodoxy which, as Brookfield (1985) commented, holds that:

> adults are self-directed learners in whom lies a partially realized potential for learning. Our tasks as adult educators are therefore to assess, as accurately as we can, those learning needs which learners perceive themselves to possess and to engage in a warmly humanistic facilitation of learning in which these needs are met. This facilitation is one in which teacher and learner grow together in a satisfying, joyous and bountiful release of latent learning potential. (p. 44)

One can scarcely disagree with such sentiments, yet Brookfield does manage to hint at the lack of theoretical depth in the field by focusing instead upon the "feel good" philosophy which limits the credibility of serious adult education endeavour.

Additionally, there are many ways in which adult education is described, which adds to the problem of definition and sound theoretical base. The research literature is rife with terminology such as life long learning, community development, adult education, andragogy, liberal development, continuing education, and recurrent education referring to very similar ideologies. Andragogy, initially introduced into

North America by Knowles (1968), has become a catch-phrase that is often used and abused within the literature. As Rachal (1983) points out:

> The word andragogy has entered the adult education lexicon, but its meaning has often remained elusive. It has been perceived as a method of adult education (which it is) and occasionally as a synonym for adult education (which it is not). It has become, to many, an attitude, thus carrying with it a certain degree of emotional - indeed, even political - baggage. (cited in Plecas and Sork, 1986, p. 56)

Knowles had initially defined andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn, which captured the imagination of the field. The term, despite Knowles' best attempts, only identified practical application and not a sound base of theory. Tough's research (1971, 1978) on personally initiated learning activities provided another element adding to the theoretical base. However, as it concentrated largely on the activities of a middle-class, university educated sample we must be careful not to generalize this work to all adult learners, without further research. Dewey (1938) and Kidd (1973) discussed principles of adult learning which stress the learners' experiences. Dewey suggested that it makes a difference in learning to consider what makes experience meaningful and worthwhile. Attention needs to be directed to the perceptions of experiences of learners. Davies (1981) built on this somewhat with his notion of the lived experience of the learner. His work suggests that learning activities occur based on the awareness of experiences by the individual.

Various phenomenological studies (Bates, 1979; Colaizzi, 1973; Taylor, 1979) support the idea of the lived experience perspective and have developed models to help in the understanding of the process of adult learning. However, these too have been largely researched with a middle class, college graduate clientele which lessens their generalizability.

The literature on learning theory reflects another aspect of the theory base of adult education. Kidd (1973) wrote that:

> Learning is the active, not the passive, part of the process: the learner opens up himself, he stretches himself, he reaches out, he incorporates new experiences, he relates it to his previous experience, he reorganizes his experience, he expresses or unfolds what is latent with him. (p. 14)

If we combine this relationship of experience to learning with Rogers' (1951, 1969) suggestion that the facilitator of learning exhibit three qualities, (1) genuineness, (2) nonpossessive respect, (3) empathic understanding, then our view of the process of education for adults becomes a bit more focused. This combination shows a way of being for the instructor to encourage learning and, therefore, supported, self-initiated change in the learner. This moves us closer to the inclusion of disadvantaged learners in professional theory.

Principles Of Practice

Besides the empathy, genuineness, and respect practised by the facilitator of learning, adult education has other characteristics which Bates (1979) identified as a series of common themes in the literature. These delineate an informal code of practice commonly accepted by practitioners:

> 1. Setting a climate that is characterized by trust, acceptance, respect and mutual helpfulness.
> 2. Modelling effective interpersonal helping skills.
> 3. Helping individuals to identify their own learning needs and interests.
> 4. Encouraging active participation in all facets of the learning experience including the planning, implementing and evaluating phases.
> 5. Helping individuals to find their own meaning in the experience.
> 6. Providing new information and/or experiences when appropriate.
> 7. Directing learners to appropriate resources.
> 8. Helping learners with assessing their own learning. (p. 22)

Although these are common in the literature, a major problem lies in the fact that a broad research base has not provided sound evidence in order to generalize the use of these practices to all adult learners. In fact, Fox (1991) discovered in a study of the utilization of these principles in prison education that their application in that system was minimal, due in part to the environment and the lack of trained staff. This is insufficient evidence to refute the applicability of the principles but it does indicate that their use may not be generalizable to all situations. Thus, there exists a need for further study.

Nevertheless, I have come to respect, through practical experience, the learner oriented tradition of adult education. In 1926 Lindeman wrote:

> ...in adult education the curriculum is built around the student's need and interests. Every adult person finds himself in specific situations with respect to his work, his recreation, his family life, his community life, et cetera - situations which call for adjustments. Adult education begins at this point. Subject matter is brought into the situation, is put to work when needed. Texts and teachers play a new and secondary role in this type of education, they must give way to the primary importance of the learner. (pp. 8-9)

There are strong indications from practice that adult education, when practised, does provide an environment of acceptance in which learning and change do occur. But whether it is enough to make JRT a change agent for students remains to be seen.

Students In The Shadows

Various writers have commented on the shadow world existence of certain areas of adult education, particularly in its remedial aspect. Knowles (1970) pointed out that education, which should kindle the flame of curiosity is often accused of stifling it. A role of adult education then is seen as rekindling the desire to learn. Kidd (1973) commented on the tendency of systems to further remove needy adults from the direct line of educational service. He suggests that "the latter are showered with advice and quickly classified - they are apathetic, or lazy or not well motivated. It is much easier to apply epithets than it is to understand or help people become effective learners" (p. 13). Special needs groups are often in this category. They are the problem clients who are identified as unmotivated, undereducated and out of step with the rest of society. The prescriptions which so neatly fit the college graduate and more motivated learners lose ground with this clientele, who are notable by their absence from the literature.

So the assumptions appear to be valid only within a particular stratum of participating adults. They have not been clearly shown to relate to adults who come to the learning process with poor educational experiences, low self-concept, and a lack of internal motivation. Furthermore, these students seem to be rather few and far between as participants in adult education, certainly as evidenced in the literature. Brookfield (1986) and Cross (1982) both indicate this gap in the research findings and point out that a positive correlation exists between previous education and currrent adult education participation. This makes past successful education one of the strongest predictors of participation.

In viewing this portion of the literature, one could therefore conclude that adult education, while being available for all, caters mainly to that section of society which is well educated and identifies with educational values. It would seem that adult education does not fulfil its objective of pro-actively responding to social needs, but reflects instead the needs perceived by a middle class view. However, care must be taken that we not pursue an illusion. There is a responsibility to seek ways of arriving at the truth and not merely accepting the assumptions that are handed down. The lack of literature on disadvantaged adults indicates only that there is a lack of research in this area. We must not assume that this client group is not represented in adult education programming. By asking more effective "why" research questions and by broadening our research parameters and methods, we may evolve out of the rather limited knowledge base which is clearly evident at present.

In the area of disadvantaged students, we do not have sufficient theoretical knowledge to employ appropriate practice. Practically, my professional knowledge and experience led me to believe that adult educators generally produce positive results with this group, but is it design or accident? We must move beyond the practice of unintended consequences into a more controlled system of delivery. This can be brought about by more relevant research. The investigation of social contexts in tandem with a psychological theory would allow the field to be considered in a more holistic fashion.

Sociology In Adult Education

Writers in the field of adult education have been aware for some time that a sociology of adult education does not exist in the formal sense. Although it is recognized as an instrument for social change, most writing about adult education has been embedded in the fields of psychology and adult learning (Connelly, 1992; Jarvis, 1985). Antonio Gramsci, writing in the 1930s, recognized the potential in this area when he considered that worker education could help destroy the cultural hegemony of the dominant social classes of Italy (Entwistle, 1979). UNESCO and other organizations have also come to view adult education as an instrument for social development in third world countries since the end of World War II. Although it is not necessarily enlightening to compare the impact of adult education programs in the third world to those in the industrialized world, it is instructive to note the role that the profession has played in the area of effecting social change there. However, a thorough sociological analysis only became part of the traditions of the field in the mid 1980s. This gap has contributed to some of the difficulties in the research which were observed previously.

The negative impact of education on class mobility has also been a topic for debate in sociology and within certain groups in education. Piven and Cloward (1971), Ryan (1971), and Sennett and Cobb(1972) have all contributed to the consensus that education tends to keep the disadvantaged classes disadvantaged, rather than assist them to improve their lot within the system. Piven and Cloward point out that employment training programs which are federally funded are often abused by the employers benefitting from them. The employees hired under such schemes are given "work experience" in dish washing and other menial tasks. Thus programs designed for the disadvantaged often provide minimal training and experience, and contribute to, rather than ameliorate, low self-esteem and a lack of upward mobility Experience with JRT students served only to support this claim. Students have work opportunities in low-level entry positions which do not give them an opportunity to experience the broad spectrum that the work force currently offers. It also serves to communicate to them, indirectly, that these are their jobs, and further opportunities are beyond their grasp.

The View From Liberal Adult Education

> Education is one way in which society ensures the preservation of its class structure. Those who hold power define education - what it is, its context, its methods. They will not tolerate an education system that works against them,

> so will not accept a true "education for liberation". Some reforms are tolerated, though, only insofar as they do not threaten the existing power structure. (Freire, 1975)

The view of liberal adult educators in the field today is that the objectives of adult education cannot be reached because they are in opposition to the views of the capitalist society. Collins (1984) calls them the liberal-socialist or democratic-socialist group and points to their particular interest in social change. This is in contrast to the conservative and the liberal-democratic orientations. Brundage and Mackeracher (1980) describe the conservative paradigm as an orientation with one reality which can be reached by everyone in that society. In contrast, the liberal-democratic view, the dominant paradigm, is concerned with individual self-actualization. The liberal-socialist view then represents a more radical element and maintains that "Growth occurs by the interactions of individuals and groups on their environment by taking it over and controlling it, by changing it for the betterment of humankind" (Collins, 1984, p. 30). This point of view nicely reflects the philosophical orientation of adult education as a profession dedicated to the idea of social equity, and the parallel between the two becomes evident. This recognition also crystallizes the dichotomy between those adult education ideas of social equity and those of our capitalist, western society. The system in which we live is clearly hierarchical, ruled from the top down, with a heavy emphasis on the priorities of wealth, individual achievement, competition, and formality (Wilson & Wyn, 1985).

Marx and Engels in The Communist Manifesto (1848) first pointed to the divisions evident in a capitalist system dominated by the bourgeoisie and supported by the proletariat or working class. Thus, the organization of our society points to social division which implies inequality, rather than the goals of social equity which are prevalent in the philosophical base of adult education.

As a reflection of society, adult education programs for the disadvantaged are frequently patronizing, authoritarian, and pre-packaged with a curriculum seldom based on the participants' interests and needs. Again, the spectre of the dichotomy between theory and practice rears its head. Individual needs assessment is one of the basic tenets of adult education provision, yet programs for the disadvantaged are, in practice, often oriented toward a "client-group" and " the values espoused are those of a stereotypical middle-class" (Collins, 1984, p.31). Individual need is often sacrificed for group efficiency. Clearly, to be more effective, adult education practice needs to work within a broader scope, integrating program directions and student needs with social and political realities. On the international scene, some countries are beginning to look more at such integrated policy.

International Perspectives

Scandinavian countries have long been recognized as leaders of social change. Adult education philosophy in Scandinavia is a reflection of this leadership role. In the 1960s and 1970s adult education in the Nordic countries became an integrated part of those countries' economic and welfare policy. During this period the allocation goal "defined as equalization of certain resources (political, economic, cultural and social)" became part of public policy (Hoghielm & Rubenson, 1980, p.1). This notion of adult education operating as an integrated part of community resources has interesting implications. First, it brings the whole concept of life long learning into the mainstream of society, as opposed to its usual position on the periphery. Additionally, in an integrated relationship, it impacts upon the wider society in ways that have far reaching effects for individuals and the world in which they live.

Smaller but no less significant indications are being recorded in the research literature which illustrates the evolution to a more integrated approach. Darkenwald & Valentine (1985) cite improvements in self-concept, family life, and relationships with others as key growth areas for participants in programs for disadvantaged adults. This indicates a new willingness by researchers to look beyond simple academic achievements and dropout/persister questions. Finally, there is some sign of awareness that the research was previously incomplete and that more affective areas need probing in order to identify the existence of a humanistic perspective in adult education.

Crudden (1987) reports similar results from Australia: "...adult education activities consistently enhance self-confidence, personal esteem and social belonging in otherwise disaffected people" (p.52) and further :

> ...adult education may relate to individual or social interests, take the form of community involvement, self-help, services to identified groups, in classes or by self-direction, but it invariably will be energized by a flow of ideas about its nature and purpose in relation to society. (p.54)

Australian programming for youth has also begun to reflect some of these ideas by providing youth traineeships in non-trade occupations, in order to stimulate the inclusion of school non-completers into productive work and training opportunities (Hermann, 1987). England and Scotland have also provided "quality training, work experience, and further education to all unemployed, minimum age school leavers" (Whiteley, 1987). The Youth Training Scheme (YTS) has been underway since 1981 and has evolved into a sophisticated program which ensures the inclusion of all individuals and has offerings consistent with current employment trends. This tendency is increasing and holds great promise for better delivery of appropriate programs. It allows one to be hopeful of a future where programs will be considered from the perspective of the participant and impact will be measured from an integrated approach rather than a minimal perspective which concentrates only on who participates and who completes.

Implications For Programming For The Disadvantaged Adult

Political and economic barriers to equality do exist in our society. Adult education is a system within society and thus is reflective of its biases and stratifications. Current thinking seems finally to be aware of this and there is a strong indication that the client perspective is being taken into consideration and that the whole person, not just the learner facet is being recognized as the participant. This has implications for evaluation and program planning and can result in more innovative strategies which will tackle the broader issues that affect each individual.

Adult education offers a second chance to individuals who have encountered difficulties the first time around. As a profession, it needs to continue within its humanistic philosophy and strive toward its philosophical goal as a social equalizer. It does need to broaden its focus and recognize its place within the wider spectrum which includes political, cultural, social, and economic relationships. This redefined focus should ensure progress toward a complementarity of theory and practice.

However, the implications for lack of theory based practice are alarming. Evaluation of programs and those who deliver the programs is made difficult by the fact that very little is known about what "good practice" and "good programs" really are. There is a need to seek ways of arriving at professional truths and not merely accepting the assumptions that are handed down. In this manner, we may evolve from unintended consequence to a more controlled system of delivery. At the moment, it is generally agreed that positive programs are happening to a degree, but is it design or accident? Consequences for adult programming must result from a sound knowledge and theory base which explicates our facilitative action (Phillips, 1981).

To reach these goals, some of the research gaps need to be addressed. It is necessary to build upon the current theoretical and practical directions in order to encompass a broader array of adult learners. To accomplish this, this study looks at a program from a naturalistic philosophy, in order to begin to discover what elements of current practice are effective for disadvantaged adults.

CHAPTER 3

A METHODOLOGICAL JOURNEY

"Nothin' Goin' On Here, Sure"

"Look at 'er ...writin' again ...what do ya write about, Ralphie?"

"Well, like I said at the beginning, I'm here to find out more about classes like JRT and because I can't remember it all I write down things I see, and sometimes things you say, just to keep me on track... ya know, nothin' bad or anything like that, just what goes on."

"Nothin' goin' on here, sure." (Field notes, March 19)

And yet so many things were going on there, in that classroom where I was sitting trying to make sense of and understand the meaning of the interactions and the chatter around me. It used to scare me that I'd miss a key interaction or the statement that would enlighten me. I came to the realization that only time and constancy in the setting would enable me to be informed. Instantaneous enlightenment would not occur. Thus, I soldiered on, belonging not to the instructors' view, nor to the students' world, just a lone researcher after elusive truth.

Ethnography as a method of research has much to recommend it as a way of uncovering the true meaning of people's perceptions. It is a personal science set in a context of multiple, socially constructed realities. It lends itself to a holistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1986) which, by its very nature, implies a view beyond a simple context.

Research of this genre demands the interpolation of a variety of experiences lived and interpreted by the participants rather than being limited to the single context in which the interaction is viewed. In order to discover the meaning the situation has for the subjects, it is critical to examine other influences. In this study, key informant interviews and observations outside the classroom provided me with insights into the students' daily lives and their perceptions of their past experiences. Thus it became possible to interpret the manner in which the students made sense of their lives and thus, illuminate the invisibility of their everyday life.

Ethnography generally then has a holistic orientation which enables the researcher to view the interaction of the moment within the enlarged context of the participants' experience and background, and therefore see as the individuals see. In this study the participant observation method provided the appropriate strategy to discover the deeper truths.

Participant Observation

The tradition of participant observation is based in sociology and anthropology, but it came into general usage in education in the 1960s. As a technique within qualitative research it places its emphasis on the human dimension, viewing a situation through the perspectives of the participants: "Through an examination of common sense, the ethnographer seeks to understand how people go about the task of seeing, describing, and understanding order in the world in which they live" (Zimmerman & Wieder, 1970). The important reality is what the actors perceive it to be.

To further elucidate this world then, it was appropriate to view the JRT classroom through participant observation and in depth interviews with students and instructors. The concern was with the process of the research rather than with hypothesized outcomes. It was difficult to foresee what might be induced from the completed research, but the idea was that I might learn more about the learners' reality and the meaning the classroom interaction had, given that reality.

The Evolution Of Participant Observation

David Williams (1986) observed that qualitative research has evolved principally through anthropology and sociology as a way of understanding people and their actions:

> The focus of naturalistic inquiry [which has become synonymous with qualitative research, ethnography, participant observation, case study, and so on] is on describing human processes and using the views of the participants being studied to guide the generation of hypotheses and the development of theories about these processes. (p.1)

Thus it becomes clear that participant action and interaction within the study setting are basic to this methodological process. This is in contrast to surveys and rating scales, for example , which guide quantitative research. The differences evidenced between the two highlights the different ways of "knowing" through research. A quantitative study gives measurable results based on scientific procedures of hypotheses testing. The qualitative method focuses on an inductive observational approach in which the key is the understanding by the researcher of the process as viewed by the participants. Thus the researcher, to all intents and purposes, must become a participant and see and feel with an inner understanding (Rist, 1977, p.44).

As stated previously qualitative research is a broad category which encompasses many approaches. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) identify five common threads of these approaches:

> 1. Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument;
> 2. Qualitative research is descriptive;
> 3. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products;
> 4. Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively;
> 5. "Meaning" is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. (pp. 27-29)

These traits were basic to my general understanding and provided a touchstone for my practical adaptation of the theory.

From Plan To Action

To move from general understanding to specific choice of method and further to a rationale for the choice proved somewhat challenging. The literature surrounding this discussion seems to operate on a personal interpretation of the discipline tradition. Thus, anthropologists, sociologists, and educational researchers use identical terminology but the basis for making judgement calls differ and so meanings differ

(Bogdan & Biklin, 1982; Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). However, the overlap was sufficient to help me define what I planned to do, even though the choice of name was more problematic. Goetz and LeCompte set the process into an educational climate which eventually clarified my dilemma. "Ethnography and its qualitative design variants provide educational and other social researchers with alternatives for describing, interpreting and explaining the social world and the operation of educational phenomena within this world" (p. 31). Goetz and LeCompte further suggest a primary technique to gain access to data which includes spending time with the participants, taking part in their activities and recording interactions in detailed field notes (p. 109).

This then was the process I utilised to interpret the social world of the JRT classroom. This process was supplemented by the use of informant interviews which is a method recommended by Goetz and LeCompte, as well as Bogdan and Biklin. The combination gave me an opportunity to check my impressions against participant views of reality. This cross-checking was a necessity to help keep me grounded in the reality of the current class, instead of making assumptions from previous experience. There was no easy way to find out the truth.

Recognizing Caveats

Earlier it was suggested that this is both a demanding and complex method of inquiry. One of the major factors which contribute to this view is that the main instrument of research is the researcher, with the accumulated field notes as the data record. There are no questionnaires and no surveys unless the researcher chooses to supplement the study with such material. Because of the heavy reliance then upon the individual, certain guidelines need to be kept in mind so that the integrity of the research is not in doubt.

One of the major questions to be asked and debated has to do with rigor. In more conventional research this involves establishing validity, generalizability, objectivity, and replaceability of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1986) outline a series of techniques to ensure that these criteria are met in qualitative research. The techniques suggested include prolonged and persistent field observations, crosschecking (triangulation) of data, peer debriefing, soliciting reaction checks from participants, thick descriptive data, and an external audit (p.77). Although there is no definition offered of how "thick" description should be, it is evident that following the suggested guidelines would enhance the plausibility of the conclusions drawn from an ethnographic study.

Besides concerns regarding the method, I had to constantly be aware of the limitations caused by myself within the study environment. A major cause for continued vigilance is that of researcher bias. It has been asked if personal interpretation can be objective. This, of course, begs the further question whether any methodology can, in fact, be objective and value free. However, due to its openendedness and the aspect of personal interpretation, ethnography needs to deal clearly with this problem. An obvious solution is to rely upon the techniques suggested by Lincoln and Guba. These coupled with the awareness of an ethical researcher can go a long way to modifying the extent of bias. Miller (1952) clearly illustrates a further difficulty he experienced in his work due to his "over rapport" with his informants. The researcher may be so closely related to the observed that the investigation becomes impeded by a lack of objectivity. In the classroom situation this could have escalated if I had been perceived to identify more with one group (class) or the other (instructors). This situation might well have contributed to distrust on the part of the participants and cause the study to end prematurely.

Student acceptance was never a real problem, as I was simply another body in the room. They never seemed to question my right to be there even when they were curious about what I was writing, or thinking. When I gave my initial talk to the group about the research as a university project and asked each of them to grant permission, K3 said, "Don't worry 'bout me, Ralphie, ya got my permission, I don't need to think about it." There was general agreement, and when the time came to sign the assent forms, they all signed with a flourish.

The students actually saw me as an ally of sorts. They joked with me, told me dirty jokes, asked me to go drinking with them, asked me out on dates, had a pet name for me (Ralphie), and generally treated me as one of them. During an interview I asked C1 if my being in the classroom made a difference:

C1: Ah...when you comes in, the class was right dead and you comes in and cheers it all up. When she walks in the door ...Ralph!

B: What I really meant was, you know, do you think I caused problems by being in the classroom... and taking notes and stuff?

C1: No - didn't affect us - you were just over in the corner takin' notes.

B: Did you see me as an instructor, or one of you guys, or in a different way?

C1: I dunno - I guess I see you as one of us, cause, ya know, um... you're... like us - well I guess you're there to learn from us, I s'pose and we're there to learn.

The instructors, with whom I interacted very infrequently during class time, often ignored me, or asked my opinion when they were frustrated. But they also had their opinions about my being in class. When Eve began, about half-way through the course, I chatted with her about my research and what I was doing:

Eve: No problem, my dear. If there's a problem I'll tell ya'.

B: I'm like a bump on a log in class, Eve. You'll hardly know I'm there. I'm not really interested in you anyway, you know.

Eve: If you're too much like it, I'll tell you that too!

Also, my presence in the classroom was accepted by the instructors as they saw me as a peer, not as an outsider. However, their acceptance was tempered by the knowledge that I was there to observe, and that caused qualms that were acknowledged only after they had subsided. Jill said, "It was kind of intimidating thinking that you would be watching everything we were doing, but I got over that and never minded you being there." This issue became most evident during the staff changes that occurred during the course. One of those instructors was initially very intimidated by my presence. She said, "I'm not aware of you at the time, but afterwards I know that you have watched me and I'd like some feedback. I explained that I was not there as an evaluator but that we could talk about it further if she wanted. However, her time in JRT was short lived, so it didn't become an issue. Other instructors ignored me completely and did not even appear to be interested in the project.

Both students and instructors invited me to participate in the activities, and I did whenever asked. In those situations I became a student, thought like a student, and to my surprise found myself talking like them. It was most difficult at those times to maintain a separate identity, but I minimized the problem by journal writing which enabled me to sort out the researcher "I" and the participant "I". This interplay of participation and reflection seemed to balance the roles, and validated to me at least, my involvement in classroom life. However, it was important to my understanding to recognize that I was at once an insider and an outsider, which as

Burgess (1982) suggests, indicates a clash of roles. This recognition enabled me simply to be aware of this ongoing dilemma, thus always considering it in my reflective analysis.

A linked consideration is that of the effect of the researcher on the study. Concerns surface regarding the intrusiveness of another individual upon the dynamics of the social context. The effect, which initially is great, can be down played and mutually eliminated by patience on the part of the researcher. One becomes part of the scenery if the role is played correctly. Once outside the observation situation, good interpersonal skills and supportive behaviour ensure acceptance into the general environment. It was clear that I could not be demanding or critical or judgemental, but cooperative and supportive. Acceptance outside the classroom ensures rapport and acceptance within.

The caveats are an intimidating part of the process but a recognition of them enables the researcher to be more thoughtful, more reflective, more apt to be grounded in the truth.

Overcoming The Caveats

Even though the task was strenuous, intimidating, even frightening at first, I felt a compulsion to work through the doubts in order find out the underlying reality of JRT. Two key elements of qualitative research which made it particularly suitable for this kind of study are its non-judgemental nature and its emphasis on the interpretation of the subject's reality. It is important to the success of such a venture to recognize that the researcher is not evaluating the process being observed, but rather, is attempting to live the experience as it is being lived by the participants. It is not that I wished to make recommendations at the conclusion, although this remained a possibility, but, rather, that I primarily wanted to illuminate the experience from the perspective of those who were observed. The interpretation aspect came as I attempted to understand the motives and beliefs behind people's actions, particularly given the personal knowledge that I had gained. The quest was for insight which would lead to an explanation of actions, rather than verification or proof. These aspects are both strengths and weaknesses of this type of research because they can add immeasurably to the richness of the data gathered, but they depend almost totally on the skill of the researcher. It was a difficult task to remain unbiased, detached, and open-minded during such an intense and complex situation.

The business of qualitative research is one fraught with pitfalls for the uninitiated. The approach initially seems quite simplistic, but is really quite demanding if true interpretation and understanding are to be culled from the compiled data. The literature surrounding the methodology is equally challenging. I had to sift carefully through terminology, context, and discipline tradition in order to grasp the salient features which applied to the specific study under investigation.

With these inherent dangers noted, the opportunities of discovering truths through the careful design and implementation of a qualitative study become clearer.

This method enables the researcher to collect data rich in participant interpretation and meaning. It allows the human element to be the emergent feature of the research and, as such, represents a "slice of life" perspective absent from a more quantitative approach.

Ethnographic research in the hands of a thoughtful and perceptive user has the capability of yielding results that can assist in discovering participant reality in a given situation and lead to a finer understanding of that situation. Its strengths lie in both its non-manipulative intent and its reflective nature. The researcher views a setting and faithfully represents that setting in an academic record. There is no attempt to change or rearrange the situation. The interest is in what exists as it exists. Extended observation is the opportunity to reflect upon what exists. Reflection leads to explication of the observation, and relationships and patterns emerge in a natural fashion, uninhibited by interference. Each piece of the process is reliant upon the skill of the observer, a role which has an unrelenting quality. Observing, recording, writing, reflecting, musing over the data, asking questions which reflect the observations, and analyzing the results are all parts of an integrated entity, each one linked to the others. It provides a true challenge for the novice researcher.

The Participant-Observer: A Personal Account

The role of participant observer is indeed a difficult one for the researcher. Values, personal judgment, biases and self all had to be acknowledged and reckoned with in order to be fully open to the situation that took place in the classroom. My early journal entries record my initial feelings: "I entered the classroom early, after dropping off my purse at the staff-room. (How will I negotiate that as time goes by? I'm sure there's an easy solution.) I have nothing, no props to hang onto except the option to sit and look around."

Every action had to be considered and taken into account; where I sat, what I did with my hands, how I dressed, and how I was seen to relate to the staff. It was an awkward task, but one which I negotiated over time, as much within myself, as within the classroom. To record faithfully the process that took place forced me to take on the most difficult task of becoming, for the time being, and as the situation required - instructor, student, and reflective observer. This also involved relating the experience to the sociological context in which these individuals exist. It was not enough to record, I had to also be aware of the background, as well as the present context of the event. Questions had to continually be asked - Why is this occurring? Why is the student/instructor reacting thus and so? Why is this interaction occurring at this point?

For me, the role of participant observer in JRT carried with it the difficulty of observing a situation in which I had once been a participant in the role of instructor.

The initial entry into the classroom was accompanied by the recognition of that difficulty. Maintaining an objective viewpoint is considered critical to the successful outcome of the study. This early recognition proved to be an asset rather than a liability because it focused the problems immediately and so did not hamper the research effort as had been initially feared. In fact, the knowledge base previously acquired provided a practical base for the theoretical principles which provide a framework for the study.

Interesting in retrospect were the feelings engendered by the role - I often felt like a spy or a voyeur, definitely an undercover agent of some sort. I referred to myself as a VCR, a mechanism to capture the action as it occurred. In retrospect, I feel that the interpretative function could only have been done by a human being. No machine could have analyzed the personal dimension.

Grounded Theory

To truly analyze that personal dimension and come to an understanding within it proved to be an enormous and daunting task. The data initially seemed to have no coherence or pattern, so I found myself mulling over my early notes with little idea of what to make of them. The concept of grounded theory helped clarify my initial confusion and provided a way of deciphering my findings.

Glaser (1978) suggested that a goal of grounded theory is to create an understanding of those basic social patterns which evolve over time to become part of the accepted daily routine. This creation of the understanding of the familiar is constructed through careful and ongoing analysis of research data during the study. Gehrke and Parker (1982), and Rennie and Brewer (1987) both identify grounded theory as an "inductive system for generating theory", and indeed the process of theory generation through detailed, ongoing analysis is the accepted, working definition of this qualitative strategy. Theory which emerges from the data is theory in process, in a sense, emergent truths rather than final proofs. Theory is therefore seen as an ever changing dynamic, and not as a prescription.

This emergent theory idea seemed ideally suited to my needs as I began to identify them during the early stages of the field work. The analysis began during the field research and informed the direction of the interviews and subsequent data collection during the study (Bogdan and Biklin, 1982). My analysis in the early stages took the form of journal writing, both as a reference point, and a record to compare my felt perceptions with my observer data. My personal journal and the field notes formed the basis of questions, checkpoints for future reference, and reminders of key reactions. This initial and intuitive reaction to the process became an essential tool.

It became clear from the early stages of the research that the project could add to adult education theory because of the lack of formal study on marginalized adults. As it is a theory-generative approach, grounded theory was seen to be the appropriate method to construct "mid-range" theory in the establishment of a broader understanding of the needs of adults. Darkenwald (1980) further suggested that doing grounded theory research would "improve professional practice through gaining a better understanding of it" (p. 69).

Glaser (1978) recognized the linkage between the practitioner's intuitive knowledge and the researcher's more theoretical understanding. He felt that research could help organize the known for the practitioner. Merriam and Simpson (1984) build on this idea and point out that the researcher can "offer ideas, categories and a theory that integrates the diverse elements of practice ... and give the practitioner a conceptual tool with which to guide practice" (p. 100). This consideration of researcher and practitioner collaboration was one which I found particularly helpful, as I sometimes saw myself in both theoretical and practical camps. The idea that the practitioner "I" had an important role in supporting the researcher "I", provided me with a clear rationale for using my past experience within my present work. Thus I was able to compare the research study with my practitioner knowledge, as well as with the ongoing data comparison within the research itself.

The process of grounded theory rests on a constant comparison of the data (Parker and Gehrke, 1986, p. 229). Glaser and Strauss (1967) identify four phases which enable this to occur:

> (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category;
> (2) integrating categories and their properties;
> (3) delimiting the theory; and
> (4) writing the theory. (p. 105)

This process dramatically differs from the notion of theory generation which arrives "by logical deductions from a priori assumptions" (p. 3). Traditional methods of theory generation rely upon hypothesis formulation and the testing of hypotheses to generate theoretical notions. It relies upon deduction from external data sources for its answers, whereas grounded theory relies upon induction from the utilization of truths garnered from the field accounts to establish theory. Theory derived in this way is grounded in the personal, rather than the external.

The process of grounded theory enables the researcher to analyze data within a context which is coherent with the methodologies used in a qualitative format. Kozma (1985) points out that initially data collecting is the primary activity but that collecting leads to coding, categorizing and redefinition of research direction. The ongoing nature of the analytic process informs the research practice and enables the researcher "to pursue the development of theory as new concepts and propositions emerge" (p. 305). The integration of data collecting, coding, analysis and theory building continue until a saturation point is reached, "that is, until no additional data, coding or sorting contribute to the extension or qualification of the theory" (Kozma, p. 305).

Hammersley (1984) has suggested that one of the more confounding problems of ethnographic research is that of finding an overall theme, model or adjunct which organizes the data in a coherent and forceful way. The procedure of grounded theory analysis helps overcome this barrier by enabling the researcher to derive concepts from the accumulated data. In this study, it became clearer as it continued that although this class was idiosyncratic in detail, it was not in its reflection of the broader category of disadvantaged learners as I knew them. Thus, general concepts and themes could be wrestled from the data which illuminated this class, but which also had implications for a broader range. I used past experiences and those of colleagues to verify the judgments, and to act as checks against my conclusions.

Summary

The emphasis in research such as this is on the human dimension and the interpretation of everyday life as viewed from the participant's perspective. The basic unit viewed was each individual's experience of the classroom, set in the context of past and present experiences and future expectations.

My role as researcher was that of an observer who had the option to participate in ways that seemed most appropriate without biasing the primary observational role. Information was gathered through ongoing classroom visitations and personal interviews with the instructors and students who participated in the course. The observations and interviews revealed a culture which was foreign to me. The personal tragedies which emerge from the data, the attitudes towards work, the value structure which was epitomized by the language and the lifestyles themselves, provided me with a glimpse of a world that I was privileged not to have experienced. The implications of negative personal events then are viewed through these themes.

Grounded theory principles guided the data collection and the ongoing analysis, and resulted in the explication of the themes of adult education practice within JRT; studentspeak - the use of language in the classroom; the values orientation of the group; attitudes towards work; and their vision of the future are expanded in the following chapters, It also enabled me to build upon the existent theory base in adult education in a manner which encourages the inclusion of disadvantaged adults into the general principles.

CHAPTER 4

JRT: A WORLD OF CONTRASTS

"Yeah, Shuddup": JRT In Action

Len comes in today and announces that the class will be about the metric system.

W: I hates metric, it's boring.

D1: I don't know nothing about it.

T gives a big sigh, and Len promises that in two hours everyone, including me, will understand metric. He then establishes the ground rules for the session: only one person to speak at a time. W looks around, grins and says, "Yeah, shuddup, he means."

I see that some of the others share my feelings of boredom. C takes notes for the test they will have; K1 is, as usual, involved; T1 is eternally bored; T participates as a joker, rather than as a learner; K2 sits slapping his knees together, mouth open, eyes wandering.

There's a lot going on today, all kinds of talk and yelling and involvement aimed at distracting Len from the purpose at hand. D1 gets quite loud in answering a question. They argue about the future of the metric system, and the class insists on discussing fahrenheit and inches, much to Len's frustration. The lesson goes nowhere, there is no attitude for acceptance here. (Field notes, February 25)

JRT: Setting The Scene

An annual report of JRT focused on the context of the class and the course problems:

> JRT is a very special place to work and our clients are very special. They come to us with an uneasy sense of themselves, usually with no history of success, and often with a history of legal, social, psychological, medical or educational problems....We encounter in every class a complete range of personal difficulties, a wide age-range, an educational range from non-literate to high school level, wide variances in attitude and value systems, and deficiencies in work experience, personal motivation and self-expectations.The course had to address all these issues and do so on an individual basis. It is indeed a challenge but not an insurmountable one. (JRT Annual Report, 1985-86, p.1)

This course was demanding of instructor and student. The difficulties that arose and the students we saw were often accurate comments on life styles very few of us could comprehend. Discouragement was common among the students, and frustration was part of the instructor's burden. A recommendation from the report read:

> Many of our students leave JRT with no place to go. They are not academically equipped to enter Basic Training in Skill Development (BTSD), nor are they particularly employable under the present employment situation. Often, they go back to welfare, or criminal activities or other undesirable options. We recommend that a working committee be struck to investigate this and to look at options such as daytime literacy and outreach capabilities for adults who may be in similar situations. We are seeing too many of our students fall through gaps in educational and social services." (p.6)

(This report was filed in 1986 when we initially began seeing a decrease in opportunity for students in the workplace.)

JRT was always an attempt to find a balance between what was desirable and what was possible. We continually had to balance our ideas of student needs with their ideas of reality, their values, their ideas of self, and their expectations.

The question which formed the basis for the study arose, then, from this set of circumstances. It seemed possible that current client attitude and expectations might not be congruent with the expectations and directions that caused JRT to come into being.

JRT: The Context

Job Readiness Training was a program funded by Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) and administered by the Department of Education through its College system. Its major aim was to help students overcome serious obstacles in order to obtain secure work situations. These obstacles varied with each individual but pertained generally to low academic skills, legal and psychological problems, and substance dependencies. These difficulties contributed to poor self-esteem and negative attitudes toward authority, education, and society in general.

Since its implementation in 1976, the program had undergone a number of changes in direction and curriculum emphasis. One of the major emphases initially was in the academic area, and indeed some programs in the province continued a primarily academic focus. Generally, though, course materials focused on problem solving skills, awareness of one's interests, abilities, limitations, aptitudes, etc., positive interpersonal skills, skills of job search, basic academic skills, skills of functioning effectively on the job, and practice in working on a job. The key function of the course was to prepare students for the work force (Ganz,1975). This broad goal engendered the use of a variety of instructional approaches, such as life skills coaching, individualized academic study, guest speakers, group counselling techniques, and on-the-job experiences. These activities were meant to increase the individual's self-confidence, upgrade academic standards, and increase their employability.

These aims were what made this program different from others offered by Canada Employment. For example, Adult Basic Education (ABE) offers an upgrading opportunity for people who wish to enter training institutes and Career Exploration for Women (CEW) aims to ensure that mature women re-enter the labour force with a readjusted and positive self-image. The multi-dimensional nature of JRT in both its offerings and its client base made it a challenging experience for both student and instructor.

JRT was directed and planned by two instructors and a job stations officer. In practice, however, client concerns, needs, and suggestions were considered in program implementation. Course work included individualized, self-paced modules in literacy, numeracy, group work in values, social skills and self-awareness, and work preparation activities such as resume writing, interview skills, and career awareness. Additionally, each student was involved in three two-week job placements which gave them the opportunity to actually experience some of the responsibilities of the world of work. These placements were chosen by the client in conjunction with the instructors.

Students came to JRT via a number of service agencies - Canada Employment, Parole Board, the Penitentiary, local half-way houses for offenders and youth at risk, Social Services, or psychiatric day-care settings. Pre-course interviews were generally carried out by the instructors to ensure the suitability of the client to the program and vice versa. If this proved to be an impossibility due to lack of time (as it did in the program under investigation), suitability was judged during the first week. Initial group exercises helped to bring to the surface client needs and expectations. These exercises and assessments helped both instructors and learners come to a decision about continuation. Initial assessments of client perceived needs and expectations revealed a vagueness and lack of information that was somewhat disconcerting. Some students had an idea that this course could help them with future job decisions or directions, while others were unsure of their reason for attending, or were at least unwilling to share this information. For all of them, the allowance which they were paid for attending was undoubtedly a factor in their decision to participate.

In a general sense, all JRT courses were the same. The students exhibited characteristics that the instructors would say were "typically JRT" and the curriculum varied very little from course to course. However, each course also had its own history, with its own successes and failures.

JRT: February 2 - June 19

This JRT began with sixteen students and ended with nine. Two of the dropouts secured employment, three were terminated due to poor attitudes, one quit (in the last week) because he felt he had "learned enough", and one was arrested early on in the course. Because we often learn more from the dropouts than from the completers, behind these words lies a clue to the extent of the need for program solutions which adequately deal with the issues for the students:

YD, a young, single mother was terminated early in the course because of irregular attendance. Her attitude when she was in class exuded boredom and non-participation. My written observations of her included comments like "seems angry"; "her interactions are limited. Why?"; "very defensive and abrasive"; and finally from my journal: "Low participation, but a lot of conversation with the person next to her. Not much group participation, her comments (when she does participate) are caustic and sneering." My first recollection of YD and my first written comments concern her attitude towards motherhood. In a casual conversation with one of the male students at break time, she said: "I got a baby, a mont' old. Some diff'rent. Don't call me Mommy, makes me feel too old." During her time in the course, she continually experienced baby-sitting problems, had difficulties with on the job placement, and was eventually let go.

However, she also had an illiteracy problem, and could not deal with the course written material, and according to the students, had drug and alcohol problems. Her life was clearly one of great challenge, and JRT was the program chosen to deal with that. Clearly, this was an inappropriate placement, but the tragedy is that too often, JRT represents the last chance for students like YD.

C2 was a young woman who showed leadership potential in class and when she was present, participated in all aspects of the course. A year earlier her baby had died and she had experienced a series of illnesses since that time which contributed to her absenteeism and eventually her termination from the course. Again, her problems could not be dealt with in the course, as it was organized, but like YD she needed the options the course offered.

T1 was also discontinued because of chronic absenteeism which culminated in non-attendance at his last job station. He exhibited a complete lack of maturity and commitment in the course, and he clearly had educational and alcohol problems. Again, the enormity of the individual situation caused a dual problem. The instructors had little option but to discontinue him, as he did not participate in a manner which was tolerable. On the other hand, what were his options? Much more work and patience were required to provide T1 with a sound basis for development. JRT was simply not equipped to provide him with the multiplicity of skills required to make him job ready in 20 weeks. And yet, he will continue to need and will be given financial assistance, most likely with no pay off for him or society at large.

P and K1 both found jobs and left before the course ended. On the one hand and for the EIC objectives, this was a mark of success. The class and instructors also were encouraged by these hopeful signs. However, P's job lasted a week because he was fired, and K1's job centred around a summer grant, which had no potential for long term employment.

These discontinuations and work opportunities made me think more clearly about the needs for integrated services for adults with such multiple disadvantage. A course to provide job readiness skills is only one of a series of needs which are evident, and counselling, support services, such as day care, and literacy programs, all need to be available as part of the package. That would entail the coordination of many agencies, but might well provide a network strong enough to ensure that students like these get the support needed to become more independent.

All in all, it felt to me like a regular JRT course, even though discussions with the instructors would elicit comments such as "They're not regular JRTs." When we looked at the students individually, they all fitted the JRT criteria; but as a group they did not meld well together. This seemed to be due to the age diversity and maturity levels of some students. There was a diversity of need in the group and the immaturity of some prevented the others from participating fully. The end of course report stated:

> The age difference, specifically the students who were sixteen and seventeen, were not a disruptive force in and of themselves, but, coupled with the immaturity of these trainees, it proved to be an ongoing problem. The students simply had not developed the maturity or level of concentration to effectively gain much from JRT. Indeed, they served to detract from the course for the older students. (p.1)

Observing the course gave me a somewhat different perspective, and interviewing the students added another dimension again. My feelings from the research viewpoint were that the younger students did indeed lack the maturity to progress through a program which tried to emphasize self-assessment and personal responsibility. They had very little sense of self-direction or internal locus of control. They were very much influenced by the behaviours of others. If T1 were in control of the moment, and carried on in his sexually explicit fashion, there was shared laughter and a lack of critical judgment on the part of the less mature students, and a rolling of the eyes and sighs from the others. (There were times that T1 actually captured the whole class, me included, in his ongoing musings of the world as he saw it. On the whole, however, his attitude was more tolerated than condoned.)

This inability to separate the appropriate from the irrelevant caused havoc in class. It meant that there was a constant battle for attention between course agenda and instructional tasks. In true adult education style, the course agenda would take precedence over instructor driven material, but in these instances, the students' orientation reflected the antithesis of productive programming, and needed to be redirected. Building upon their experiences did not provide the basis for growth and development in the course, so that tenet of adult education practice did not hold true for this group. Thus, in this class, the conventional wisdom of adult education clearly lacked the scope to offer adequate provision for the situation.

From the student perspective, the disruptions were tolerated, more willingly by some than others, as has been pointed out. In the interviews, P and K1 shared their frustrations and C1 shared hers in class:

> P: The way they are in class now - they carry on and that, like Grade 6 and 7. I got no time for that anymore. I don't say nothin'.
>
> K1: I think some students should not be there...it's difficult to get into discussion, to express yourself when there's disrespect for students in the class, students that tend to.. ah.. students that fool around a lot.
>
> C1: Stop it and leave me alone! I came here to learn and that's what I'm goin' to do.

The problems exhibited by these students were not unique to this group. In my years as an instructor I saw them many times and in many dimensions. The objectives and timelines of the program, as well as the instructors' training and experience, do not provide an adequate framework to deal with the issues which arise and the problems which the students face.

Reality Challenges Theory

A large part of my professional life has been spent as an instructor of adults diagnosed by society and Canada Employment guidelines as "disadvantaged". The label is applied because the students possess low academic skills, or a criminal record, or no social graces, or exhibit signs of psychological instability, or they have difficulty with alcohol and drug abuse. In other words, they are, at first glance, unemployable and in need of assistance to become productive citizens. Thus they attend adult education courses specifically designed to introduce them to the world of work and to a different structure of values and priorities.

As an instructor, all that I had known was that Job Readiness Training worked, to some degree, for these students. The success rate, as measured by subsequent employment or training involvement was a 64% average over a period from 1977-1987 (course end reports). This was only a short term follow-up of course completers, but even so, it demonstrated a modicum of success not displayed by these students prior to their course involvement. Success, as measured by improved self-esteem and responsible decision making would increase that average as the majority of students left feeling much better about themselves. What I could not know objectively as an instructor was why JRT was successful. In a course inhabited by so-called unemployables, the achievement and change was remarkable for the short amount of time they were given. The key question was why? What caused these students to become more motivated and desirous of self improvement? In a course lasting 20 weeks, what caused some of them to be, by outward appearance, more job ready, willing and able? And, most important, was the outward and visible sign of change indicative of a more important, inward, and reflective growth?

My relationship with JRT students initially made me examine the rather knotty problem of relevance of programming in adult education. I recognized early on that they taught me more about life and its injustice and its hardships than I could ever begin to teach them about getting a job. What I had to teach them was a perfectly legitimate way for me to behave because of my social status, my profession, my way of being; but it was not a value orientation that my students would willingly embrace. Their world view and mine hardly ever crossed paths, and here was I, with my knowledge, education, and experience, arrogantly supposing they could and indeed, wanted to be part of the world that I took for granted. It could not be so, and I gratefully acknowledge the graceful manner in which they showed me that fact, and over the years pointed me in a direction of acceptance. The chasm between " us and them" could not be bridged by a simple course. But there were other connections which played a role and contributed to the modicum of success which occurred.

Adult educators tend to enter the field by way of the back door (Fingaret, 1983) rather than as a straightforward career goal. Variety is the hallmark of the profession -- ex-social workers, ex-teachers, ex-priests, ex-health personnel, all who have shared common service-oriented occupations but who see adult education as offering the potential for career satisfaction. It is an area within the education system which lacks a rigid structure; it theoretically encourages individual creativity and it attempts to function within (or into) a certain social conscience. These aspects challenge those who do not quite "fit" the occupations for which they have formally trained.

In my own case I moved from a variety of library positions to an administrative position within adult education. In time I moved to instructional duties with women who wanted to re-enter the work force. As I gained experience, I became more versatile and ran groups for sole-support mothers, youth, displaced workers and JRT. This final course was particularly notable for its broad client base and its problems. Clients who did not quite fit criteria for other EIC offerings were directed into the JRT melting pot. Therefore, in many ways JRT clients and adult education instructors shared similarities in that neither fit well into prescribed patterns. This, I believe, caused an understanding to occur within the classroom which would have otherwise been lacking. It provided a corollary to the principles of adult education practice which made the inclusion of JRT students more of a possibility.

Working From The Theoretical To The Practical

One of the key constructs of adult education concerns the relationship within the classroom. It is generally assumed (Brundage & Mackeracher, 1980; Griffin, 1983; Knowles,1970; Tough, 1978) that adults prefer and work more effectively in an atmosphere which is mutually respectful, learner-centred and in which self-directed learning is a key element. Within the JRT classroom, however, other agendas seemed to be predominant. Nevertheless, the official context of the course was housed within this andragogical framework. The informality, the student participation in the program evolution and the non-traditional subject matter all seemed to reinforce the idea that the students were adults and ultimately responsible for their own learning.

The combination of student experiences in the school system which was usually both recent and negative and the expectations aroused by the program assumptions seemed to contribute to the emergence of a complex classroom dynamic. It was tinged with a mixture of both adult and more juvenile patterns and consequently the resultant instruction ranged the entire continuum from pedagogical to andragogical practice. The technique applied in a situation depended on the instructor, the topic and the reaction and attitude of the students at the time. Student reaction in turn depended upon instructor attitude and mood, seeming relevance and value of the topic, personal interest, historical consequence and time of day. Boredom was often noted regardless of the topic when break time was near. "Time for a 'smoke and a coke'," were clearly indicated by restlessness, folded arms, lethargy, as well as verbal comments. Very few of the students really got "into" the course. Their attendance hinged upon a variety of factors - weather, hangovers, baby-sitting problems, questionable health, value of the day's work for them.

There were six instructors involved in this course which is three more than usual. This was due to the illness of the job station officer and a rejuggling of staff from other programs. This factor caused little outward difficulty but was questionable in terms of group trust building. The "special needs" aspect of the course seemed not to be highly regarded by administrative practice.

"Some different from other schools," said J to D after the first session had ended. The differences seen by the students on that first day began as they walked into the classroom. It was arranged so that the students sat in a U-shape around a large centrally located table. The physical layout is meant to help make learners feel part of a group and stimulate interaction and trust (Rogers, 1984). The layout certainly looked different from rows of desks and chairs and contributed to making the re-entry to a classroom environment easier. Combined with this were the informal attitudes of the instructors and stated practical intent of the course.

Thus students of JRT found a more conducive environment in this program, but did it make a difference? And how did they end up there? Were they simply told to attend, and did so? Did they have choices? Was the key reason for coming a financial one, or was it to access employment? Furthermore, why did they stay? The reasons turned out to be as varied as the clients themselves.

Why JRT?

"No work around, boy."

"I got some skills, But I wants more work experience."

"Wants some experience."

"Wants the money."

"To get a job."

The reasons they initially gave reflected their immediate perspective, but it did not necessarily get at the true picture. On Day 1 of JRT the class was involved in a dyads exercise, ostensibly to get to know one another. The participants divided into pairs and exchanged names and addresses and various bits of personal information. One of the questions suggested by the instructors for the exercise was, "Why did you decide to come to JRT?" Their reaction to this question was an interesting one. There was some shuffling of feet and exchanged glances, particularly among those male members of the class who had spent break time sharing cigarettes and exchanging information about their choices of beer and drinking ability. This seemed to me to be part of a male ritual that was expected, accepted and necessary (maybe that they did not have anything else to talk about) as an initiation for acceptance. It also formed the basis for the core group which evolved over the course duration. So the question, "Why did you choose to come to JRT?", took on new significance, given the undercurrent which I noticed. The eye contact between the students was shy and slightly amused, particularly between R and T. These two were, at this point, living in a group home for young offenders. Their exchange seemed tinged with some embarrassment, but the bravado and machismo were also present in the swagger and the hidden snicker.

The students interviewed each other in pairs and then introduced their new acquaintance. This process in itself seemed intimidating to some with many comments of, "I'm not gettin' up," "You can count me out," "No way." Eventually all participated in some form with much evident discomfort, recognizable by the shuffling of feet and the agonized looks. The reasons given for attending JRT at this point seemed quite superficial, and this seemed to be due to the new situation and the lack of group trust. It was also a new idea for them to consider a reason for making the choice. For T and R, choice was not in their hands. They either came to JRT or sat in their room all day. The other reasons: "No work around", "Got some skill, but wants more work experience", "Advice from Manpower and a friend", "Wants the money", "To get a job", seemed to come, not from well considered motives, but from what were thought to be acceptable answers. It was interesting to note that pairs often shared the same reason for coming. The "wanted the money" answer came from a couple of the more brash students who made the statement, gave a grin and looked around for acknowledgement.

At this point, on Day 1, I was aware of the discomfort, the lack of well-considered decision making by the students and the general absence of self-knowledge in the group. Three of the older students - K1, K3 and D - seemed to be more self-aware and cognizant of their decision; but it was still a decision made without much prior knowledge of the objectives and content of JRT. If answers were to be found for attending a course of this type, it was obvious that the initial reactions would tell little except that the non-verbal behaviour observed seemed to contradict or cause one to question the verbal statements.

Why Stay?

On the surface, JRT was quite an interesting place to be. There was always something amusing happening, always something out of the ordinary. Life was never dull for students or instructors. As for the researcher, well I could hardly wait to walk in the classroom door, to see what the day would bring. And yet, I had to wonder what it was that kept the students coming to a situation which offered little real hope for changed circumstance, and which did require them to put in some effort. And certainly not all of them stayed. The course lost almost 50% of its initial participants before it ended. Those who did stay had many reasons for doing so.

In my first interview with W, she began to chat about JRT and how she found it. She felt that "it gives us a good opportunity to do somet'ing for ourselves, now I'm not afraid to look for somet'ing." There definitely was that aspect to the course, that encouragement of individuals to try to accomplish something, to set goals, to move forward in their lives. For many of them, this support was not something they had often experienced. "The teachers are nice", "they're here to help ya'", "some diff'rent here", were the comments that the students gave at one point or another. They would argue with Jill, tell her she had big hips, and was boring, but they felt she was on their side. That seemed to be of the utmost importance to them. Money, of course, was an important factor for the entire class. They received an EIC training allowance for attending, and this probably was the deciding factor for getting them into the course in the first place. This allowance ranged anywhere from $53 to $307 per week, depending upon their individual circumstances. To what extent it acted as a decision making factor for staying is not well researched. Davis (1982), in a discussion about this, stated that education and training programs have been successful in recruiting disadvantaged young adults because they also provide other services (food, money, and shelter). He further contended that subsequent participation was often minimal and that there was strong evidence to suggest that students were unable to apply information to improvement of their life situations. Thus he suggests that financial aid plays a large role in the continuing participation rate of students and that the programs themselves do not have carry over benefits. This is an interesting statement because my observation caused me to both agree and disagree with his premise. On the one hand, for many of them the money was critical. Without it, they would be forced to go on welfare and be at the mercy of another system. On the other hand, social assistance was available and they didn't have to go to school to receive it. There was a deeper truth.

K1 was being hounded by creditors during his time in JRT and it was no secret that the money was critical to him, for his peace of mind, as well as his financial stability. In my follow-up interview with him, I asked whether the money made the difference.

> "Money was no match to its value, it can't be given the weight of the rest. I needed the money, but it wasn't what kept me there. I sort of relaxed. It was good looking back on it. I was very critical but I was able to refine my perspective. Before, I had no perspective, just a general feeling of hopelessness...some people shouldn't've been there, but they had a valid reason - but their behaviour...they had a disregard for the course and didn't know why they were there. Instructors were good, had a few disagreements with Jill, but generally we got along."

The course provided a place for K1 to have a breather, do some more thinking, and get himself ready to go again. It just didn't provide the support he needed to get beyond his entry state.

There are no simple answers to the allowance issue. It was as important to the students as my salary is to me. Yet, as money is not the only thing that keeps me at work, money was not the only thing that kept the students in the course. P felt, for example, that JRT would get him better acquainted with work. His work history was patchy and he felt that if he were to make something of his life this offered him the best opportunity. He also appreciated the fact that he was treated like an adult: "You got somet'ing to say, they listens. They got confidence in you."

C1 had to get up every morning at 4:30 to get the bus to come to class. His reasons for continuing to come to class were many: "I dunno really. Money got a bit to do with it. Now, more or less when I'm home, there's nuthin' to do, just walkin' around the roads. Here, well, gettin' some references, some experience." When I talked to him at the end of the course he felt JRT had had an impact on his way of thinking about the future. "Before I never used to t'ink about it, I used to just go with the flow, right?"

W was offered a job in the final month of class, but she decided not to take it, choosing to stay in JRT. When I asked her why she would make such a decision she said, "Well, I wanted to finish the course and get my certificate in it and t'en well like, the last few weeks we were doin' more stuff that was wit' jobs, like interviews and goin' out volunteers day and workin', phonin' on the phone, how to use the phone, and then our resumes and tha's what I wanted most, right?"

For each of them there was a reason to stay and something to be gained from staying. I also had the suspicion that staying was safe for them, that going out to look for work was going to be really tough. They realized that their education and past histories were going to get in the way of successful job hunting.

Even though there is evidence to suport Davis'(1982) contention that individuals enrol in programs such as JRT to receive the money, the students' own accounts revealed reasons beyond the allowance for staying. They felt accepted there, they felt they learned skills that had some value, and they looked at their lives differently. While it may not be enough to make major change, it does indicate a rationale for providing in some form the kind of supportive and practical programming that JRT offered.

Summary: Building On The Strengths

There were often times when I felt as an instructor that my work was in vain, that all the good intentions and adult education philosophy in the world were not going to make a difference in JRT, because the problems were too great, the time was too short, or I was too inept. As a researcher, I felt the same frustration, but it was tempered by the knowledge that I only had to observe. I was not the one with the responsibility this time. I was simply the one with the luxury of time for reflection and analysis.

My observations of the course in action, coupled with my knowledge of adult education principles, gave me one view of the JRT world. Adult education itself cannot possibly provide the structure to meet the needs of such a group. The respectful relationships, the concern of good instructors, the relaxed, non-judgmental atmosphere were all in evidence in this course. However, the students themselves did not have the background and experience to begin to develop learning goals, nor was their experience likely to be of the sort which would encourage them to think positively about an academic situation. Andragogy, in its purest form was not sufficient for JRT. Both students and instructors shared a tenuous, unspoken connection of not fitting into their conventional norm and I suspect this aspect provided an element of acceptance in the classroom which added to its positive effect. There was an understanding on the part of the instructors that had to have been intuitive and personal, not learned. In other ways the gaps between student and instructor were immense. I felt that the instructors represented a world to the students that was desirable but unattainable in their eyes, and so to a certain extent they ruled it out. They had no identifiable role model which could enable them to see that an instructor position was one to which they could aspire. Consequently, they saw no obvious path to the kind of success that Jill and Len represented. So we see a contrast between the climate created by the instructors - supportive and encouraging change; and the model of work they represented - seemingly unattainable and therefore outside of the students' aspirations. And yet, it is too much to say that adult education principles are not worthy goals to work towards. The students in this class felt personally acknowledged and had positive experiences. I can only suggest that by building on the obvious but limited strengths of adult education practice, the instructors provided a foundation for the students which was an improvement upon their (the students) previous educational encounters. But it is not enough to provide a setting of acceptance. The culture and values the students bring into the classroom also needs to be acknowledged and understood.

CHAPTER 5

STUDENTSPEAK

"Ralphie, He Wants A Date Offa You"

The day began with a flurry of excitement. Andrew, a part time instructor with whom I had worked, came into class to introduce job stations. Andrew, with earrings, a military beret perched rakishly on long permed hair, red shoes and skinny leather tie, created quite a stir.

T1: Fifi!

YD: Man, he's wicked!

The classroom buzzed. Later he and I chatted, catching up on old times, and then he left.

T1: Hey Ralphie, he wants a date offa you.

B: Naw, besides I'm married. That kinda gets in the way of dates.

There is general scoffing at this idea.

D: What t'e eyes don't see, t'e heart don't feel!

T: The hands do.

B: I'm going to be corrupted before I leave here. (Field notes, February 24)

My journey back to the classroom as a researcher made me an observer and listener within a world which seemed to magically unfold before me. Initially, I heard words and observed actions and responses, but as time went on I became more attuned to the action and language as they related to the real, but to me, previously invisible world of the student. Studentspeak became a core element which exposed a society I had previously perceived only as an undercurrent, but which illuminated much of what I had missed or misunderstood in my earlier role. Consequently, I began to see within the words themselves (and the body language which provided a context and in some cases an explanation for the words), a sense of a culture which was foreign to me, but which was home to them. The language of the classroom became larger than its parts in that it provided a verbal context for the incongruities, it illuminated the stigmatized sub-culture, and it served as a kind of background music for the issues under study.

As Blauner (1987) points out, our view of the world is symbolized by the words we use and this paradoxically connects us to society while at the same time enables us to show our individuality (p.49). And so it proved with the JRT students. Their communication network provided an understandable connection to the world around them, but set it within a unique framework.

JRT Conversation: Banter At Its Best

> The study of linguistic phenomena in school settings should seek to answer educational questions. We are interested in linguistic forms only insofar as through them we can gain insight into the social events of the classroom and thereby into the understandings which students achieve. Our interest is in the social contexts of cognition: speech unites the cognitive and the social. (National Institute of Education, 1974, p. 1, cited in Cazden, 1986, p. 432)

The normal level of discourse in the classroom under study could best be described as banter, which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as: "to make fun of (a person), to hold up to ridicule, 'roast', to jest at, rally, 'chaff'. Now usually good-natured raillery" (p. 938).

The communication system in this setting, a good-natured raillery, highlighted elements of social values, personal esteem, and power structures. Words, tone, double-entendre, the unspoken, that which was intimated by gesture and facial expression all contributed to the sense of informality between instructor and students, and among the students themselves. This informality reflected the principle of mutual respect which is so prevalent in the adult education literature. The instructors tolerated the teasing and language usage of the students. The students, on the other hand rolled their eyes at attempts at more formal language by the instructors and certain members of the group. Jill and K1 came in for the most of this teasing because of their use of longer words and more complicated ideas. In contrast, the general level of student language was slang ridden, sexual in connotation and street smart.

Language also defined the level and type of acceptance within the group. K, for instance, was constantly referred to as "the Reverend," a derogatory term which began as a joke, appreciated by all (including K, who initially enjoyed the attention) and then later degenerated to a sneering allusion. He did not fit into the core group and the derisive name stuck and became a symbol of their disdain. His attitudes, physical appearance and values did not parallel those of the "in-group" and he did not participate within or outside the classroom.

In another case, C, who suffered from Cerebral Palsy and was handicapped further by reactions to her drug therapy, appeared to benefit from the effects of banter. C generally was tolerated by the others, though often was an object of irritation or pity. One day she came to the classroom crying because she'd fallen down and was wet. W, a class leader and an aggressive personality said, "That C. I don't know what's gotten into her lately. She's right crooked." This was stated with a half-grin and a half-irritated shrug of her shoulders. C interpreted this (as it was meant) as a kind of acceptance. Anyone teased in this manner was meant to feel part of the whole. She recognized the truth behind the kidding around and went off, somewhat mollified.

Conversations emerged out of the blue, with no apparent connection to anything else, just a diversion from the classroom agenda. For example, in the middle of a group exercise, T1 and YD exchanged the following:

T1: My dog is gettin' spayed.

YD: Tha's what should happen to you!

T1: No, you should, you got a youngster. Well, so do I, but I never had it.

In JRT the students were constantly involved in such undercurrents, which illuminated their reality and undermined the task at hand.

The question which obviously arises is what unities between cognitive and social aspect can we see? Are there incongruencies evident in the banter? Cazden suggests that linguistically, there are two "interpenetrative worlds" within the classroom, "the official world of the teacher's agenda and the unofficial world of the peer agenda" (Cazden,1986, p.451). I felt those worlds might well be interpenetrative, but often they were not connected.

As language is the reflector of the processes within the classroom, it became glaringly evident that on this stage with these players, the language used reflected the varying and conflicting objectives, values, and experiences of students and instructors. To reinforce that, the unspoken gestures and actions provided the context for the undercurrents, the messages which were sent to convey what was really meant.

Decoding The Unspoken

It was a new experience for me, hearing the unspoken, and I didn't trust my feelings about it at first. It would have been so easy to ignore, and yet so difficult to live with the consequences if I had. I now saw and heard from the other side of the desk, and what I saw appalled and amused me, often at the same time.

> "I am sitting observing in my usual place in the corner, when T1 catches my eye. He sticks a black plastic tip in his finger, wiggles it at me and the others behind Jill's back, with a suggestive leer. They all think this is really funny.

> Interesting to be included and to see from this side of the desk." (Field notes, February 19)

The rolling of eyes, the finger gestures, the busy hands under the desk while the face smiled blandly at the instructor, the hidden messages in innocent words, the shared and conspiratorial grins, the quick looks at me to let me in on the secret, the real words that tumbled out when the instructors were gone, all cued me into a culture which operated beneath the official agenda of the classroom. As an instructor I knew it occurred, but I didn't know what occurred. As a researcher and quasi member of the group, I was constantly being initiated into the current happenings of the students: who needed drugs, who was dating whom, who got drunk last night, details of their sex lives, their home lives, their pain, their pleasures. It all came wrapped up in the behind the hands whispers and suggestive actions. It was from this source that I began to perceive what triggered their interest, both positive and negative, and could begin to ask appropriate questions of the key informants.

> "There is something going on between W and T1, under cover of the introduction to relationships that Jill is giving. T1 is not listening to the lecture at all, but is busy tormenting W who glares at him and now is writing him a note.
>
> T1: I don't know.
>
> W: If I can get seven, that's all I wants.

They make sure I get the note, which reads, diet pills. W is very slender, and I am curious as to why she would want diet pills." (Field notes, March 17)

In a later interview, she (W) says: "I used to be right big, then I got int'rested in nutrition and lost all me weight. Then I got into diet pills, and got anorexic and all t'e like a t'at." W was dealing with a problem far larger than the instructors knew, or even she realized. This seemed to reflect a truth for all the students. The hidden reality was the one that the instructors were trying to deal with, but without access to it, it was a hit-or-miss affair.

Thus the banter existed on two levels, the shared and the hidden. The shared was the common class environment, which all had access to, including the instructors. The hidden banter was the more personal, the framework of the students' real lives and interests. Being part of that opened my eyes to realities that were outside of my experience, but which went a long way toward explaining the undercurrent of activity that I always sensed, but had not previously been privy to. It also clued me in to their working reference of the world, which consisted of approaching life from the negative, rather than the positive.

The World According To JRT

Their world reference was to mock anything that was not part of their experience. The students immediately picked up on anything they saw as pretentious and satirized it mercilessly. So K1's speech patterns, in which he tried to disguise his rural origins, were taunted; Jill's reference to Victor Frankl and his courage over adversity was greeted with derision; C's drug induced mood swings, tears, giggles, and anger, produced exasperation and jeers. Anything out of the ordinary was open to comment. It struck me that they had to be pretty tough themselves to survive in such a critical environment. Nothing new received easy acceptance. This was clearly a life lesson for them, and affected their endorsement of new ideas and suggestions for change. No amount of gentle persuasion could untie this knot of learned behaviours which so affected their current attitudes and their future goals. Any questions about the future and new choices elicited shoulder shrugs and pat answers, no searching for new paths. I was left with only my speculations about their sense of a future, not anything tangible I could report.

JRT started out as a classroom of students who seemed too scared to participate beyond stating their name. This atmosphere changed dramatically and quickly to become one of openness, sharing and complaining -- all communicated through an endless stream of banter which was generally cheerful. It was most entertaining to sit and observe this group. They had an endless catalogue of invective that ranged from the absolutely rude to the mildly pornographic. Few aspects of the instructor's personality, dress and habits escaped this colourful description. Few occurrences in class were beyond the limits of one or the other of the participants' dialogue. I was called "Ralphie", Jill had "great legs", Len was "prissy", Andrew was "Fifi", academics were moaned about - quite graphically as "that f------ stuff."

"Speech makes available to reflection the processes by which they relate new knowledge to old. But this possibility depends on the social relationships, the communication system, which the teacher sets up." (National Institute of Education, 1974, p. 1, cited in Cazden,1986, p.432)

In this classroom, the social relationships were based on the informal and open attitudes modelled by the instructors from Day 1. Care was taken to maximize the comfort level of the students so that they could feel that this was not a strict and strongly academic atmosphere. Much was tolerated in regards to language usage and innuendo.

The informal atmosphere is functional for the group to be served and recognizes individual needs, the adult as peer. In this sense JRT worked well for this group. The respect that was given each student, the attempts at involving them in decisions about their own learning, the working towards goal definition were all valued and important attributes of the classroom which had meaning for the students. Those principles of adult education, and it could be argued of any good classroom, were elements of importance. The students recognized their benefit and commented on them as positive features of the course:

P: ..not like you're 12 or 13, you're treated like a adult...the way they talk to ya and treat ya. They don't treat ya like a youngster, if ya got somethin' to say, they listen.

T: ... they (teachers) don't tell you what to be doin' all the time...no.

D: I finds the teachers and that really nice - they understands you more than when I was goin' before.

These statements came from students who had left school at 15 or 16, who had hated school, and who had never experienced success. Their attitudes in this course were more positive and they reported that they were happier than they had been in other academic environments. So the atmosphere of openness and acceptance built a secure place for these students, in which it was possible for them to learn and develop some self-confidence.

This provided an interesting contrast, then, to their normal way of viewing the world. Perhaps the negative context grew from negative experience, and the more positive views articulated arose from the more hopeful situation which occurred in the class. I can only report a different attitude which I observed, but which I was unable to clearly understand. However, while some things were changing for the students, the banter enabled me to see that others were remaining the same.

A Sex, Drugs, Rock 'n Roll Culture

The banter as well was a means by which the sex, drugs, rock 'n roll culture was communicated. I began to think about the classroom in that metaphor early on in the research and had little reason to change that image as time went by. The whole context of the class revolved around the constant sexual idiom that was adopted by most of the students and tolerated, to some degree by all. Drugs were an undercurrent of whisper and allusion, but only an undercurrent. There was no obvious dealing or drug related activity, but drugs, alcohol particularly, were part of the students' day to day experience. The rock 'n roll culture was usually evident in a non-verbal way. T often came into the class strumming on an imaginary guitar, lost in the world of heavy metal. The students wore shirts depicting their favourite bands, and covered their exercises and sometimes their hands and arms with the particular symbols of their music heroes. This sex, drugs, rock 'n roll context permeated the class environment, but the sexual innuendo took top billing.

There was very little in class that was not reduced to a sexual connotation. T1 was mainly responsible for the verbalization of this but he found connecting non-verbal assent from the majority of the other students. The sexual banter was quite frank and open and crude. The issue of virginity and general sexual codes of behaviour were cause for derision. In one film shown the class on Sexually Transmitted Disease one actress says, "I'm really worried. I'm saving myself for marriage." Every member of the class hooted at this naivety and T1 said, "My dear, where are you livin' a'tall!"

They talked openly of their current partners, their sexual prowess, their children, their pregnant girlfriends. T1 again, "I kicked t'e girlfriend out last night. Five months pregnant. Not havin' t'at again!" The tone surrounding these discussions was macho and braggadocio on the part of the male participants, more thoughtful but accepting of the male behaviour on the part of the women. This dynamic seemed a reflection of the acceptable social context of these students because it was such a natural element. There was no self-consciousness in the discussion, just an acceptance. The attitudes enabled the discussion to get into issues which might not have occurred initially, such as implications of violence in the sex act. It certainly allowed a level of crudeness of language which did not permeate other classrooms in my experience.

Interestingly, when the time came for a more formal discussion of sexuality and personal ethics, the tone was more embarrassed and restrained. Interviews solicited a similar response to the topic. It was as though sexual matters were issues to be considered as jokes and acceptable for discussion only at that level. Nevertheless, the undercurrents of sexual activity were pervasive through every topic in the classroom. Their attitudes diverged widely from those espoused by both the course and the instructors. This type of comment was largely ignored by the staff who did not usually deal openly with it. When it was addressed, it was done in a slightly confrontational way, yet with a laughing undercurrent:

Jill: Yes, T1 and is there something else you'd like to add?

This aspect of the observation fascinated me because I was quite unprepared for the extent of the banter and the sexual overtones. I kept coming back to it because it seemed key to understanding their interpretation of the world, and to understanding them. Was I too fastidious in my life and had I missed this kind of talk? Or was it, as I thought, an important clue to their views?

Talk As Identity

It was very instructive to be initiated into the students' idea of reality. Their sense of the world was bound up with that sex, drugs, rock n' roll culture. There was little in their daily exchange that did not use this as a metaphor. Non-verbal communications, direct conversation, and bragging male talk were usually rife with sexual innuendo, which seemed to be not so much derogatory as social habit, and simply a way of interacting - commonplace and acceptable. When I asked C about it in an interview, he grinned and said:

C1: It's only a laugh, shore. Tha's the way ev'ryone is in class, 'cept fur a few.

B: That's the way it was in school, too?

C1: No, it would'na been like t'at in school, no. Well, outside it might 'a been, right? But not inside.

Trying to elicit information about this from the key informants was telling in itself. First of all, they looked at me blankly and had to think about an answer because they truly did not know what I was referring to. I became almost embarrassed to bring it up, it was so strange to be asking about the sexual chat in the class. However, after I explained the question a bit, and they had stopped laughing, they simply shrugged their shoulders and replied as P did:

"Only a bit of carryin' on sure, no one means anything by it."

The students who did not participate in this banter were, by and large, dismissed by their classmates. K1 was called "the Reverend", K2 was dismissed because he had gone to university and had an affected way of speaking, and C, who had a vocal disgust of the carrying-ons of her classmates, was jeered for all her behaviours. The only student outside the clan who maintained links was K3, who was somewhat older than the others, and who tolerated a lot of the behaviour with a grin and a shrug. If he was frustrated he never showed it. He often hinted that he understood the situation, and that he in his time had been similar.

There was a sense of who belonged and who didn't, by the language and the eye contact. Never mind for the present that belonging in class meant that it would be more difficult to belong in the outside world. For now, the kindred spirits were comfortable in their insider world. It was hard to imagine that most of the players of the sex, drugs,and rock 'n roll culture would be able to make the transition to the world of work, as we know it. The reality gap stretched too wide for a 20 week course.

Bernstein (1971) points out that elaborate speech codes are absent from working class children and Jarvis (1985) feels that they are therefore absent for working class adults. It would seem that the sexual banter serves as a basic speech code, crude and often unacceptable as it may seem, but one which had meaning and identity for the JRT students. It certainly served its purpose as a unique communication device that was not shared by the instructors. Blauner (1987) proposes that "language and identity are closely joined, mainly because our sense of self develops in great part through language and communication." (p.49) This banter served as an indicator of the different cultures and values which operated within the classroom.

CHAPTER 6

ROSARY BEADS AND CAR LICENSES: VALUES REDEFINED

"It's A Rule Of The School"

Eve: You can't have wine (for the class party). It's a rule of the school.

Students: Ah, Eve is always against ev'ryt'hing!

Eve: No. It's just that it's against school policy. It's not that I care what you do!

Eve looks hot and bothered, Len is looking cooler.

W: What nobody don't know won't hurt 'em.

Eve: You can say that about anything... (she seems fairly upset. The class is against her)

Students: You don't have to come. (They are laughing and taunting her - she looks closed and angry. Len is letting them go on.)

Len: I think we should thank Eve.

Eve: Sure!

W: You said it was all right, Len. If Eve hadn't said anything - you'd have let us go on.

The class is boisterous and noisy.

Len: Have they gotten worse, Barb? I'm putting you on the spot.

B: They're like other JRTs I've known and loved!

Jill taps on the door and the class says, "Let's ask her, she got more aut'ority than you Len," Jill responds as Eve did, and the class, laughing now, asks her to leave. Her manner is different than Eve's as she says, "You knew the answer to that. You didn't even need to ask," and laughs and leaves. (Field notes, June 10)

Each step of the way in JRT was accompanied by similar interactions; interactions which exposed the dichotomy between the way the students viewed the world, and the way the instructors saw things. Nothing was ever simple and accepted. For example, when Jill did a presentation on values clarification, the students rated things like family, friends, money, and leisure time in socially accepted patterns. However, their comments, nudging and jokes told another story. W said she valued her boyfriend. The conversation continued:

Jill: Boyfriend - the person or the good feeling you get from a loving relationship?

W looks confused.

Jill: If you split up would you value him?

W grins broadly: No way!

Jill: Then it's the other.

W: Yup!

Someone muttered, "Sex!" and the class chuckled. The nods around the room indicated that there was general agreement that sex would be the issue of value, not the personal relationship. Jill sighed.

Jill defined values for the purpose of this exercise as standards you have developed which guide your actions, attitudes, comparisons, and judgments. From every encounter that I observed, it seemed clear that the standards the students lived by differed considerably from those of my colleagues and I. Looking at the interplay it was difficult to imagine how the two cultures could possibly be products of the same general environment.

"Ya Can't Lose What Ya Haven't Got"

> T1: I got a set of rosary beads in t'e car so I won't get picked up for impaired. I took 'em out of t'e car once and I got $350 wort' of tickets. Ev'ryone says why don't ya have your license and I says ya can't lose what ya hav'n got.
>
> K1: What happens if you hurt someone?
>
> T1: No sweat, got no insurance! (Field notes, February 13)

My experiences as an instructor of JRT had taught me one thing well - my reality and my values were not the norm within the classroom. In some ways, those very things that I had spent considerable time and effort striving toward were on the surface open to derision and disdain by the students. Educational aspirations, a mortgage, a settled family life, and two cars were in some way seen to be the stamp of an unattainable elite. They were received in much the same way as I might react to the well-publicized excesses of the glitterati of Hollywood. This attitude was at first startling and I suspected, symbolic of a "sour-grapes" mind-set. However, I forced myself to reconsider and probe a bit deeper into the perceived thinking. As an instructor in the classroom milieu, I came no closer to an answer and tried to work through these issues with the students through values clarification exercises and group discussions. When I entered the situation as an observer and a researcher, these thoughts of social context were much on my mind. Would I be able to discover a better sense of values discrepancies than before? What could I learn that would clarify the cultural and contextual polar opposites that were apparent? Failing to find that, perhaps I would discover that the problem was unique to me and my interaction with students. Instead I found that the value spread was even wider than I had originally thought. Sitting in, observing the daily interactions, hearing them speak as though I were not there, gave me an insight I had never achieved as an instructor. And though I wasn't naive enough to think that I had plumbed the depths of their world, I did come closer than I had previously. It gave me cause for much thinking.

First of all, JRT students are not individuals with little hope or ambition or intelligence. On the whole they have survived in a world that has shown them meagre support or encouragement. Each of them had run into problems as very young children, interrupting their formative years. In an interesting study of young undereducated adults, Sabto (1986) showed that if a child suffers some traumatic event during the formative period, it causes an interruption of the learning process. When the child is ready to reconnect with learning again, catch up never really occurs, and critical learning is missed. She theorized that this causes many of the educational problems we see among young people. JRT would certainly bear this out. Each of the students had suffered some major and disaffecting event in their lives at a very young age. The tales of abuse, alcoholism, violent home lives, and misdiagnosis at school resulting in years in special education classes ran through the whole class. No one had been untouched by tragedy. That they still functioned and joked and planned in some form for some future, was in itself an amazing tribute to them. That they did not plan and anticipate tomorrow with the same eagerness as I did was not surprising. They had learned early that the future was not necessarily going to be worth looking forward to.

The fact was that not one of the students had dealt with those issues. They had been ignored or covered up, or accepted as part of life. JRT offered, in a tentative and hesitant way, to build some self esteem back into those individuals. When C stood up to talk about her experience with disability, the class and instructors supported that step. When C1, who stuttered, gave his talk the class applauded his effort.

From my back of the class position, I learned a lot about courage and making the best of a raw deal. I began to understand what it was that made me enjoy JRT so much. I admired their strength and their ability to persevere. With little education, a criminal record, and an alcoholic, abusive father, P managed to find work and began to make plans to upgrade his academics. They all had walked a difficult road in which values and a future orientation, as I would know them, were not congruent with the life they experienced. This contributed to their reactions and their views of themselves.

JRT: Views Of Themselves

In the summary of his book, The Antecedents of Self-Esteem, Coopersmith (1967) states that the presence of high self-esteem has three conditions: "total or nearly total acceptance of the children by their parents, clearly defined and enforced limits, and the respect and latitude for individual action that exist within the defined limits" (p. 236). While this places a heavy burden on the role of the family unit, it does point to the critical role that family relationships do play in the development and nurturing of children. The Job Readiness Training adults were all victims of family crisis - single parent homes, alcoholism, merged family units, parental death and abuse. They also grew up in a society that supports the two parent family and stigmatizes the rest. This is particularly true in traditional Newfoundland society where the norms prevailed and deviations from it were not readily accepted. Thus, the students of this study came into adulthood with inherited difficulties and low self-esteem, participants in a new generation of crisis. Accompanying these impediments was their personal history of school failure and legal, drug, alcohol or mental problems. The picture painted is of a disenfranchised individual, with few self-perceived positive attributes.

W, aged 19, had lived with an aunt because her father "used to beat Mom up all the time and my mother is an alcoholic." This spilled out in a heap during the initial interview taped after I had observed the class for almost two months. She talked about experiences:

with drugs: "I used to live on drugs, now I don't smoke up at all."
with jobs: "baby-sittin' for me brother from February to July."
with school: "I hated almost all the women teachers. I don't know why... used to call me in the office all the time.

She exhibited a hard shell, bluster and a matter of factness about all this information. So what - can I shock you? was the message that I observed - with a shrewd glance watching for my reaction. Then she talked about the present:

> "Boy, every time I went to Social Services I fainted. I dunno ...used to hate it so much, to know t'at I had to go out and get it. For two mont's I was just completely down, every night I'd be cryin'. I wanted to do somethin', right?"

P, aged 23, talked about:

home life: "Well, they're divorced now. Father drinkin' a lot, then he gave it up, then he started last year... nothin' we could do, we talked to 'im, he never listened ...yeah, he always used to beat me up."

work: "I barred myself up for three years. I never bothered to do anything, just stayed home, day in, day out.

drugs: "... just the drugs -- hash, weed, acid. A hard three years."

P identified a turn-around point that was internal. He literally woke up and said,

> "I'm 23, in 10 years I'll be 33. If I don't take care of my life now, I never will."

In the end P took a job which lasted a week and then disappeared and no amount of tracking could find him. Without further long term supports, P was destined to become a lost soul, yet the discontinuation record reported him as finding full time employment. His success was short lived.

I sensed that these and all the other students had little value for themselves. Everything they had encountered had encouraged a negative sense of self.

Baseball Caps And Tattoos: The Culture And Values Of JRT

Bogdan (1971) characterizes programs for disadvantaged adults as depositories which force: "the segment of society to whom the American Dream did not apply to live up to the Protestant ethic, thereby affirming this value." (p.4). This view of mismatch between course and student was equally true of the JRT course under study. The cultural understanding of the JRT student and his/her accompanying values were at odds with the culture and values prevalent in the instructor and course expectations. Attitudes towards work, the future and life in general were unduly at variance and discussions led to vexing situations which went far beyond disagreement to total incomprehension.

It was at once fascinating and enlightening to sit back and view the scene which unfolded in the classroom. On the first day the differences were marked by outward and visible signs, as well as by attitude and the power differential which was unremarked, but definitely there. The female instructor was expensively dressed, with a good hair-cut and the male instructor was equally well-clad, though less formally. The students wore the blue jeans and sneakers uniform, with long hair and baseball caps. This outward signal of difference was quite dramatic to observe. It communicated different styles of appropriateness which seemed to go far beyond dress code. Warner, Havighurst and Loeb (1944) felt that "unless the middle-class values change in America, we must expect the influence of the schools to favour the values of material success, individual striving, thrift and social mobility." (p. 172) Thus the initial influence portrayed by the instructors through their dress was one of middle-class material success, which was at variance with the student values.

My initial reaction to the visual impact was quite strong and unexpected. The demarcation lines seemed visibly drawn in this first meeting. I was left wondering if the students felt the same, but no amount of subtle questioning could uncover a satisfying answer. The gap simply existed, was expected and highlighted the social and material differences of the classroom. Dress, as an aspect of communication and a mirror of class, economic status and self-esteem, was an indicator of the different cultures operating from the beginning.

Other obvious differences in outward appearance seemed to point to differing senses of social belonging. Tattoos were common among the male students. In The Decorated Body (1979) Brain says that "One of the most important impulses behind tattooing seems to be a search for identity in the precarious situation" (p.160). This brings to mind the almost universal tattooing of servicemen during the war years. Equally, this seems true of the JRT males. The tattoos were usually limited to the name of a girl or "Mother" but were conspicuous and always on show. Brain also defines tattooing as a symbol of defiance and a sense of identity with groups. Again, my conclusions were drawn from observation and not elicited from student talk. Their response when tattooing was mentioned was a shoulder shrug - an accepted part of life, nothing to be wondered at or commented on. On the other hand, tattoos are not generally part of the package of the instructor. For me it marked another point of departure, of personal experience, worthy of note because of its different meaning for the groups in the classroom - a norm for the student population, that did not fit at all into the instructor experience. It would, in fact, indicate an unusual preference for the instructor.

Another element in the classroom culture which was observable and yet held no conscious meaning for the students was the habit of nail biting. To a student they were nail biters, and it was this fact that aroused my interest. Nail biting has long been viewed as a behaviour that indicates anxiety (Hadley, 1985). One student, T1, was a constant practitioner. He was a very fidgety individual, his long, thin body constantly in motion, never at ease. However, as Hadley further points out, although it signals distress, it must be viewed in relation to other symptoms and can be only a "nervous habit, oral habit or secondary habit disturbance" (p. 17). This group seemed to have many reasons to be anxious as they were all consciously out of step with general social goals. The instructors, as might be imagined, were not nail biters, nor in fact did they exhibit major nervous habits of any discernible type. The nail biting, tattooing and dress standards were all obvious, even glaring points of differentiation between the groups and indicated the cultural differences evident within the classroom.

"There's Life Jim, But Not As We Know It"

(During the time I observed JRT, Star Trek was part of the regular, weekly television fare. As I watched the crew meet new civilizations and conquer new worlds, I often thought that their fictionalized adventures mirrored my own daily activity - both life and television attempting to understand different cultural forces. In one episode, the doctor says to the captain " There's life, Jim, but not as we know it." It captured my experience of the JRT classroom, that place where I felt so often out of my depth, outside of my familiar.)

One of the most difficult hurdles for the instructor to negotiate in the classroom for the marginalized adult is that of different social orientation. Most of us who reach the lofty pinnacles of university degrees and successful work records have had some support systems in place, some personal motivation and some measure of academic accomplishment to assist us along the way. The students in programs for disadvantaged adults have usually experienced few of those positive events and in fact enter with a history of failure, which leads to disillusionment and discouragement. These negative life experiences seem to affect their future orientation and encourage a belief that locus of control exists outside themselves.

This adult classroom then is a portrayal of a social microcosm with very clear sub-divisions. The instructor typifies the middle class, successful, upwardly mobile professional while the students are socially and educationally disadvantaged, poor and unproductive in the eyes of our society. To be disadvantaged carries the stigma of low socio-economic status and educational attainment (Clark & Hall, 1983), the definition of which is applied by those who are neither. Thus, the adult educator who works in programs such as JRT finds him/herself in a kind of ethical dilemma. In my own case, I recognized the problems of the students but could only offer myself as a model for a different choice. However, students could no more readily relate to the values and lifestyle I represented than I could fully appreciate their experience.

To find a middle ground where course objectives, values and personal goals can be congruent is a challenge that is a necessary part of teaching in this course geared to job entry. The challenge is equally great for the student. In order to be successful the participant needs to share the goals of the course, take on a revised vision of self and adopt, to a large part, values of the working society. Some of these shifts and changes may occur but the task exceeds the goals of JRT programs. My practical experience, my observation, and the literature support this. The shifts are too great and the expectation and objectives not in concert. This leads to a course with few long-term employment success stories. Their familiar simply did not reflect the values of the world JRT was offering.

CHAPTER 7

"WORKIN' GOT A LOT OF STRESS TO IT"

"I Don't Think I'm Cut Out For It"

They are sitting in a corner of the classroom, looking not at each other, but at the table in front of them. The sounds are hushed, and I feel that the four of them are discussing matters of importance.

Jill comes in and C blurts out: Ya know workin' got a lot of stress to it. I don't think I'm cut out for it.

K3: Sure ya are.

D: I don't think I am either.

Jill: Well we all feel like that some days C, but that's it.

YD: Yeah, that's life.

Later the class is reporting back on job stations and T, who has worked at a fast food establishment, talks about his experience: "Worked down to da rest'rant Don't know where 'tis to. I was workin' in da kitchen - little square box. It's a rest'rant - eat-in and take-out. I did pre-cookin', liftin', washin' dishes, moppin' up the floors - did a lotta eatin', too. I t'ought it was alright - beats home all day doin' nuthin'. I don't know if I'd like it - no idea about salary or benefits."

Work, as experienced by JRT students, has a limited appeal. As T said, it is better than sitting at home all day. (Field notes and journal, February 12)

An Official JRT View Of Education And Work

The rationale used for job-readiness programs addresses the basic capabilities needed to obtain and maintain employment (Smith, 1988). This overarching objective reflects both the mandate of Employment and Immigration Canada and the conventional social values which anticipate that all adults will work and contribute to the economy. Yet Canada, in concert with all western, capitalist societies, depends on and provides for the "surplus labour force" (O'Connor, 1975). Wage replacement programs indicate a general acceptance of under/unemployment but do not provide a solution to the problem. Students in the JRT course under study were part of that "surplus" group and provided a human reality to the more academic description. In analyzing this human dimension in the context of the broad social expectations many incongruities became clear. The course objective was often an alien concept for this group because their experiences with work and their definition of employment reflected an entry level, often degrading experience which held no promise of a future. Given this reality, the idea of work was resisted.

"Wouldn't Want To Do This All Me Life"

Job stations, an integral part of the JRT experience, only reinforced this previous knowledge. D commenting on his stint as a janitor at the hospital, said,

"Cleanin' up, moppin' up -- some maintenance. I don't think I'd like it really for a long time. You cleans up and they walks over it and leaves black marks."

C1, who worked in the warehouse in a local chain store, said, "I loaded stuff and unloaded stuff - like ya would. The salary was too low - just about minimum wage... I wouldn't be happy with this all me life."

The course reinforced the entry level ability of the student but gave no incentive to look further. Work opportunities were boring and did nothing to encourage an optimistic future outlook. After the second job station experience, the students returned with a sleepy, re-entry look that I remembered from my experience as an instructor. Returning to the classroom after the relative freedom of a work placement is often a difficult transition. The group were cynical about their experiences and questioning of the process.

The instructor then pointed out the purposes and goals of job stations and the importance of job preparation. This was interrupted by a frustrated K1:

K1: There are all those programs, but there are no jobs out there. We're living in a civil service town. These programs are in place to show us that there's something wrong with us.

D: You can get a job in a place if you got a relation working there.

This whole session was characterized by anger and disillusionment. JRT had seemed to be a bridge to better times, but on the whole, this attitude was being undermined by the harsh reality that little was changing. C suggested that the complainers go to Canada Employment. This suggestion was followed by a chorus of

"Sure, my dear."

"Who gets a job there?"

"Tha's no good."

The whole class was involved, united by despair, frustration, the shared experience of failure with the system, and promises made and broken.

Reflecting upon this attitude, I was struck by the perceived "victimization" that surfaced, accompanied by the perceived lack of inner ability to assume responsibility for the future. Past experiences for all had been tainted by academic failures, lack of social acceptance, and/or a troublesome family life. As noted earlier, their view of success, though verbally spoken of as a "nice house, a good job and a family," did not seem to carry with it a sense that it was within reach or worth working for. Comments like:

> "You can go up t' Toronto and get $10 an hour and make enough money without goin' to school for years,"were common retorts to instructor questioning about the future. The future seemed to be a hazy idea, the present was all that really counted. There seemed to be no sense of planning for the future - just of regret for the past.

"Well, if I had more education ..." was a recurrent theme - education was seen as a key to a better life, certainly not valued for its own sake, or to derive some self-satisfaction. Education meant getting ahead, but JRT students generally did not identify with where education could get them - to a future which included a lifestyle and values which were alien to them. There was an incongruence between what they knew and were accustomed to, and the prospects that education and well-paid work could bring.

There seemed to be a risk in getting ahead, as if it would not fill their own or significant others' expectations. Discussion often arose about getting ahead, but there was obvious divergence between the class idea and the instructor assumption. University was immediately rejected as "can't do that." K1 was jeered for having pretentions (in their eyes) - talking with an "assumed" accent, using very sophisticated language, and referring to his university experiences. He did not fit their model of normality or acceptability. They seemed to fear the unknown which existed beyond their familiar. Their immediate reaction was to dismiss that which was not within their experience.

It took a lot of courage for K1 to be as he was. He grew up in an isolated part of the province with a dream of becoming a doctor. His lack of financial and family support ground him down and he failed in his attempt to get beyond his origins. The other students in the class could not understand his ambition and he was an outsider to the class and an irritant to the instructors who couldn't support him either. To his classmates, K1 was just another example of the risks you took if you ventured beyond what you knew, not an example of hard work and motivation to succeed. It was safer to stay with the known.

Reference Group Theory

The sociological notion of reference group theory, as discussed by Parkin (1971) and Goodenham (1987), points the way to a better understanding of the rationale of JRT students to choose work and life patterns within their knowledge base. Parkin says:

> The problem is to decide whether the selection of narrow-range reference groups on the part of the disprivileged is a cause of their modest expectations, or simply a consequence of these expectations.... Those whose expectations and likely achievements are of a modest order might well choose not to compare their lot with the more advantaged, since such comparisons would be upsetting." (p. 62).

This perspective tends to indicate that individuals recognize their social limitations and choose their reference group to correspond to their level of expectation. If this is so, programs for the disadvantaged tend to reinforce the limitations as perceived by the client group.

Gooderham quotes Merton (1957) regarding the phenomenon that:

> ...reference group theory seeks to account for the fact that on the one hand people act in a social frame of reference yielded by the groups of which they are a part...there is, however, the further fact that...(they) frequently orient themselves to groups other than their own in shaping their behaviour and evaluation." (p. 142).

Gooderham defines the role of the normative reference group as the one from which a person takes "standards, attitudes, and value", while the comparative reference group provides the contrasts and inevitably causes some sense of deprivation. This deprivation points to goals and aspirations toward which the individual may aim. However, comparisons are generally limited to the feasible, so extreme personal dissatisfaction is avoided. And so it seemed with the JRT students. In retrospect, they appeared to limit their dreams and aspirations to the known, and were not able or willing, perhaps, to fantasize about "what ifs". The instructors as role models were, I think, lost to them. When I asked C1 about the values of the instructors, His comment was, "Well, ya know, at times when they're sayin' whatever, and you thinks to yourself well, what do they care, right? They got a big job and big cars, big house, whatever, you know." He seemed unable to think that those material things could be his if he chose. Equally he, and all the other JRT students were unable to recognize that the instructors had worked hard to achieve what they had accomplished. They almost seemed to see the instructors' success as a given, not as a end result of personal striving.

Their vision of success meant "a steady job," or "if I can get enough stamps to get me unemployment," or "there's good jobs up in T'ronto -- 10 bucks an hour -- that's where I'm goin'." However, the link between long-term employment and skill training was not one that appeared to be realistic to them and often for good reason.

There was a large gap between their current educational standard and what they needed to look realistically for a job.

> D1: Well if I had more education, I think I would go for it then, right. But I'm still, like, ya know ...where I haven't got the education, like when I was over to Newfoundland Constab I got an application but I mean it's no sense of me fillin' it out when I got to put down what education I got, right ...cause, I mean, there's no way they're goin' to look at that ...it's a really nice place to work ....

Views Of Work

Job Readiness Training, as the name suggests, is very focused on job attainment and skills required to achieve that goal. This objective was clearly expressed by the instructors early on in the course and was accepted by the students. Indeed, many of them identified "gettin' a job" as their reason for attending the course. Over the period of time that I observed the students, I became aware, though, that the words of the students often had a different meaning for them than for the instructors. In the discussions around work subtle, important differences became clear. The students valued the outcome - a job - as the pinnacle of their hopes. They saw getting a job as the next step. The instructors viewed this differently. They saw value in the lead-up skills, the process of job preparation and skill development. The students did not share that appreciation of the need for preparation for the future.

K3: I'd like to go to a place where there's a chance to get hired on after.

T1 This is my spot guaranteed - $28 an hour. The buddy that paints the car gets it. That's the way it's s'posed to go - $28 a car [sic] ... You don't a ... it's not ... I didn't ask them about it [education]. Nobody down there got their body [autobody course]. Buddy does the paintin', never went to school - jus what he learned on his own.

Another student asked:

D1 Can you go to trades school to do a course?

T1 Yeah, but why do a course? I knows all about it.

K3 Experience is better.

Latour (1977) wrote that:

> Disadvantaged clients are concerned with survival today but training is a preparation for the future so it is important that they are made aware that such training is relevant. These clients have often experienced failure after failure, resulting in a defeatist attitude which is often perceived as a lack of motivation. (p.37)

Davis (1982) further suggests that for the disadvantaged, goals are seldom dependent upon educational achievement, but rather they see goals dependent upon educational attainment as beyond their reach and so other skills and strategies are developed to cope with daily living.

Work then, and the skills leading up to obtaining work, are viewed from widely different perspectives by students and instructors. The instructors tended to talk as positively as possible about job possibilities, the importance of constant and effective job hunting and the possibilities of turning up jobs through contacts and networks. These discussions often erupted into debate as students retorted angrily based on their experience, personal beliefs and social realities. The statistical and sometimes glib information handed out by instructors and visiting content experts did not reflect or support the knowledge the students had accumulated for themselves. Analyzing these points of philosophical departure objectified the cultural differences and also boldly illuminated the rather cruel reality facing those who lack educational, social and motivational certification to gain entry into the work force. Additionally, the minimal experience of job placements was insufficient to prepare the students for job entry, and clearly did little to motivate them to look for work.

Is The Job Experience Worthwhile?

The students returned to class after a two week job placement and the following conversation took place in class:

Len: We could have a course without the job stations.

C1: Be no good then - we're not gettin' nothin' - only a reference.

D: I agrees with ya there.

K1: How can you learn anything in such a short time? You only get a bit of experience in a work station.

Len gives a longish pep talk about job preparation skills, job finding clubs, resumes, and interview skills. However, the students mentally checked out, and there were no further responses or interaction. As C1 said in a later interview,

> "Well... when you're out on the job training t'at should be for a mont', because like see if you're workin' for a employer and only after two weeks see you're startin' to be familiar wit' it. And then ya know, if ya had anot'er two weeks, then you know, t'ey'd ah... t'eyed really know ya t'en after and t'ey would know what you worked like.....I would've see, I really didn't learn any t'ing from ...regards to trainin', because well, workin' in a store, workin' in maintenance, sure I knew all t'at anyway, right?"

In contrast to the reality that the students experienced, the course objectives around this module identify a broader range of goals than were met in the course under study. These goals were meant to:

> 1. provide the students with opportunities to identify the basic skills required;
> 2. determine the suitability of the occupation in terms of their interests;
> 3. offer practical experience;
> 4. test newly acquired skills. (Job Readiness Training document, Canada Employment and Immigration Commission [CEIC], undated, p. 3)

However, the reality was that the job stations were often menial tasks in which the students learned very little, and had very little opportunity to expand their knowledge of the work place. It only reinforced their previous knowledge of work, and their concepts of the kind of work they were able to do. This represents the practical nature of the course to provide actual job experiences for students. It is also echoed by the stated desires of many students to get experience and a job. An EIC report, Only Work Works (1987), indicates that the most successful programs are strongly rooted with employment opportunities and practical training elements. Therefore, there is much justification to support the premise that job experiences are useful components for a course such as JRT.

Financial independence is a community value held in high esteem by Canadians. The Working Paper on Social Security in Canada, April 1983 states that our society believes that all people who are able to work should work, but to enable this, society has the responsibility to provide the means to obtain an education." Theoretically society values work, independence and the means to achieve these goals. Yet JRT students find themselves in pre-employment programs which serve only to reinforce their negative attitudes about work, and make them feel more hopeless.

Summary: The Mixed Message From Adult Education Programs

Thus the message from adult education programs for the undereducated, the young offender, or the re-entry woman is a mixed one. As Davis (1982) points out:

> A major goal of education, especially when directed toward adults, should be to prepare the individuals to assume the vast responsibilities of adulthood, while fostering personal growth. However, for many education has failed; they are viewed by society and themselves as failures. (p. 3)

Remedial or compensatory education is offered to those who need to improve their chances in the world of work. The promise is of work, or a better academic base or even just an improved job resume. The end result is often a heightened self-awareness combined with the chilling reality of introductions to jobs that are menial and limited. The question arises whether these limitations are in keeping with the students' views of themselves. After all, it is they who usually choose the type of employment they experience during the program. However, one cannot choose what one does not know. Also, very rarely are options available beyond the janitorial, domestic, shelf-stocking, clerk-filing level. The expectations of the program seem to reflect the entry expectations of the clientele, but unfortunately tends not to advance beyond that. They never get to experience the positive aspects of work by which I, in part, define myself. For the JRT students there is no motivation, no fulfilment, no fit in the workplace because their jobs don't engender those psychological benefits. Thus their JRT experience serves only to reinforce their previous experience and to further support their minimal visions of the future.

Again we see the inability of the program to provide a useful function for the students. Their experiences, their attitudes about the future, their inability to relate to the instructors as role models, and the reality of their reference group all combine to place students in a no win situation. The instructors are hard pressed to operate effectively given that situation. However, a more comprehensive recognition of the reality of the students could help ensure that these issues are addressed in programs which build from that reality rather than operate in unawareness of it.

CHAPTER 8

THE FUTURE AS A BLACK HOLE

A New/Old Perspective

"You a teacher or a ... a student here?"

"Neither, really. I'm a university student and I'll be sitting in on this class as part of a course I'm doing."

"Oh, yeah." (Field notes, February 2)

I was sitting in the back corner of the classroom, attempting to blend into the wall when this interchange took place. Innocent on the surface, it marked my initial acceptance into the classroom. I had arrived that morning, in a state of trepidation, to take up my new role as "researcher". This brief conversation gave me an opportunity to say aloud the words that identified my function and to gauge reaction from one of the group under study. The "Oh, yeah" was accompanied by a shoulder shrug and a grin, and my questioner resumed the more engaging task of chatting up the girls at his table.

This calm acceptance of my status was initially surprising. However, upon reflection and after the months of field study, my judgment is that the surface lack of curiosity about experiences and identities beyond the known social milieu marked a norm for the group. Further education, professional jobs, travel opportunities and cultural events, for example, were treated with the same studied disregard and lack of interest that I, university student, received. These broader opportunities were seen to belong to someone else and were not within their normal expectations. There was an indifference that puzzled me, because in the same circumstance I would have been curious to know what other opportunities existed. They seemed to accept life as it was given and anticipate no change, nor look for any. Only immediate concerns caused interest.

Look Only To Today

That theme of immediacy was one which affected me deeply, both initially as an instructor and then again in the research role. As an instructor I had been frustrated by the seeming lack of interest in future goal orientation. As a researcher in the same milieu, albeit with different students, I recognized the same pattern, but I came to understand it differently. The instructor "I" recalled a conversation with a young man who had been with the class on a day-release condition from Her Majesty's Penitentiary. The time arrived when he was granted full parole and was able to move back home. He was picked up for petty theft on his first week-end of freedom because, as he put it, "Barb, what do you do when your t'ree year old is cryin' and hungry and you got no food in the fridge and no money in your pocket. You do what you knows how to do." When I mentioned a future which might have a better chance of providing those necessities, he just shook his head. His experiences had taught him that the future was just a repeat of the past, and that you did what was necessary for today. So I had some notion of this phenomenon of students who dealt with today and could not conceive in a developmental sense about issues for tomorrow.

In most of the discussions about work, further education and life dreams, the attitudes were for the most part, indifference or derision that things could be different. At best, plans which were formulated were grounded within the reality of their own experience and knowledge, which was rather limited. Any suggestion of jobs which were new to them were greeted with disinterest. All efforts by instructors, visiting content experts, and job search activities to get them to think beyond autobody repair, hair styling, carpentry, or secretarial work seemed to fall on deaf ears. Again they shifted from future planning goals to a current and personal knowledge. Moving beyond their known only got them into trouble - legal hassles, academic failure, or financial problems.

D1 was a mature, married student with one child. Her formal education had ended at Grade 6 and she initially wanted work that was not waitressing or baby sitting "'cause it's so hard to get" although "I likes baby sittin' to tell you the truth." When I interviewed her at the end of the course and asked about her plans for upgrading and training, she shook her head and replied, "[A decision to go back to baby sitting or waitressing] is easier on me now, yeah."

W, another female student, said that a good job was, "makin' about 10 bucks an hour and like ... I like to have some'in -- not workin' in a restaurant or a bar, somethin' like that -- I'd like to have like a secretary job or some'in that's not hard to do ..."

However, when we talked about training or the possibility of university, her look was sceptical and her response was a cynical, "No doubt, my dear."

Other students responded in a similar manner.

"Might go on -- haven't made up me mind yet."

"I don't think I'm prepared to go to school for five years."

It became clear that the students in this JRT class had a sense of immediacy that does not blend well with the more futuristic, goal-setting objective of the course. The need is acknowledged to manage for today, but the future is not clear and there is no real sense of preparing for it. This causes the building blocks of goal setting, career preparation and decision making to be meaningless objectives until certain other learning has taken place. Whether JRT is the place to change these attitudes is debatable, but it did make the course objectives highly questionable for this group of individuals.

A Kitchen Table View Of Reality

While these students lived mainly for the present, it would be misleading to say that education, a good job, and money were not recognized as both desirable and necessary. It was simply that their horizons were defined within a much narrower band. As W put it, "...grade 10 I smartened up...me attitude, ev'ryt'hing. Dad wanted me to get me grade 12, no one in our family got it, so I got grade 10, 11, 12...straight." She was clever and articulate and saw herself as getting somewhere. Her somewhere didn't include, and never had included, the possibility of going to university.

Classroom sessions concerning professional work options were, for the most part, treated with the same lack of regard and connection. Mickelson (1990), in a study of black adolescents, suggested that a paradox exists between that group's expressed high regard for education (attitude) and their poor academic performance (achievement). She concluded that the abstract, positive attitudes towards education, which reflect the dominant social ideology, do not have as much impact on student achievement as do the more concrete life experiences in which educational credentials are not necessarily rewarded by good work opportunities.

> The information conveyed to students about potential returns on education is not only what parents, teachers, and the dominant ideology expound, but what the students' daily realities show them. Adolescents see their parents' experiences in the labour market, in which class, race, and gender also influence returns on educational credentials. Young blacks are not bewitched by the heroics of equal opportunity through education; they hear another side of the story at the dinner table. (Mickelson, 1990, p.59)

This paradox holds equally true for adolescents/adults who are not black, but who suffer other visible and/or hidden disadvantages. The students who entered JRT cited education as a key requirement for future opportunity but were more influenced by the reality of unemployment, income support programs, and the lack of opportunity they saw all around them. This reality was a multi-generational experience and a short 20 week program was hard pressed to counter balance the lessons of lifetimes.

Culture Shock

The closer I got to the context and the student reality of JRT the clearer it became that there were conflicting norms operating within the classroom. As I became more cognizant of the student point of view, it became clear that I had to avoid "going native" or overidentifying with the student group. I was, after all, there to view the process as a process and not with a preordained conclusion orientation.

Instructors, as a group, have experiences and backgrounds that we can generally categorize as a middle class orientation. Typically, there is a positive correlation between school success and parental values towards education (Coombs, 1985). If the home supports educational efforts and supplements the child with books and a good vocabulary, this gives the child an edge over his contemporaries. This type of support is normally seen in households of relatively well-educated and reasonably financially stable homes. As Nordhaug (1987b) reports "... the individual's social background (e.g. family resources, friends, achievement orientation) influences his/her returns from the educational system (the duration and type of education, school grades) and the socio-economic status attained with the first job." (p. 117)

What I saw operating within a JRT classroom was a kind of polarity. The instructors had been instilled with a positive respect toward education because of background, personal motivation, or experiences of achievement. The students, on the other hand, on the whole emerged from a cultural milieu which did not value education and did not totally support the notion. Additionally, their experience with the educational process was often marked by failure.

D: Education was not important in our house. When I quit Grade 6, me mother said, "Well, my dear, if you're goin' to quit, you gotta get a job."

W, as we saw earlier was encouraged to complete high school, but she was the first in her family to do so. It would seem that the educational ethic in her family was not particularly strong.

T: T'ree years in Grade 9 and I quit... I didn't like it.

C: I left... had 'nough a school, din't like the teachers.

Later in the same conversation:

C: I brought,...ah, brought it up before and she (mother) talked me into goin' back, but last time I talked to Mom - I'm not goin' back.....I would never go back to school, even if they paid me...

K1: ...education is not really a value, around the bay... although I values it.

However, there were vast differences in the recognition of the implication of education to future life. All of the participants recognized the western society value of education as an investment in the future. However, the instructors acted upon it, but the students did not. It was as though a strong commitment to further education was outside their personal expectation. They viewed the instructors as being from a different level, one they could not hope to attain, nor did they desire it. It was a foreign notion, like becoming a millionaire is to me - it could be attainable but is beyond my comprehension of self. They did not recognize themselves in the role or shoes of the instructor. The instructors, on the other hand, could not, with the best will in the world, comprehend this ethic. The differences have to do with different socialization, different expectations, and different reactions to similar circumstances. Thus they operate in different cultures with different expectations. This in part led to outcomes which were less than satisfactory.

JRT Aftermath

As intended, I followed up with the students after the course was over. It took some doing as their phones were disconnected, or they had moved to parts unknown, or they just didn't want to talk. Being outside the friendly confines of the class seemed to put me back where I belonged - on the other side. It was rather disconcerting. But, I was successful in some cases and even more successful than I wanted to be in others. K1 and I still talk whenever we meet and he keeps me up to date on his work history. Life is still difficult, jobs are scarce and he now has a small son to support. He has worked at the local mall as a security guard, and off and on in computer jobs. There is no permanence and there is no security. He seems to be coping but is not assimilated into any system. He often looks troubled, but still seems determined to make it. His thoughts about JRT are mixed, but basically positive:

> "...would've had more fun than what I had. I was critical and criticized for being critical. That was due to frustration. I certainly needed JRT - the last work term I got a job, so that was invaluable. Before the program I was running in all directions, frustrated, desperate - no self-respect. After I got in the program, I relaxed, enabled me to relax and I been busy ever since....helped you evaluate, reevaluate...stopped running around."

K1's situation was mirrored by all the others. Jobs obtained were short term, low paying, entry level - all were frustrated in their attempts to become independent.

W's comments were positive about JRT, but she also got nowhere after the course. I would often see her at the local shopping mall, just "hangin' out". She told me that : "Social Services kept me 'til August. I was workin' with a volunt'ry organization answerin' phones, writin' stuff up, a bit a typin' and that. Got enough fer me UI (unemployment)."

We talked about JRT, and she said, "showed me a lot, made me know what to look for when I got out - helped me know not to be so shagged up in me words. Helped me learn to know meself better. It made me know that I'm as good as anyone else and I can get what I wants - I can try." W had the potential to do almost anything she chose, but the vicious circle of short term course, Social Services make-work project, UI, and then back to Social Services again seemed very hard to escape. W had nowhere to turn for advice or the continued support she needed to get on track. She wanted to go to school, she said she wanted to work, but without longer term supports, she was unlikely to become independent.

C also fell into the cycle of UI sponsored programs, courses, and support systems after JRT was over. She felt that JRT had improved her self-confidence, and had shown her that she'd have trouble getting a job, but "I'm glad I went. I got a chance to graduate from something." This acceptance of a life of difficulty and her pleasure at getting a certificate in "something" gets at the heart of the problems for JRT students. Dreaming small dreams and accepting what fate dishes out was the way they seemed to deal with life. They could only plan on a larger scale with a lot of help, and when that help was not there they settled for what they could. Gooderham's reference group theory seems to be correct in that JRT students choose work and life patterns within their knowledge base. However, this limits them to a life of poverty and underemployment. No wonder they do not plan and think beyond the present.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The future for JRT students loomed ahead as a repeat of their past. When I talked to the key informants about what they would do next, they were only able to answer in general terms, not with any firm plan which might change the tenor of their life.

K1, the student with university experience, said, "I hope to get a job. That's all I want from this is just a job......I want something to take me through the winter, that's all."

T had left school in Grade 9 and was "plannin' ta go ta work wit' Reggie."

B: Reggie?

T: First cousin.

B: Oh, yeah - what's he do?

T: Builds aluminum sidin'.

C1, who had also left school in Grade 9, thought for a moment: Don't know yet - got another few years yet to think about dat. Goin' to do me upgradin' and see what happens after dat. Says I should get t'rough.

B: Can you see yourself doing anything in particular?

C: Um...more or less a construction job..somet'ing like dat. After I finishes me upgradin', I'm goin' fer a trade, haven't got me mind made up yet.

D1 was a bit older than the class average, married, with a young son, and her future looked bleak to her. "I dreads for Friday to come now, to tell you the truth, for it [JRT] to be over - cause I'm goin' to be home, sat around, doin' nuttin, right?"

Thus their future loomed ahead like a black hole. In some ways JRT had done the students a disservice by introducing them to ideas and options which it could not deliver, and which they could not follow through on their own. Lack of finances, lack of education, long waiting lists for courses and lack of support services, both personal and professional, prevented even the most determined from being able to succeed in a world I took for granted. Adult education alone can only begin to provide options for JRT students. There are larger policy initiatives which must be effected if we are to make real change.

CHAPTER 9

ADULT EDUCATION: SOCIAL EQUALIZER OR UPHOLDER OF THE STATUS QUO?

"Oh, Me Nerves!"

> By 11:15 they are underway - half are going to the library. There's a lot of wasted time, the students are past masters of it. T1 is sitting chewing his nails as usual and is doing nothing, nor is he making any attempt to do anything. Jill has a talk to him: "Do you remember our chat about appearances? Not only must you do something, but you must appear as though you are doing something."
>
> T1 engages then in an interesting discussion/diversion with Jill about "buddy who fell off the bridge and died, and buddy what got killed downtown the week-end." Jill glares, hands on her hips.
>
> T1: Jesus, I forgets where I'm at. (in his language program)
>
> Eve: Well check your exercise. Oh, me nerves! (Field Notes, April 21)

JRT - a contradiction in cultures, in values, in objectives, and in life patterns. And yet, I was still convinced (maybe against all odds) that it had some merit.

Grounded In The Slippery Phenomena Of JRT

Discovering the reality in JRT was no easy feat and it is difficult to say whether I uncovered the whole truth in the time of my observation and analysis.

What I did do was to get a little closer to the students' perception of their experience, something perhaps a little different than the unvarnished truth. It was, at any rate, a little more slippery than I had imagined, and a lot more surprising than I was prepared for.

Barton and Lazarsfeld (1955) pointed out that single qualitative observations often indicate the existence of "something surprising" which we may want to find explanation for or that we may wish to study further. My practitioner self knowledge provided the single incident surprising something (L in the assertiveness class) which motivated me to begin the research. My researcher self then tried to find a way to discover and better understand that phenomenon, the JRT class. In order to unlock the secrets of the field notes and the interviews, I had to make sense of the data, begin to analyze it and find the connections contained within. I found that I had to move from the presumed knowledge of the instructor and into the reality as perceived by the students, all the time avoiding what Douglas (1970) says is "the fallacy of believing that you can know in more abstract form what you do not know in the particular form." (p.11) In order to avoid falling into that trap and to build a structure from which to derive theory, I utilized the methodology of grounded theory as indicated in the opening chapter of the thesis.

Grounded theory builds from a constant comparison of the data, is illustrated by characteristic examples, and is derived inductively. These principles were easily followed because they made such good sense. In fact they were almost intuitive as I searched for a path through the accumulating material. Looking back to the field notes, basing the line of inquiry in the interviews on hints from the daily log, reflecting and analyzing via a personal journal, and following the resulting thoughts through to logical ends, were the processes used to build towards a theoretical finale grounded securely in the data. It began with an initial data sampling, comparing incidents - in this case including what I saw as a researcher compared with what I had felt as an instructor. In time, I was able to tentatively choose themes. Then I began to develop those themes more coherently and began to link incidents with the themes. This evolution enabled me to build interview questions around the data, and I began to see patterns emerging. Sometimes these patterns were logical, as in the ideas that formed around adult education theory and its use in a JRT classroom. At other times, the process to truth was circuitous, even torturous, as in the case of capturing the language and values into a framework that was coherent and true to the situation.

Initially, theory was not the final goal for me. My aim was simply to know more, to be better prepared to deal with the classroom, to be more effective. As I began to observe and analyze, I started to realize that I could say more about what worked and what did not work in this classroom, with certainty based upon participant insight, than I could previously. If this insight can be usefully applied to classes other than the JRT class in the study, then perhaps a link toward a developing theory has been forged.

The road to delimiting theory as Glaser and Strauss (1967) have ascribed it is not an easy path. In this case, it took months of field work, analysis, reflection, and writing to begin to understand the larger issues which were formulating. To write the theory was equally challenging, in that it must be evident and argued within the presentation itself. Thus theory comes alive through the words and actions of the actors in the piece, not as facts derived from the research. As Kozma (1985) points out:

> The massive effort enlisted to develop the theory cannot be shown in the writing, they can only be suggested by the structure, shape, and conceptual style of the presentation. Concepts and propositions are illustrated by references to the data, but these references are used to establish imagery and understanding of the theory. (p.305)

Thus the end product reflects the theory building as a reasonably accurate statement of JRT as I saw it through the eyes of the participants.

Grappling With The Theoretical Dimension

Working within JRT made me realize how lucky I had been to grow up in a stable family unit in which I was loved and encouraged and valued. As an instructor, I began to change my middle class opinions about "that crowd on welfare" as I'd heard them called many times, recognizing from experience that the students I met were no more responsible for their formative years than I had been for mine. Environmental factors contributed in large measure to the negative self-image and attitudes of the students, although it is too simplistic to say that they were the only influence. Social injustice took on human form in that classroom; class inequity was clearly evident. It was with these thoughts in mind that I began to come to terms with what I had gained from months of observation and analysis. The themes - the sense of immediacy, the incongruence within the classroom, language as a reflection of culture, the students' sense of an external locus of control, and the future a black hole all emerged as powerful messages to me as the researcher. That they felt right to me as the practitioner gave me an extra guarantee of fit. The themes both emphasized my initial misgivings and left me feeling more disturbed. I could no longer pretend that these were not realities. I had some kind of proof. And so I reached the time to consider the issues and tender my thoughts on increasing the level of knowledge within adult education practice.

I had been struck anew by the incongruence in the classroom. This incongruence was fundamental to understanding the dynamics of the class, and key also to a clearer understanding of the role JRT students play in our society. Their dysfunction resulted from the lack of shared values and goals. The course had an agenda which was geared to putting them into the workforce; the college wished to provide that within an educational context, using principles of adult education to provide a comforting and life enhancing environment; the instructors provided the facilitation of the course within the context of their middle class values; yet the students were dealing with experiences and needs which neither education, entry level work, nor a 20 week course could begin to address. It seemed that we all began from the premise of fixing the students when we would have been more correct to change our course objectives in order to make them fit the students' needs.

The language of the classroom, the values of the students, the attitudes about work and the future were part of a whole which reflected the issues around long term dependency and a lack of faith in better prospects. The despondency of the students as they returned from yet another menial work placement was discouraging. They had entered the program for the money, but were for the most part willing to try something that promised a new beginning. The reality of entry level work was another letdown, designed to make them feel less than adequate. This reality reinforced their attitudes of learned helplessness, their lack of internal locus of control, their position as second class citizens. The course and the instructors promised change, but the reality delivered a message from their past. Even those students who worked in jobs that had some promise were informed that they could not apply for them because their education was inadequate, or no jobs existed. There seemed no point in aiming for productive work options when their experience told them that it did not exist for them.

Thus their values, culture, experience, and future views combined to encourage them to become dependent on a combination of welfare, UI, and make work projects. It was the only security they knew. JRT failed to mobilize these individuals for the long term and instead they were doomed to become clients of the state for their lifetime. Even more tragic is the thought that they are children of dependent parents, and in their turn they too will have children who will most likely be dependent. One is lead to ask if answers that are fiscally responsible and educationally appropriate exist? Can we begin to address the multiplicity of needs that are evident from this research effort? Is there a way to make adult education work and programs fit the needs of the client group? Can instructors be more effective? Clearly these are questions of importance and complexity, but ones which we need to confront if we are to provide equitable programming for those who missed out the first time round.

The JRT students in this study were representative of a group in society who have been miscast as the takers, the lazy, the unmotivated. The reality is that they have issues and problems with which those of us who succeed have little experience. They cannot dream as we do, they cannot plan for a future as we do, they cannot prepare themselves for life as we do, because they have never had the support and the experience with success that we have had. As a result we condemn them to programs that are reminders of their own felt inadequacies. This study illuminated the lack of fit between our social and educational practice and the needs of a broad band of society. The changes in policy needed to address these issues must take into consideration the values and aspirations of individuals other than those of the middle class. This can be accomplished by making some changes which would be cost effective in the long run and in fact have proven to be successful in other situations.

First of all, the discipline of adult education should be recognized within mainstream educational training. This work is too important to be left to individuals who are untutored in the principles of adult education philosophy, and who do not understand the complex needs of the students they reach.

Programming for students with recognized social and educational handicaps needs to be consistent with overcoming these difficulties, thus must respond to an agenda reflective of student needs, rather than EIC, college, or instructor objectives. This is not to say that other agendas are incorrect, simply that we need to ensure that the priorities are student led. This would indicate a building process within the classroom because many students have not given thought to future goals, and more importantly, have not identified themselves as having a future worth planning.

Integrated program design will be crucial to successful outcomes. As we have seen it is not enough to have a welcoming climate, or academics, or work stations. All these modules are required and then some. The importance of ongoing counselling, the necessity of supportive, available day care, the need for programs which pool the resources of all funding and support agencies are determining elements in the success of the process. Additionally, work placements need to be connected to related skill development programs so the students can experience accomplishment and feel that they have gained something worthwhile. Building self-esteem and ensuring opportunities for success will provide self enhancing incidents which can help students perceive themselves in new ways.

The difficulty with these suggested changes is that we live in a society which does not value students like those I met in JRT. Some students, admittedly, will continue to have problems, regardless of their best efforts. However, as a society we are losing much of our valuable human resource by ignoring the potential in individuals like W and C1 who have spirited approaches to life, but lack the supports and skills to move forward with confidence.

Was JRT Sufficient?

The students I met were entering a program designed to prepare them for the world of work. JRT was meant to motivate them, provide a skills analysis, upgrade their academic deficiencies, introduce them to jobs which suited their abilities and interests, and make them job ready, within a 20 week time frame. Although it was understood that each student had serious problems to overcome in order to enter the workforce, it was clear that the task and the time allotment were set to agendas other than student need. The social and educational agendas were not the responsibility of EIC, the federal employment agency. On the other hand the employment potential of the students coupled with the economic situation of the province meant that jobs would be difficult to obtain. With social, educational, and economic agendas not in concert the students stood little chance of advancement. The initial premise of the course could not be realized and the losers were the students who were victims of yet another well-intentioned strategy meant to improve their lot. The course is no longer in existence, but this has occurred because of policy change at the federal level, rather than as a recognition of a need for a more comprehensive program.

Although Lawrence (1983) recognized an increase in the need for accountability and cost-effectiveness of basic skill and manpower programs, this accountability and subsequent re-organization of fiscal support has evolved out of a response for more innovative job/training initiatives, rather than a clear look at improving programming. However, there still exists a population which needs pre-employment, sociability and academic upgrading in order to take advantage of training options geared towards the new watchwords of competitiveness, prosperity, and a well-trained workforce. As long as there is no integration of social and economic policy, the changes that occur will not answer the needs of that population.

A review of the literature in the area of participation in programs for the disadvantaged (ABE/literacy/prison/re-entry women/social welfare recipients) underscores the benefits of these programs in far more than academic terms (Darkenwald and Valentine, 1985, Knox, 1977, Mahaffy 1983). Improvements in self-concept, family life, and getting along with others were all cited as key growth areas for participants in such programs. Academic and subsequent job success notwithstanding, these more affective measures have implications of far reaching individual and social impact. The literature to date though is minimal and largely quantitative in scope. Equally, adult educators have not been effective in indicating to funding agencies the importance of these qualitative measures. As Lawrence (1983) states: "If adult educators are to make a strong case for the use of non-economic social development indicators as measures of program success, they must begin to specify and assess individual growth along these dimensions." (p. 148)

The results of this study agree strongly with the premise that the affective measures of JRT programming cause positive impact on the students. Both from their own reporting, and in changes noted in individuals, the improvement to their self-esteem and their life skills was positive.

C: It gave me a little self-confidence.

K1: My self-confidence has certainly changed. I didn't have any last winter and my esteem was down below zero. It is building.

W: I used to be self-conscious. I was afraid to go out. Good t'ings definitely stayed wit' me.

The building of self-esteem was small compensation for the five months effort, particularly when real life and no job caused it to falter. Both C and K1 subsequently reported that they felt depressed by their situations when I met them on other occasions. Thus the JRT program, although it had elements of strength, did not produce participants who were job ready, nor could it have done so given the constraints of time, the incongruence of values, the cultural differences, and level of student need which were evident from the research.

Principles Of Adult Education: Do They Fit?

In the early stages of this research endeavour I questioned the legitimacy of adult education principles to address the complex issues which face instructor and student within the JRT classroom. It seemed to me intuitively that there were variations between the accepted practice in adult education and the reality of what was needed to make JRT a successful program. At the end of this journey I am convinced that the answer is more complex than I had initially anticipated and no less disturbing.

Adult education offered all participants in this JRT program the important option of being respected and accepted. There was an undercurrent of comfort there that enabled even the most fragile to feel included on some level. C who had cerebral palsy and because of drug inbalances, often behaved in a wildly inappropriate manner; K2, the Reverend, who was the object of much disdain; K1, with his accent; T1, with his immature behaviour; and all the others, found a place in which they could be themselves. It could have proved to be a learning environment of great impact, but the truth was that even with the positive element of a welcoming climate, the course did not succeed. These students were not self-directed, nor were they able to assume responsibility for their learning objectives, nor could they build on their experience to enhance their current learning. The principles of adult learning could not apply to JRT students because the gaps in the students' experience did not permit them to participate at the level which makes these principles workable. This is not to suggest that these are not worthwhile goals. On the contrary, they provide a foundation which facilitates students operating at disadvantage to build more positive self-esteem, to become more integrated into learning situations, and to develop better interpersonal skills. However, necessary as they are, they are not sufficient in and of themselves to provide the changes required to enable independence and change. The students responded well to the climate of the classroom and the attitudes engendered by the staff. They just needed more than could be offered in 20 weeks by a changing group of instructors.

Also, it must be realized that simply providing an accepting climate will not undo years of disadvantage and negative self-esteem. Thus the program was insufficient for the needs of the client and the adult education principles, though providing an element of acceptance for students, were also inadequate to provide what was required.

Towards An Answer

Adult education programs -- barriers or motivators? Changers or hindrances? The research to date shows an overwhelming indication to support the theory that these programs are short-sighted, non-integrative elements that do little to improve the status of the participants. Radical adult education thinking even disputes the rationality of the field operating within a capitalist society. Sociological findings indicate that education, as a reflection of the wider society, merely sustains the barriers to class mobility that are already in place, which is in direct opposition to the philosophy of equality on which adult education is based.

Current research is showing indications of a broader view of evaluating programs and looking at issues. This change alone will assist in a more complete understanding of the impact of provision. Beyond this as Morch-Jacobsen (1980) points out: "It is naive to suppose that [education and social change] can be described or explained by means of simple cause and effect models" (p.48). There is an evident need to get below the surface and ask better, more appropriate questions such as why does a person participate and what are the long-term and short-term results of participation.

This study provided some substantive answers to those questions. Clearly, as I had initially suspected from my practitioner role, there are good things which occur and there are positive changes for some of the students. But it is not enough. The students cannot hang onto improved self-esteem, knowledge about work preparation, or interview skills in an environment which does not support those initial efforts towards independence. Without continued supports and integrated programs which link work, academics, skill development, and life skills, the students cannot improve their future options. It is better to have no course and no raised expectations than to be shown the road to a brighter future and have it disappear. Further to this, educators must begin to speak about what they know, that the current programs are insufficient, that adult education principles cannot be followed blindly for they are inadequate for the needs of students, that values and cultures in classrooms need to be attended to, and that adult educators need better training to deal with the complexity of their work.

Complex Problems Require Complex Solutions

It has been said that there is always a simple answer to a complex problem - simple, plausible and wrong. This is an issue which is complex enough to warrant a complex answer. Therefore, it is not enough to believe that by offering programs for disadvantaged adults, we are eradicating lack of opportunity and improving their chances for work. Rather we must be aware of the total fabric of the dilemma and address it as a whole, not just pull at threads. Adult education has a role to play in its solution, but there are many interacting elements which affect it. Ryan, in Blaming the Victim, (1971), has written a compelling treatise on the issues which affect and cause deprivation. Of schools he writes: "And the task to be accomplished is not to revise and amend and repair deficient children, but to alter and transform the atmosphere and operations of the schools to which we commit these children. Only by changing the nature of the educational experience can we change its product." (p. 60).

His focus was the school system, but the implications are equally meaningful for adult education. Ryan believes that reform lies in the hands of the concerned citizen who becomes aware of the inequalities and struggles for change. With its history of social concern, this is a role that adult education can also play - as long as we do not look for simple answers in short term programs.

Collins (1984) focuses on the stratification of society which he feels causes the poor to stay poor and he outlines the role programs for the disadvantaged play within that structure. He argues that:

> Just as transition and retraining programs for the unemployed and school-leavers simply reshuffle the actors, so programmes for the disadvantaged do not create new jobs or even help most individuals; they simply alter the actors while the numbers of the disadvantaged remain the same - or increase. (p. 33)

Cameron (1987) disputes this view and suggests that training assists the needy to move from one level up to another, thus making room for disadvantaged others to move up behind. She concludes that adult education thus has a net social benefit, even for those who do not participate. Her suggestion seems somewhat questionable in light of the research done on participation and barriers to further education. The general orthodoxy of adult education suggests that it serves as an instrument to improve basic education standards, employability and social equity. Adult education seems, in fact, to be adding to the social inequality it wishes to help eradicate. However, as the research on working class adults and disadvantaged groups generally is quite sparse this may not represent a total picture.

In light of this, the present study (an attempt to visualize the meaning and impact of an educational/pre-employment training program on disadvantaged adults) was forced to question both the lack of related research and the assumptions of adult education practice. The intentions of the majority of studies seemed to be focused upon "who" participated based largely upon demographic descriptors (Cross, 1982). However, this study was aimed at an attempt to illuminate why disadvantaged adults participated initially and why they pursued the goals of the program through to a finish. It also attempted, in part, to identify the impact of such a program upon the long term intentions and values orientation of the student.

Recent studies such as Only Work Works (1987), results from the Youth Training Scheme in the United Kingdom, and youth traineeships in Australia indicate that a much broader scope is needed if we are to effectively meet current needs. Given the economic trends of the late twentieth century, the technological nature of the workplace, the high levels of unemployment, and the problems inherent in the disadvantaged client groups, it becomes clear that there are serious gaps that need redress in order that we may offer programs appropriate to the demand. The mismatch between trainee skills and experience and the requirements of the job market are resulting in programs that offer band-aid solutions to critical social problems and that do not change the opportunities for the participants.

This study suggests a multi-faceted approach to training which would build on and enhance the current JRT course. As it exists, JRT has limitations, but that does not imply that the set directions are not sound. We need to produce programs that are developmental and not remedial, long term and not minimal approaches, and set within adult education practices but not bound by them. We also need to look at successful ventures such as traineeships in Australia, YTS in Great Britain, and the community education initiative on the Port au Port Peninsula to guide us towards better answers. Finally, we must consider the ethical questions which arise regarding the cultural incongruence between general social values and those of JRT students. Is it ethical to presume that the values of society should provide the context for classes such as JRT? It is, I believe, an issue for further research.

Final Thoughts

During a course, many issues were discussed, many stories were heard, and a host of needs were identified in interactions with students. It was an education to hear about their feelings about themselves and to explore with them the root of some of their perceptions. Each student in JRT was a tragedy - a lost person - misdirected and without a defined place in the broader society of which he/she is a part. Each one felt this way, and indeed, in many aspects, each one was this way. Can any program undo a lifetime's damage? What causes these feelings of inferiority, personal incongruity, and negativism? The histories of the JRT students gives some indication of where the problems begin. The majority of students came from neighbourhoods in which poverty and unemployment were the norm, had a history of alcoholic and/or broken homes, abuse, family crime, and a lack of school success. The education system, or a JRT program cannot begin to address these complex and interrelated issues alone. These factors indicate a need for education to become more closely linked with social and community agencies, in order for individuals to receive an integrated helping strategy, rather than receive services in a piecemeal fashion as is so often the case. The personal cost of ignoring these issues cannot be calculated. Nor can the loss to society in terms of civic input, labour input and informed political will. Warren (1982) stated:

> Unemployment compensation, welfare payments, and incarceration expenditures are all costs that society incurs by not providing resources adequate for educating all our young people. Unlike education costs, they do little to develop human resources that contribute to the wealth and quality of our society. (p.6)

Our lack of commitment to social problems is indeed costly, but it is the sad human reality that is reflected when I see K1 and he says: "I'm at the bottom now, but I'll find my way to the top." And he says it each time I see him.

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