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Older Adult Education: The Need to Chart New Directions

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ABSTRACT

Older Adult Education: The Need to Chart New Directions

The term "lifelong learning" has become a popular phrase in both society and the field of education. In fact, the field of adult education professes to dedicate itself to the pursuit of the realization of lifelong learning in our educational systems. However, the educational realization of lifelong learning has been minimal for those over the age of 65. Despite the fact the field of adult education encompasses ***all*** ages of the adult lifespan, adult educators have focused primarily on the education of those under 65. Obviously, adult education has been impacted greatly by the "productivity" bias of education. It appears the majority of programs that do exist for older adults are often characterized by a "filling up time" philosophy or are developed or undertaken without any true sense of why education in later life is important in the first place. There are, of course, examples, in the literature and in practice, of positive and meaningful programs. Unfortunately, these programs represent a minority. Obviously, there is a desperate need within the field of adult education to reconceptualize and re-create older adult education. As adult educators we have, for the most part, either ignored, underestimated, or misunderstood older adult education. Now more than ever, our aging society illustrates the problematic lack of meaningful older adult education. It is also this aging society which offers us the chance and the challenge to re-create older adult education.

The purpose of this applied thesis is to explore new and meaningful directions for re-creating older adult education. The thesis examines what various thinkers have written about what they believe should be the purposes and goals of older adult education and what theoretical beliefs should guide or inform our quest to reconceptualize and re-create older adult education. It is proposed in the thesis that a merging of both instrumental and expressive education would best encompass diverse learning needs. The merging would also recognize and value the heterogeneity of older adult education. The need for and benefits of creating a balance between humanist and critical thought is also argued. Both the humanist and critical paradigms offer tremendous insight into meaningful goals for older adult education. It is the fundamental purpose of this applied thesis to create a model which can serve as a guiding philosophy for meaningful older adult education.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wonderful parents, Bill and June Jessome, in appreciation of the steadfast love, support, and encouragement they have given me throughout my life.

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Today, we hear the words "lifelong learning" time and time again, both within the field of adult education in particular, as well as in society. In fact, the term "lifelong learning" has become somewhat of an popular educational catch phrase over the last number of years. Unfortunately, despite the wide use and popularity of the term, the actual educational realization of "lifelong learning" has been minimal, particularly with those over the age of 65. The disregard of older learners within the field of education becomes very evident as one examines the adult education literature. One revealing example is the fact that the 1970 edition of the Handbook of Adult Education did not discuss adult education as related to older adults because there was simply not enough room in the Handbook to include a discussion of the education of older adults. Obviously, older adult learners did not merit much attention or importance to the editors and contributors of this volume. Although the 1989 edition of the Handbook of Adult Education does dedicate a chapter to education and older adults, the discussion seems to focus primarily on the clientele older adults will offer to adult educators now and in the future. Rather than stressing the importance of lifelong learning and the necessity for learning in later life, the two factors the Handbook suggest convey the importance of older adult learning are population aging and the gap in the educational level between older and younger generations. Have the writers of

the Handbook truly recognized the importance of later life learning or are they concentrating on the clientele it will offer them in years to come?

Another example of the disregard of later life learning can be found in the results of Barry Lumsden's national survey of graduate programs in the United States. Lumsden surveyed universities that offered graduate studies in adult education to determine whether or not these programs were preparing students to work within older adult education. Although this survey was completed in 1977, which is just over 20 years ago, the results are still startling. Lumsden found that 55% of the graduate programs in adult education offered no courses dedicated to education and aging. He also found that if the program did offer courses, it was usually only one or two (Lumsden, 1978:194). Lumsden aptly concludes from this study that "The aging adult learner is a species largely neglected by our nation's college- and university based programs of graduate study in adult education" (194). How can we possibly profess to study and educate others about adult education if we do not include the entire adult population in our discussions, research, and writing?

A final example of the evidence of the neglect of older learners is more recent. In a 1985 volume of the education journal "Convergence", which began publishing in the early 1970's, the opening editorial section and entire volume is devoted to the discussion of "Implications for Lifelong Learning

of the Emergence of the `Age of Aging'". The editor Margaret Gayfer introduces her editorial section by stating, "This special issue of *Convergence* marks a first-time effort to focus on the role of education in the lives of older people". This particular volume of the "Convergence" journal was published in 1985 and it represented the journal's first time effort to focus on education and older adults.

The Participation of Older Adults in Education

The participation of older adults in educational opportunities is known and generally agreed upon to be much lower than their younger counterparts. The majority of research studies so far have definitely pointed in this direction (Johnstone and Rivera 1965, Deveraux 1984, Carp, Peterson and Roelfs 1974, etc). However, these studies have primarily focused on more formal types of learning and have not adequately probed the equally significant area of participation in informal learning, so these studies are not entirely conclusive nor comprehensive. Research of participation rates in education is often a tricky concept in adult education because of the tendency within the research to focus on the more formal learning settings. So we must be very careful about how much merit we give to these studies as illustrations of a clear picture of the participation of older adults in adult education. Definitely, there is a need to redefine what constitutes adult education participation and there has been support for this from numerous

writers such as B.S. Clough (1992), Hiemstra (1985), and Tough (1971, 1979) to name just a few. Despite their drawbacks, however, the studies which probe mainly formal learning still provide important insights. While limited, they give us a sense of basic participation rates, as well as an understanding of the types of older adults who access the formal learning opportunities. Perhaps this is a good time to review a few of the more important studies.

In 1965 John W.C Johnstone and Ramon J. Rivera released their national report and famous study, "Volunteers for Learning", which was based on their 1962 study of adult education participation. This report was the most comprehensive study of adult education participants up until this time. Johnstone and Rivera concluded that participants in adult education "tend to be young, white, and with more income and education than the mean of the population" (Heisel, 1980:128). Johnstone and Rivera also found that women were as likely as men to participate in education. As André Grace states regarding the Johnstone and Rivera study findings, "Adult education was geared toward the younger, more productive members of society. Nearly eighty percent of participants were under the age of fifty" (Grace, 1997:246). The previous educational attainment of an individual also proved to be a important factor in whether or not the person would participate in adult education opportunities. Johnstone and Rivera had found that those participating in education usually had an education of high school or higher. Obviously,

older adults were not the priority of adult education at this time. What is also very important to note is that if you were older, had a below average income, and did not have significant prior educational attainment, the chances you would participate in adult education was even lower. If you were not white your learning opportunities became even less. While it is important to recognize that older adults in general were not participating, we must also understand the special circumstance the more disadvantaged elderly faced in regards to participation in education. In their article, "Participation in Organized Educational Activities Among Adults Age 60 and Over", Heisel, Darkenwald, & Anderson state,

> Not only do the aged seem to have less opportunity for lifelong education than the young, but within the older population some groups- those with lower education and income, the very old, and particularly older black men and women- seem to have less access to education than the rest of the elderly (1980:239).

The Adult Education Survey, which was conducted in 1984 by Statistics Canada, also indicated that the numbers of older adults taking part in adult education was very low.

> This survey was based on an unusually large sample-more than 90,000 individuals- and yielded a subset of some 12,545 persons 65 years of age or older. The large number of observations, combined with an unusually detailed set of questions about continuing education, permits more comprehensive and reliable analysis than was hitherto possible (Denton, Pineo, and Spencer, 1988:5).

A summary report on the survey concluded that only 4% of those over 65 were taking part in adult education (Deveraux, 1984:6). It is clear from the survey data that the participation rates for

older adults are seriously low in comparison with 19% participation for the rest of the population over the age of 17 excluding full-time students. The report notes, "Adult learners tended to be relatively young...For both men and women, enrolment declined markedly after age 45" (6). The report also states, "The keenest adult learners were university graduates- more than 40% took a course in 1983. By contrast, just 5% of people with less than Grade 9 were participants" (13). The report concluded that "The profile of the adult learner that emerged from the survey was that of a young, well-educated, urban, white collar worker" (48). Again, age, class, and previous education were shown to be strong determining factors in whether or not an individual would participate in educational activities. In the article, "Education and the Disadvantaged Elderly", Marsel A. Heisel makes the similar point that "Preliminary results of data collected in 1975 on adult education participation show that years of formal schooling and age account for more of the variance in participation than do any other factors" (Heisel, 1980:129). Heisel also goes on to state that "the educationally disadvantaged elderly are least likely to benefit from adult education".

Merriam and Caffarella suggest that "Despite concern with the middle-class bias in participation, it seems unlikely that the profile of the typical learner will change significantly in the years to come" (Merriam and Caffarella,1991:66). They also note, however, "broader definitions [of education to include both

formal and non-formal learning experiences rather than just the formal will] result in higher participation rates" (66). I believe that the participation rates of older adults in education would be higher if we looked more closely at non-formal learning experiences, but I still do not believe they would be nearly as high as the younger generations rates. If negative assumptions and ignorance regarding aging affect formal learning participation, they will surely affect non-formal learning participation rates as well. The assumption that participation rates will not change in the future is based on present circumstances. There is no reason why we cannot change our view of education to encompass and welcome later life learning. If we did so, it would undoubtedly change the rates of participation of older adults in education. The question remains whether or not we will do it.

Heisel makes the important point that "This lack of participation can in no way be attributed to alleged intellectual decline with age- a stereotype that seems to persist in spite of all contrary evidence" (129). Unfortunately, this incorrect stereotype or myth has been repeated time and time again. As Merriam and Caffarella state, "This powerful myth- that adults lose their ability to learn as they age- still prevails, although for the most part it has not been substantiated in the literature" (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991:140). Support for this myth and stereotype has come from poorly conceptualized research studies, weak attempts to create tests to measure intelligence,

limited definitions of what constitutes intelligence, and a negative and ageist view of aging. We must admit, however, that there are changes in our bodies due to aging which may affect certain declines in ability. However, these declines are not universal nor are they to be experienced by everyone or necessarily in the same way. Nor do they mean that normal aging changes result in substantial limitations in ability to learn. It becomes highly problematic if we try to describe the overall learning ability of older adults. In doing so, we are assuming that all older adults are alike, which we know is not true. Merriam and Caffarella mention a study which consisted of a longitudinal comparison of adults ranging from the ages of seventy-three to ninety-three and the study "found that although many of the subjects showed some decline in abilities, more than half displayed no such change, even at the oldest age levels" (153). Thus, we can expect there may be a decline but it will probably not affect the older person's ability to learn to any substantial amount. The bulk of the present literature now suggests that older adults definitely can and do learn but studies show they may not do as well if their efforts are timed (154). Heisel notes,

> Reviews of studies on intellectual functioning and age appear to indicate that the stereotype of the aged as suffering from intellectual decline is not supported by data and that the healthy elderly are just as capable of learning as those who are younger and such literature surveys often end up reiterating the need for increased educational opportunities in the later segment of the lifespan (Baltes & Labouvie, 1973; Grabowsky & Mason, 1975; Eklund, 1969; Birren & Woodruff, 1973) in (Heisel:154).

Obviously, it must be said that there is a need for society to completely rethink its current conceptions of the ability to learn in later life, however, this is beyond the scope of this discussion. I could go on and on about various studies and literature which support an older adults ability to learn in later life but I think it would be unnecessary. There are a multitude of authors who write very positively and extensively about our ability to learn in later life, and the wonderful and necessary learning experiences it offers us, such as Harry Moody (1975, 1985, 1986, 1987-88, 1988), Thomas R. Cole (1986,1992), D.Barry Lumsden (1985), Betty Friedan (1993), Louis Lowy (1986), Darlene O'Connor (1986), Howard Y. McClusky (1971, 1974), Bradley C. Courtenay (1990, 1997), and Mary Alice Wolf (1991, 1993, 1994), to name just a few of the authors and some of their work. I see the learning ability of older adults as a given and a fact. I am more interested, at this point, in looking at the learning ability of older adults as proof of why we must acknowledge and recognize the importance of later life learning, both in the field of education and in our society in general. I also believe we must recognize the positive benefits education can have in later life and the positive influence education can have "in maintaining intellectual effectiveness into advanced years" (Heisel, 1989:129).

So why do we keep hearing about lifelong learning in education and our society if it does not fully recognize or meet the needs of the learning that takes place in later life?

Unfortunately, the truth is we often do support and promote lifelong learning but usually only in relation to earlier and middle life. Patricia Cross argues that lifelong learning is necessary for all ages. She writes,

> "Lifelong learning is not a privilege or a right; it is simply a necessity for anyone, young or old, who must live with the escalating pace of change-in the family, on the job, in the community, and in the world-wide society" (Cross, 1981:ix).

Cross believes it is our role as adult educators to promote and support lifelong learning for all ages (ix). Margaret Gayfer also points out, "If we really believe in lifelong learning and in the right of all people to learn, we must be concerned about how adult education can help meet the learning needs of people like ourselves facing and going through the significant changes encountered in the later years" (Gayfer,1985:2). In their position paper on Lifelong Learning, The National Advisory Council on Aging of Canada states, " `Lifelong learning' includes all of the learning that occurs from infancy to old age, in settings including the workplace, classroom, community centres and the home. It can be sparked by personal curiosity, by life transitions or by situational demands" (NACA,1990:3). Obviously, we are not meeting the requirements of the fulfilment of lifelong learning in our society as NACA and many other authors define lifelong learning.

There are probably a number of reasons for the low participation of older adults in adult education. "For instance, Goodrow (1975) and Kaplan (1960) have clearly shown that economic

and health factors limit the degree of participation, and other relevant factors have also been identified" (Merriam and Lumsden,1985:52). Older adults may also be affected by the fact society does not seem to view them as productive or capable for learning and they do not participate as a result. Many factors are possible but we cannot overlook the importance of the disregard and lack of attention on the part of adult educators for later life learning. Merriam and Lumsden state, "the possibility does exist that adult educators, through negligence of one sort or another, may be partly responsible for the failure of older adults to avail themselves of educational opportunities" (52). Perhaps some adult educators have had the tendency to see education in the light of economics and productivity or as "first and foremost an investment in human capital" (52). Or as Lumsden also suggests in another article "It is possible that adult educators have neglected the older learner because of an ignorance about what it means to grow old" (1978:191). Adult educators may also have had the tendency to assume that older adults simply were not interested in education so they did not encourage older adults to participate nor did they become interested in their participation or lack of.

While I do believe adult education has neglected and underestimated the older learner, I believe attempts are being made within the field to counter this. Dorothy Thomas writes, "In recent years many adult educators have been working to insure that older adults are not excluded from the concept of lifelong

learning and that their needs and contributions are accepted and valued equally with the education of children and of younger adults" (1985:4). While this is a positive sign, we need more than a number of adult educators to change the situation. The field of adult education as a whole must address the underestimation of the importance of the older learner. Society must do so as well for any significant changes to be felt. This will require us to think more positively of aging, later life, and the learning we can experience when we reach that time in our lives. The amazing growth of the field of educational gerontology since the seventies, which was also the time of its conception, should provide us with renewed strength, vision, hope, and belief in the possibilities for positive changes in the future for education and aging. Lumsden defines educational gerontology as "According to Peterson, it is the study and practice of instructional endeavours *for* and *about* the aged and aging individuals" (Lumsden, 1978:189). As adult educators, we can learn a great deal from this encompassing burgeoning field.

To be fair, there has been a significant move within institutions of higher learning to offer courses, programs, and tuition free waivers to older adults over the last number of years. However, "it is generally accepted that, under the prevailing conditions, both market and nonmarket factors ensure that the highest educated, and most affluent groups, have the highest participation rates in adult education" (Moody, 1987-1988:8). It is often the case that the older adults who engage

in learning within universities, community colleges, schools, Elderhostel programs, etc. are usually already educated and, to them, lifelong learning has always been a way of life. Importantly, the numbers of these older individuals who do attend university and college are still quite low. If the majority of those who do attend higher educational institutions are individuals who have had access to education in the past, are somewhat privileged, and are already committed to lifelong learning, one begins to wonder about those older adults to whom education in previous years was not accessible or possible. Unfortunately, the less educated or disadvantaged older adults are not readily seeking the learning opportunities available within institutions. (By disadvantaged I refer to a social, financial, or educational disadvantage.) Moody notes: "Statistics repeatedly show that both fee-based and "tuition-free" programs fail to reach those with the greatest needs for education" (1987-1988:8). Peterson also makes the point that the accessibility to education by the disadvantaged older adult is one of the most important concerns in the field of education today (1983:13). We definitely do not have equal access to education for all older adults.

Obviously, there is a need to rethink how universities and colleges meet the needs of the older adult learners, as well as acknowledge and incorporate the strengths of age and life experience that the older adult brings with them. It is true that the "educational needs for the older adult are quite

different than for the 18-22 year old. Older adults have at least twice the life experience in time on which they can draw as compared to younger age groups" (Calgary Survey of Educational Interests of Older Adults, 1983:3). In the past, education has focused upon one fundamental purpose, which was to educate or prepare for life a young student population. As a result, "Most existing programs require the elderly to behave and compete in a manner similarly required of the 20 year old, and assumes that they are seeking similar goals" (Calgary Survey of Educational Interests of Older Adults, 1983:3). However, if we are truly committed to lifelong learning in our society this situation will have to radically change. While many formal institutions have begun to offer tuition free waivers, they have not gone any further into examining how best to meet the needs of the older student. In fact, it would be fair to say that changes in the formal system to accommodate older learners have been superficial to say the least.

Certainly there are a few examples of excellent initiatives and programs but in general there has not been a great deal of attention or effort given. For example, our metro universities: Dalhousie, Saint Mary's, and Mount Saint Vincent, all have tuition free waiver policies for older adults. However, the numbers of individuals who are actually accessing this opportunity are quite low. Upon requesting actual numbers from each of the universities I was informed that the administration was not sure of the actual numbers but that they knew there were

not very many individuals accessing the opportunity. It is important to remember that it is not just a question of accessibility to the institution or opportunity for learning, but rather how the institution must re-organize and re-create the education offered to the older adult. It will not be easy for the formal system to change "since education for older people attracts little attention in the youth-oriented system that now prevails" (Moody, 1987-88:8). The Calgary Survey of Educational Interests of Older Adults outlines nine particular problematic conditions in post secondary education today in regards to not meeting the needs of older learners and lifelong learning. Almost all of these problematic conditions are the result of the following factors: a lack of recognition and understanding of the importance of later life learning; how we learn in later life; the importance of meaning in later life; the ability of later life learners, and the obstacles or challenges we may face in later life learning. In fact, this same report from 1983 also noted that "documented information necessary for development of educational programs responsive to and adequate to the needs of older adults in Calgary and other Canadian communities is virtually non-existent" (2). Obviously, as adult educators and as a society, we have our work cut out for us. Moody notes that in order to create educational opportunities responsive to older adults we will have "to go beyond conventional definitions of education and aging services" (Moody, 1987-88:7).

Education and learning as we know, however, does not just

take place in our universities and colleges. "Lifelong learning does not begin, nor end, at the sound of the school bell" (NACA, 1990:5). Learning opportunities are available within communities through public libraries, the workplace, museums, churches, senior centres, health clinics, reading groups, discussion groups, etc. Even television and electronic media offer educational opportunities. However, the National Advisory Council on Aging explains, "There is no way to gauge the actual proportion of the senior population engaged in `informal' learning activities; they may not even recognize their involvement as `education'". The opportunity to learn via these informal channels is most important" (NACA,1990:5).

The learning that takes place outside of the formal institution is very important and significant because it is the non-formal that represents the majority of learning opportunities. Non-formal is also important because it often allows the older adult to have more control over the learning and may meet their interests and desires much more. Not only do we have to broaden our horizons when we think about older adult learning, but also about non-formal learning. Whether learning is formal or non-formal it is equally meaningful and important. However, to some formal is viewed as superior. In contradiction to this Harry Moody states, "Many of the most exciting initiatives in older-adult learning have taken place outside the mainstream of our colleges and universities" (7). Some excellent examples of successful non-formal educational opportunities can

be found in B.S. Clough's article, "Broadening Perspectives on Learning Activities in Later Life". Some examples are:

> New Horizons, a federally funded initiative of Health and Welfare Canada (Novak, 1987), sponsors programs across Canada that encourage seniors to learn, to grow, and to be contributive members of society...innovative health programs such as the Victoria Health Project in British Columbia (Deacon, 1990) support initiatives with strong educative components for seniors...[and] in Manitoba, Homebound Learning has successfully developed and delivered learning programs to isolated elderly (1992:448).

It is truly a shame and a loss that we do not value informal learning in our society and our educational systems more.

The goal or purpose of the above discussion has been to lay the groundwork or background to the central problem I plan to investigate within this applied thesis. In the preceding pages I have outlined the present situation of older adult education and our supposed dedication to the realization of lifelong learning. I have explained that as educators and a society we have ignored and underestimated learning in later life, and in doing so, we do not fully emulate a dedication to lifelong learning. There have been more educational opportunities available to older adults than ever before, and we still do not understand nor appreciate why we should promote and support it. As Harry Moody notes,

> We have more educational opportunities for older people but no better understanding about why such opportunities exist in the first place. Both the general public and professionals in the field of aging have only the vaguest ideas about why it might be a "good thing" (people generally believe it is) for old folks to go on learning. We are delighted when we read a newspaper story about a 75-year old grandmother who has just earned a college degree. But we don't usually give serious attention to the subject of late-life

> learning, and needless to say, funding in support of older adult education still remains at abysmal levels (Moody, 1987-88:5).

Obviously, we have a shocking lack of any policy towards lifelong learning and, as adult educators, we must address this.

I have also presented research that illustrates the neglect of the older learner and the special circumstance of the older learner who is disadvantaged. It is crucial to remember that it is the disadvantaged older adult who will be the least likely to access formal education programs. As Moody notes, "Most adult educators believe that the elderly poor have the greatest need for education....Yet the programs that exist are not reaching the poor" (1987-88:8). Moody also adds that "the affluent, well-educated elderly are receiving the lion's share of opportunities, while little or nothing is being done for the poor" (8). This is often the case for other age segments as well.

I have also acknowledged that there are problems with the participation studies to date because they only survey formal learning. If more comprehensive studies were completed, the rates of older adult educational participation would probably be higher. However, I also make the argument that despite this probability there is still not enough being done. Within society and the field of education we still have the tendency to view education in terms of economics and productivity and we still possess negative and incorrect assumptions about later life and non-formal learning. This situation needs to change regardless of anything else that occurs, but it becomes especially important

when we recognize that we live in an aging society. Logically, we arrive at the question, what do we do about this problem? I believe that our aging population offers us both the challenge and the chance to find out. If we recognize and appreciate learning in later life and value it equally with learning in younger years, not only will we change the face of education and truly foster lifelong learning, but we will also promote a positive image and understanding of the later years. As a society we have lost our symbolic meaning of old age. With renewed appreciation of what later life has to offer us and the understanding of quality of learning that can take place at this time, we can attribute later life and later life learning the meaning and significance it deserves.

Some might argue that funding for older adults should address immediate concerns such as housing and income first and focus on education later. I would agree with Moody again that "the opposition between so-called quality of life concerns -such as adult education-and more pragmatic concerns-such as income and human services-is actually a false dichotomy" (Moody, 1987-88:5). Education in later life is just as vital and important as in earlier years. In fact, I believe that learning is of particular importance in the later stages of life because learning encourages and fosters needed development, growth, interest in life, and a search for meaning. As Moody thoughtfully asserts, "We need to create an aging society where people have the material resources to live a decent life and where they can

pursue those activities that make life worth living, a society where they are not driven to ask, Why survive?" (5). The benefits of learning in later life are tremendous both to the individual, as well as to society. Education enables older adults to improve their situations and retain individual self-sufficiency, happiness, and quality of life. Their strengths of age and experience offer a great deal to others in society. As an example of this the National Advisory Council on Aging points out, "Seniors in the classroom can intellectually stimulate the instructor, serve as role models of self-motivated learning for younger students and generally break down age stereotypes" (NACA, 1990:4). If only we could recognize more seriously both the need for meaningful education for older adults, as well as the benefits of such education, especially when faced with an aging society such as ours.

The Central Problem to be Examined in the Applied Thesis:

Although we need to completely rethink older adult education as it currently exists, for the purposes of the applied thesis I must narrow and concentrate my investigation to one purpose. The central problem the applied thesis addresses is, of course, the fact that we have, for the most part, either ignored older adult education, misunderstood and underestimated its importance, or finally, created and supported older adult educational opportunities with no real understanding of why they are important. Immediately linked to this problem is the special

situation of the disadvantaged older adult in adult education. It is these groups of older adults who are the least likely to access adult education opportunities. Faced with this startling reality, we are left to contemplate what direction we should take, now and in the future, to rethink and recreate older adult education. It is in this thesis that I plan to explore these possible directions. The next section of the thesis consists of a literature review which explores what a number of thinkers have written in regards to the purpose and goal of education in later life. In the literature review, you will clearly see that there are a number of different opinions and views on the purpose and goal of later life education.

It is from these differing views, regarding the purpose and goal of education in later life, that I will select a particular approach or combine a number of approaches to provide the basis for my argument of the directions and changes we should make in older adult education. Older adults are not a homogeneous group and there is danger in viewing them as such. To visualize only one form of education for older adults would be to conceptualize them as homogeneous. With the realization of heterogeneity also comes the realization of the need for many different types and opportunities for education both informal and formal. The selection of an approach and the development of my argument will serve as the third section of the applied thesis.

The fundamental purpose of this thesis is to create a model which can serve as a guiding philosophy for meaningful older

adult education. Hopefully, this model will transcend specifics and offer a basic guide for what we should consider and value when creating or participating in older adult educational opportunities and programs. This model will provide the basis for the fourth section of the applied thesis. While the creation of the model is the fundamental purpose of thesis, before I can even begin to create such a model, which addresses what is necessary for meaningful older adult learning, I must as Moody suggests, "ask some basic questions about what it means for older people to learn and develop in the last stage of life" (7). This will, of course, be addressed in the second and third sections, respectively, the literature review section and the selection of an approach section. The model will primarily be the result of the careful investigations that will take place in the second and third sections.

It is important to clarify what I refer to as "meaningful learning" and "older adult". First, I conceptualize meaningful learning as educational experiences that meet older adults needs and desires, as well as recognize and value their strengths of life experience and age. However, not very many programs within the community and the university fulfil this conception of "meaningful learning". Currently, much of the education offered to older adults is often characterized by the "keeping busy" or "filling up time" philosophy which is not only meaningless but is also often resented by older adults. In her book, The Fountain of Age, Betty Friedan argues that many older adult service

programs, for instance, are essentially ageist in nature. Friedan writes,

> So many of the programs are really ageist and work toward increased dependence of the elderly and increased segregation as opposed to working toward integration and independence. I worry sometimes about the giant network that has been established to help with "problems" of the aged, i.e., senior centres, nutrition meal sites, etc. It seems to me that they have added to the problem and now work toward securing enough resources to keep themselves and their programs funded (1993:58).

Of course, there are programs or learning opportunities which are exceptions to this. But it is important that a multitude of older adult learning programs can be described as having the "keeping busy" philosophy.

The term "older adult" is a difficult one. In no other point in the lifespan do we place such a vast group of different ages into one age category. Chronological age does not make us old, it is the way we feel and respond to our aging. Different cultures and countries set different ages at which they consider a person older. In the article, "Older Adults and Lifelong Learning", Dorothy Thomas refers to older adults "as those in the latter part of their lifespan, recognizing that differences exist among individuals and among countries" (Thomas,1985:5). I agree with Thomas' approach and will use this description in this thesis.

Two of my greatest interests and passions in life are working with older adults and adult education. Obviously, these interests and passions have led me to explore what we can and

should do to recognize, appreciate, understand, and create meaningful learning in later life. I believe deeply in the wonderful possibilities of later life and in the necessity and rewards of true lifelong learning. Whether we live in an aging society or not, we should be concerned with education and growth for all ages in our society. We do, however, live in a society which is aging very quickly. More than ever before our neglect of older adult education has become prominent and problematic. We live in a society that does not value education for older adults and we live in a society that does not value later life in general. Unfortunately, our society often views later life as time to fill before death. Later life has been stripped of its role, significance, meaning, and respect. We must find ways to reverse this. One way can be through adult education. The recognization and honouring of the importance of learning in later life will result in an appreciation of the abilities and opportunities in old age. A new vision of education for older adults can influence a new, positive, and realistic vision of aging. Education must stop being viewed as only a service system. We must remember, as Harry Moody eloquently states, that "The promise of late-life learning is nothing less than the challenge of human development in the second half of life" (Moody, 1987-88:7). It is necessary for us to construct a learning society which values and respects learning in all parts of life.

Chapter II
Literature Review: An Examination of the Purposes and Goals of Later Life Education

The fundamental purpose of the following literature scan is to investigate what different thinkers in the fields of education and gerontology have written regarding what they envision as being the purpose or goal of education in later life. I am basically asking the question, "What is being written about the purpose and goal of later life education?" Reading and examining what others have written about this topic is necessary to formulate an informed and thoughtful viewpoint or belief of what the purpose of older adult education should be. The previous pages of this thesis have clearly illustrated the crucial need to rethink older adult education as it stands now. The survey of the literature has also shown that there is common agreement and commitment among all of the thinkers to this need, despite the other differences between them. The educational needs of the disadvantaged older adult will be taken into consideration during the course of this review, however, it will not be until the next section of the thesis that a specific concrete argument is made for a purpose or goal for older adult education that meets the needs of all older adults, including the disadvantaged older adult.

Before we proceed any further into the literature scan I would like to make an important point. While there are a number of thinkers who are writing about older adult education and arguing for educational improvements, the numbers of contributors

to the field is still small. Within the literature of older adult education, the same core thinkers names come up over and over again. Names such as; McClusky, Lowy, O'Connor, Peterson, Lumsden, Sherron, Cole, Havighurst, Hiemstra, Moody, and Merriam, are ever-present and prominent in the literature. While the dedication and prolific writing of these authors is highly admirable, they constitute the small majority of those who have contributed significantly to the discourse of older adult education. I hold deep respect for these individuals as I recognize them as pioneers in the field of older adult education, especially writers such as Howard McClusky, David Peterson, and Harry Moody. While it is true that more and more people are becoming concerned and aware of the importance of older adult education than ever before, the literature has yet to reflect this. It appears that the majority of the most prominent and important books or articles to date, which deal specifically with education and older adults, were written in the late seventies and eighties. This is frustrating from a researcher's point of view because of the gaps it creates in the literature, the limitation to the amount of material available, and the fact that the majority of the sources are over ten years old. Nonetheless, we work with what we have, but at the same time we acknowledge and stress the need for more attention, thought, discussion and writing to be devoted to education and older adults.

While the literature is not as expansive as one would hope, there are still a multitude of wonderful insights and viewpoints

to be discovered and investigated. Sometimes trying to understand and make sense of an array of different opinions can become overwhelming and confusing. For this reason, I have decided to divide the different thinkers into particular categories. Even at the beginning of the literature scan it was very obvious to me what the categories should be. Throughout the literature regarding education and older adults there is constant reference to three types or purposes of education: instrumental, expressive, and a combination of both. In the "Education of Older Adults" section of the 1989 edition of the Handbook of Adult Education, Bradley C. Courtenay explained that key to the purpose of education of older adults is the following question, "Should subject matter be expressive, instrumental, or both?" (Courtenay,1989:531). Since these categories are already present in the literature, it only made sense to use them to delineate between different thinkers. David Peterson writes,

> There has been one major attempt to develop a dichotomy of educational wants of older people in order to create some generalized understanding of this area...this is the division of educative wants into expressive (or intrinsic) gratification and instrumental (or deferred) gratification" (1983:141).

Louis Lowy and Darlene O'Connor also note that, "A division which has been found relevant and useful by many educators and gerontologists is the dichotomy between *expressive* and *instrumental* education" (Lowy and O'Connor, 1986:143). However, Lowy and O'Connor also admit that while there is a benefit to using such categories, the use of the categories can also be

"Susceptible to the usual criticisms of dichotomous thinking (because it too narrowly restricts the range of choice)" (143). Lowy and O'Connor then suggest that "such a classification may be better conceived as two ends of a continuum in which there are various levels of overlap in between" (143), but that such a distinction "provides useful insights" (144). I agree with Lowy and O'Connor that while categories can be problematic, if we do not see them as rigid and static dichotomies they can help us to conceptualize and delineate between different ideologies and viewpoints. While the merging together of both instrumental and expressive has not been as prevalent in the literature as the separation of the two categories, the position that the two should be combined has received significant support and it appears it is gaining more and more support as time goes on.

Purposes of Older Adult Education: The Three Categories

So what exactly do these three categories represent or mean? Well, each represent a belief in the purpose or goal of older adult education. Basically, instrumental education is education that is primarily goal oriented or as Havighurst explains, "Instrumental education is education for a goal that lies outside and beyond the act of education...Instrumental education is thus a kind of investment of time and energy in the expectation of future gain" (Havighurst, 1976:41). A simple example of this would be if an individual went back to school to upgrade so that they could receive a job advancement at work. Expressive

education, on the other hand, can be described as learning for learning's sake. Havighurst states, "Expressive education is education for a goal that lies within the act of learning, or is so closely related to it that the act of learning appears to be a goal...Expressive education is a kind of consumption of time and energy for present gain" (42). For example, an individual would go back to school for the pleasure of learning rather than to get a job promotion or raise. Courses in art, music, and creative writing could fall under the expressive category. Expressive education is directed towards an inner goal or meaning and the benefits or rewards are immediate. The third and final category represents a merging of the two previous categories, instrumental and expressive. While this merging has often been more of a suggestion than a dichotomy of its own in the literature, it still represents an important category or way to describe a particular viewpoint or ideology. Those who support this merging of the previous two categories do so because they believe that older adult education cannot have only one purpose when one realizes the heterogeneity that is present among older adults in later life. They would argue that both types of education must be available. Some proponents of this position might also argue that the differentiation between instrumental and expressive is too severe and that, in fact, a person may take a woodworking course to achieve a better job but also do so for enjoyment. Thus, an educational endeavour may be both instrumental and expressive depending on the motive of the learner. Now that a

basic explanation of each of the categories has been established, we should refocus on each of the categories individually in more depth beginning with instrumental learning.

Category I: Instrumental Education

R.J. Havighurst is believed to be the first to bring the terms instrumental and expressive to the adult education literature in his article, "Changing Status and Roles During the Adult Life Cycle: Significance for Adult Education", in the book edited by H. Burns entitled Sociological Backgrounds of Adult Education in 1964. "Initially, the terms `instrumental' and `expressive' were introduced into the literature of adult education to indicate whether the activity was an end in itself [expressive] or a means to an end to be realized at a later date [instrumental]" (Sarkisian, 1982:189). Carroll A. Londoner was the next to make the distinction between instrumental and expressive in his contribution to Lumsden's and Sherron's Introduction to Educational Gerontology in 1978. While Londoner credits Havighurst as using the terms before he did, Londoner credits sociologist Talcott Parsons as the initial creator of the dichotomy. It was in his 1964 book, The Social System, that Talcott Parsons...

> "distinguishes two major orientations guiding individuals as they pursue goals within the social system: *expressive orientations,* those characteristics of activities which provide immediate gratification or satisfaction in of themselves; *instrumental orientations,* those which are subsidiary and require postponement of immediate gratification for some future goal" (Lowy and O'Connor, 144).

Talcott Parsons did not, however, make any specific reference to education in his social action theory. While Havighurst's writing reflects a belief that both instrumental and expressive are necessary for lifelong learning, Londoner supports a need for instrumental education for older adults. Londoner completed a number of studies and concluded that older adults did prefer instrumental courses more than expressive courses. Londoner believed that older adults were focused on survival goals, and thus, instrumental goals. Adair and Mowsesian quote Londoner describing older adults, "Their basic goals are instrumental (i.e. surviving and coping in a less-than-hospitable culture); and consequently their needs are instrumental survival goals" (Adair and Mowsesian,1993:324).

As a result of Londoner's and Havighurst's ideas, there was a great deal of discussion and time given to the debate of instrumental and expressive learning in the field of education. Many studies were undertaken in order to try to establish, once and for all, whether or not education for older adults should be instrumental or expressive in nature. Roger Hiemstra's studies in the seventies (1972, 1973) illustrated that there was a strong preference for instrumental activities over expressive for older adults. This does not mean, however, that Hiemstra found complete and absolute support of instrumental education. Instead, he found overall preference. His findings did illustrate that different subjects preferred instrumental and some expressive. Based on his surveys of individuals over the

age of 55, Hiemstra found "that younger subjects, white-collar workers, college graduates, nonwhites, and married people are more likely to be engaged in instrumental activities. Females, urban residents, and college graduates are more likely to be engaged in expressive forms of learning" (Hiemstra, 1976:233). The focus of the majority of Hiemstra's studies was on senior centre participants (146). Interestingly, Lowy and O'Connor point out that "Reports in studies by many Senior Centres today tend to emphasize even more the preference for instrumental education" (146).

Despite the results of these studies with their potential methodological flaws and the conclusions drawn by Londoner and Hiemstra, there appears to be more studies to contradict the preference for instrumental than to support it. Lowy and O'Connor cite studies by Whatley (1974), Goodrow (1975), as finding "no significant differences between preferences for instrumental or expressive education" (146). They cite Bauer in 1975 as finding "expressive activities to be preferred" (146). S.D. Pearce notes that "Graney and Hays (1976) asked an open-ended question about course preferences. Their findings indicate a strong preference for expressively oriented courses" (Pearce,1991:455). Lowy and O'Connor point out that "Several studies concluded that the differences in preferences for instrumental as opposed to expressive activities were related less to age and more to educational background" (146). As mentioned before, even Hiemstra found elements of this in his own

research. Londoner accounts for the diversity of results because of "the fallacy in classifying educational activities as inherently instrumental or expressive" (147-148). Londoner does not believe that the course or program can determine whether or not it is instrumental or expressive. "On the contrary, Londoner argues, such a classification of educational activities depends on the goals of the individual student" (148). Which he, of course, believes to be primarily instrumental. Londoner does, however, have an excellent point. As educators, we cannot classify a course as instrumental or expressive simply by its title or even its content. We must look to the individual learner to determine this. Hiemstra, however, only viewed education in terms of course title or learning activity. "These conflicting data suggest that it is overly simplistic to assume that older people generally want exclusively instrumental or expressive instruction" (Peterson, 1983:142). Obviously, we cannot determine for all older adults whether the purpose of older adult education should be completely instrumental or expressive. We can, however, look to those who promote each category for insight into why a particular category is important for them. We would do this to try to determine whether we should focus on a particular category more than another as our ultimate purpose or goal of older adult education or we should instead look to combining them.

An examination of the literature shows that there are a number of writers who view later life as a time for learning to

accomplish goals, not for the experience of learning. Londoner and Hiemstra, as explained earlier, would belong to this group. Those who subscribe to instrumental education envision the learning experience as having necessary outcomes rather than the learning being an outcome.

Before I go any further, I would like to again clearly and concisely reiterate that I am using a definition of instrumental learning to simply mean learning which is intended for a goal or purpose outside of the actual experience of the learning and not in the way instrumental learning is commonly conceptualized in the adult education literature today. Within the field of adult education, instrumental learning is closely associated with the technical rationality or technical paradigm. The technical paradigm views education primarily in terms of productivity and the ability of education to produce results. Competency based learning methods and pre-determined objectives are common within the technical paradigm. Adult education has been greatly affected by this paradigm and its effects are often seen in our preoccupations with visible productivity and the control over the learner and the learning process. However, I am suggesting a very basic definition of instrumental learning and I am not equating it with the technical rationality or paradigm.

Keeping in mind my very basic definition of instrumental learning, consider the instrumentality of a thinker such as Paulo Freire. Although Freire did not specifically address older adult education, it is well known that his general philosophy of

education rests on an activist role of social responsibility. Freire would suggest that our goals should not be primarily intrinsic, instead we should focus on utilizing education to evoke social change. Thus, Freire's beliefs and approach to education could easily be described as being instrumental in nature (Moody, 1985:34). Another individual who did not necessarily address adult education per se, but had very definite views of our purpose in later life as being instrumental, is Simone de Beauvoir. Harry Moody notes, "Freire's views have much in common with the outlook of Simone de Beauvoir (The Coming of Age,1973), which has similar perspectives of Marxism and existentialism" (34). Moody describes de Beauvoir and Freire's views as "teleological" or goal directed (32). de Beauvoir, like Friere also advocates a strong activist role in later life. To de Beauvoir, "Old age, in this view, is not a time for wisdom or summing up. It is a time for continual engagement" (21). Moody includes in his discussion of de Beauvoir a quote from her book The Coming of Age which I believe best describes her beliefs regarding the purpose of later life. The quote is as follows:

> The greatest good fortune, even greater than health, for the old person is to have his world still inhabited by projects: then, busy and useful, he escapes both from boredom and from decay...There is only one solution if old age is not to be an absurd parody of our former life, and that is to go on pursuing ends that give our existence a meaning- devotion to individuals, to groups or to causes, social, political intellectual or creative work. In spite of the moralists' opinion to the contrary, in old age we should wish still to have passions strong enough to prevent us from turning in upon ourselves (de Beauvoir as quoted in Moody, 1986:21).

Simone de Beauvoir certainly would not welcome the idea that later life is a time primarily for inner reflection. She would also not agree that our purpose in later life and in education should be focused on the learning experience itself rather than on the outcome. Simone de Beauvoir rallies, instead, for continual activity to keep us "from turning in upon ourselves" (21) and having to face more expressive forms of learning and living. Moody suggests that Simone de Beauvoir's conceptualization of the purpose in later life "while perhaps extreme, is not really far from the view that prevails among the enlightened upper middle classes who articulate the dominant values of our society" (21). Moody also infers that this type of outlook may also envision the constant state of activity as a way to deal with aging or as a "preferred solution to the problem of aging" (21). Moody believes that this viewpoint disregards the unique possibilities of later life. Moody explains that,

> A philosophy of education that sees learning exclusively in terms of social contribution repeats the teleological outlook, but fails to recognize the unique perspective of the last stage of life, especially the possibility that the older person may call into question his or her own socially conditioned goals, purposes, and values (1985:34).

While there can be many different motives behind endeavours of an instrumental nature, the fact that the purpose or goal is to benefit from a reward outside of the actual experience or learning opportunity is what connects them as instrumental.

Category II: Expressive Education

From the foregoing discussion it is quite obvious that Moody believes that it is expressive education that is the most important to focus on in the later years. To Moody, old age offers a unique time to reflect back upon our life experiences and the meaning we have created in our lives. Moody believes education in the later years should be intrinsically motivated or inner directed towards the fulfilment of "self-actualization", rather than for the purpose of some outside goal. The term "self-actualization" is, of course, taken by Moody from humanist psychologist Abraham Maslow. Moody conceptualizes that an individual can reach a state of "self-actualization" through "a combined psychological and spiritual quest for meaning and insight" (Peterson,1985:6). Only through life review and the investigation of what has given our life meaning, can we attain psychological growth and "self-actualization" which is the ultimate fulfilment of our potential. While Moody concedes that this process is possible at any age, he argues that what makes it so important and meaningful in later life is the result of the magnitude of life experiences that we have accrued. Later life offers us the unique opportunity to look back upon a lifetime and also offers us the opportunity to analyze our experiences and what has given us meaning in our lives in terms of the time we have left (Lowy and O'Connor,1986:149). It is...

> Through the liberal arts, through the review of the life experience, Moody argues, older learners can transcend their past roles, can escape the past limitations on their view of themselves. Such

> transcendence of the past is essential to the human for growth and expanded consciousness, and thus he suggests
>
> that this is the only type of education deserving of education in old age (149).

Erik Erikson would agree wholeheartedly with Moody that education in later life should be expressive in nature. Erikson constructed eight stages of life which represent the time from birth to death. The last stage of Erikson's development is "ego integrity vs. despair" and it takes place in later life. It is in this stage that Erikson suggests an individual must come to terms with one's life and find acceptance and the meaning of one's life in order to avoid despair (Peterson, 1983:119). It is, in a sense, the last major task of life to Erikson. Peterson explains,

> If the review is successful, it will likely lead the person to a sense of transcendence, an understanding that life is more than the body and that the meaning of life is not measured in physical attributes, material possessions, or social accomplishments (120).

The transcendence that Erikson speaks of is very similar to Moody's "self-actualization". Peterson makes the important inference that "the educational implications of Erikson's eighth stage are easy to identify. They include the provision of an opportunity for people to examine, with supportive help, their lives and the meaning they have had" (120). Clearly Erikson, like Moody, is also motivated by expressive purposes and goals.

Moody has conceptualized four models of education which represent how older adults have been treated in the field of education. The first model is "Rejection". This model

represents the neglect of the older learner. It is based on the belief that education for older adults has no benefits nor is it important (Moody, 4). The second model is "Social Services". This model is based on the assumption that the older adult is unproductive and is in need of bureaucratic handouts. Moody suggests that this assumption is often behind meaningless "keeping busy" projects for older adults (5). The third model is the "Participation" model. This model rejects the idea that older adults are to be neglected or that they are not capable of being highly productive members of society. Instead, this model proposes that continued activity is very important for older adults. This model would focus on activist roles in later life or on second careers. While Moody believes this model is much more positive and realistic than the first two models, he would still see it as very instrumental. He does, in fact, use Simone de Beauvoir as an example of a promoter of this model in society (8). He does admit, however, that the model has many possibilities. Through education we can support this model by encouraging older adults to be active and to take charge of their situations. Moody notes, "As individuals, older people must be led beyond positivist and given the option of second careers and new opportunities for genuine participation, regardless of age" (8). While Moody does respect the "Participation" model in some aspects, he still holds true to his belief in education for the attainment of "self-actualization". In fact, "Self-actualization" is the fourth and final model or stage that Moody

proposes. He argues we should strive to make this model the goal or purpose of older adult education. He believes study of the liberal arts- the humanities and social sciences- will help us to attain this. Moody explains,

> It is only Stage IV ["the stage of self-actualization"] that accepts aging on its own terms and discerns in the experience of growing old not a problem to struggle against but an opportunity to reach deeper levels of meaning. Thus, the prevailing values of Stage IV are inner-directed and are psychological and spiritual in their orientation (12).

Although Moody's primary focus is on expressive education in later life, he does admit that other forms of education are important as well. In fact, he cautions against focusing too closely on the differences between instrumental and expressive learning. Moody believes all types of education can offer new opportunities and we should not become ambivalent to certain types (Moody, 1987-88:70. However, Moody emphasizes the fact that expressive education for "self-actualization" has not been given much attention and we must focus upon it if we are to offer meaningful learning to older adults in the future. Moody's intense involvement in the realm of the expressive is what defines him as being a part of the expressive category rather than the category which represents the merging of both the instrumental and the expressive. It is probably safe to say that Harry Moody is most likely the most prolific writer in the area of expressive education for older adults today.

In R.D. Bramwell's article, "Beyond Survival: Curriculum Models for Senior Adult Education", Bramwell argues for a process

model or transformation model for the education of older adults. Bramwell suggests, "Proponents of this model assert that education involves taking part in activities deemed worthwhile in themselves rather than because they achieve rigidly defined objectives, as would be required by the Tyler model" (1992:433). Obviously, the author is asserting that expressive learning should be utilized with older adults rather than instrumental. In doing so, Bramwell is simply renaming the dichotomy of expressive vs. instrumental to the process model vs. the Tyler model. Tylerism, of course, refers to the competency based curriculum model used by many adult educators. It does, of course, have a list of critics such as Michael Collins (1983, 1995), Jack Mezirow (1990), Stephen Brookfield (1986). The process model, on the other hand, would encourage continual reflection and the transformation of our belief systems. The focus in the process or transformation model is not on the objectives to be met but rather on the educational experience itself. Mezirow's conception of perspective transformation would of course embody this model. Like Moody, Bramwell respects the need for many types of education, but also wonders if the expressive might be the ultimate purpose to education in later life.

> For many, retirement brings with it new problems, and education for seniors must therefore, at least in part, concern itself proximately with the conveying of information and the teaching of skills required to deal with those problems. But is there some ultimate purpose to be served beyond that of mere survival? (433).

Ultimately, Bramwell argues that the purpose of education in later life should be upon transcendence or "self-actualization". He states, "To the furthering of this growth, education for seniors should also be devoted" (433). In his article, Bramwell also mentions another scholar who has illustrated tremendous devotion to expressive education. This individual is the President of L'Association des Universities du 3ieme Age, R. Bernier. Bramwell quotes Bernier describing the purpose of the Universities du 3ieme Age as "`privileged access to enlightenment, to the realization the self'" (Bernier as quoted by Bramwell, 437).

Related to the special circumstance of the disadvantaged older adult in education, M.A. Heisel suggests that the expressive may be better suited to meet this group's particular obstacles and needs. Heisel writes, "Yet one wonders if there might not be conditions where expressive learning would be more successful in motivating the older person to participate" (Heisel, 1980:134). As an example of this, Heisel describes the tremendous success of a poetry group in a nursing home. Heisel makes the point that those in the nursing home may be the most disadvantaged older adults (134). In conclusion Heisel asks:

> Could it be that for those who feel they are too old or too disabled for education, or who appear completely lacking in motivation, expressive learning would renew their interest in life? Perhaps many older adults show no interest in expressive education because it has often been presented as a means of keeping busy, the implications of which they may resent (135).

In their discussion of the "Educational Philosophies

Underlying Instrumental/Expressive", Lowy and O'Connor make the interesting link between the instrumental vs. expressive dichotomy and the liberal education vs. vocational education dichotomy. This second dichotomy has, of course, sparked much debate throughout the history of education, just as the instrumental and expressive has since the sixties and seventies. Of course, the two sets of dichotomies are not completely similar or parallel but they do share similarities. Obviously, the liberal would most closely link with the expressive and the vocational would relate to the instrumental.

Category III: The Merging of the Instrumental and the Expressive

Lowy and O'Connor make the point that just as liberal or vocational cannot meet all of our educational needs and wants alone, neither can instrumental or expressive meet our needs alone or independent of one another. The authors suggest that focusing too much on the expressive/liberal category "runs the risk of elitism by attracting only those who, though previous education or life experience, have developed an appreciation for the search for meaning"(149). They also point out that only focusing on the instrumental can also be detrimental. They state: "Such goals reinforce the view that productivity is the measure of humanity, that educational activities are to be measured in terms of their development of human productive potential alone" (150). Lowy and O'Connor believe that it is problematic to try to choose between instrumental or expressive.

They believe that we must combine both categories in order to truly meet the needs of all older adults. Havighurst, one of the first to distinguish between instrumental and expressive, echoes Lowy and O'Connor's belief in the following quote, "In a changing society competent people need to combine instrumental and expressive learning at every stage of their lives" (Havighurst, 1976;420). Sarkisian also contributes to the merging of the categories as she states, "Thus, a third category, expressive-instrumental, is useful for describing not courses but a learning orientation in which the activity is enjoyed for its own sake and for a contemplated future use" (Sarkisian,1982:190).

Howard McClusky, who has probably been the most influential writer in the discourse of education and aging, also supports the merging of the instrumental and the expressive in his work. In his background paper for the 1971 White House Conference on Aging, McClusky identified five types of needs for older adult education programs. The five were: coping needs, expressive needs, contributive needs, influence needs, and transcendence needs (Merriam and Lumsden, 1978:60). McClusky believed that all of these needs must be met to truly realize lifelong learning for older adults. It is clear that the needs proposed by McClusky fulfil both instrumental and expressive expectations (60).

During the course of the literature scan, I have come to the conclusion that the third and final category offers a great deal to a discussion of what the purpose or goal of older adult education should be. Therefore, I plan to examine the merging of

the instrumental and the expressive furthur throughout the remainder of the thesis. Coming to this conclusion has been rather simple. If one believes in the heterogeneity of later life, then one also believes in all forms of educational opportunities and experiences.

Chapter III
Selecting a Particular Approach: Creating A Balance Between Humanist and Critical Thought

In the previous chapter of this thesis I explored what different thinkers in the fields of adult education and gerontology have written regarding what they believe should be the goals or focus of later life learning. At the end of the chapter I concluded that merging instrumental and expressive forms of education is key to recognizing and appreciating the heterogeneity of older adults needs and desires for learning in later life. I believe it is ultimately necessary to have later life learning reflect and encompass both instrumental and expressive learning, as well as informal and formal learning opportunities. In doing so, as educators, we are increasing the likelihood of reaching the many segments and differing interests of the older adult population, including disadvantaged older adults. We are also clearly showing that education can exist in many forms and are valuing each of these forms. The primary focus of this chapter, however, will be upon selecting a specific approach for what directions, as adult educators, we can take to reconceptualize and recreate older adult education. The previous literature review has provided many different approaches and ideas from which to choose. The goal of this chapter is to select an approach, provide reasoning for why this approach merits attention and importance, and finally to explore the approach in detail.

The approach I will argue for in this chapter to explain

what directions I believe as adult educators we should take within older adult education is actually a combination of a number of different approaches. To be frank, I believe that the literature to date does not offer a particular thinker or specific approach that completely or satisfactorily addresses the problem. Writers such as Simone deBeauvoir and Betty Friedan offer us a belief that later life should be focused primarily on continued growth and active participation in society. Friedan and deBeauvoir suggest that older adults can help society to move in positive directions by offering their wisdom, life experience, and support, to evoke social change. Essentially, Friedan and deBeauvoir argue that it is our responsibility in later life to make use of our life experience and wisdom to actively try to make our world a better place. While writers such as Harry Moody Louis Lowy, and Darlene O'Connor, would agree that De Beauvoir and Friedan's goals for later life were very important, they envision the ultimate purpose for later life as being a time for inner directedness and for the contemplation of the meaning in our lives. Both beliefs of the ultimate purpose of older adult education offer important insight and guidance toward, framing a goal and purpose in later life and, articulating the learning opportunities we engage in at this point in time.

The majority of the thinkers featured in the literature review in the previous chapter could be described as subscribing to either of the following two paradigms; the humanist paradigm or the critical paradigm. Essentially, the different paradigms

lean toward a particular set of beliefs and convictions regarding how we should conceptualize and utilize education in the later years. For example, writers such as Moody and Lowy would fall under the humanist paradigm while deBeauvoir and Friedan would support the critical paradigm. In the following pages of this chapter I will argue that both the critical and humanist rationality can contribute greatly to our reconceptualization of learning in later life and we should look to both these paradigms for guidance. I will outline what each theoretical standpoint offers to us and I will provide reasoning for why each offers important insight and guidance. First, however, it may be useful to review briefly the basic beliefs and thoughts of each paradigm.

The Humanist Paradigm

The humanist orientation or philosophy of learning focuses on "learning from the perspective of the human potential for growth" (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991:132). Humanist thought is deeply concerned with individual fulfilment and self-actualization, as well as the moral and ethical questions that often face us. Merriam and Caffarella explain that, "From a learning theory perspective, humanism emphasizes a person's perceptions that are centred in experience, as well as the freedom and responsibility to become what one is capable of becoming" (132). Within the humanist paradigm of education, the self-directed learner and the experience they bring to the

learning situation is paramount and the actual experience of learning is regarded as more important than any goal, pre-determined objective, or outcome of the learning opportunity. In a description of the humanist philosophy of education "it is important to make a distinction between *humanistic studies* and a *humanistic philosophy of education*" (Lowy and O'Connor, 1986:156). Lowy and O'Connor explain that humanistic studies are concerned with the study of the humanities and social sciences and they explain that "Out of such study of the best of human thought and search for meaning in human existence, humanism as a philosophy has itself arisen" (156). Humanist psychologists, such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, have been prolific promoters of this school of thought.

The Critical Paradigm

The critical paradigm, on the other hand, is deeply committed to understanding, recognizing, and minimizing the influences of power in society and in our learning situations. Critical theorists believe that we must be free to participate in learning and communication and that the only knowledge that is truly valuable is that which is gained without coercion. This paradigm promotes critical thinking, reflection, and perspective transformation in the learning process. The critical tradition encourages us to actively question what powers or forces are influencing our learning situations, decisions, our beliefs, and how we view the world. While humanists also acknowledge the

importance of critical thinking, it is not the fundamental premise of the humanist tradition to actively and "critically" question and address influences of power in our learning situations and in our lives, as it is within the critical tradition. I believe that there is a difference between reflection and reflection which is inherently critical. To me, critical reflection in the purest form questions not only what we learn but also what impacts our learning experience and our understanding of it. I believe that the practice of critical reflection can mean different things to the humanist theorist and the critical theorist.

Now that basic descriptions of each paradigm have been established, we should again refocus our attention back to the different thinkers who support each paradigm to gain insight into what their convictions can offer us in our quest to reconceptualize and recreate learning in later life. Both of these paradigms propose convincing and meaningful illustrations of what later life education should contain. Moody's suggestion to "ask some basic questions about what it means for older people to learn and develop in the last stage of life" (Moody, 1987-88:7) is, of course, at the core of this investigation and journey.

What do the humanist and critical paradigms offer to older adult education?

In their book, Why Education in the Later Years?, Lowy and O'Connor argue that it is humanist thought that offers the most to a philosophy of learning in later life. In the section of their book entitled, "Toward a Humanistic Philosophy of Education", Lowy and O'Connor argue that a radical philosophy of education [critical philosophy] can be limited because of the concentration on identifying oppression or the distorting influences of power. They write, "The experiences of older adults may thus be examined to identify and address sources of oppression, but not necessarily to refute other theories of human and social behaviour" (1986:153). Lowy and O'Connor suggest that the focus of education should, instead, be upon our abilities as free and unique human beings to achieve growth and self-actualization. Illustrating further they explain,

> Humanists hold that human nature is fundamentally good, but they also recognize the necessity of dealing with problems of evil although they by no means agree on what the solutions are to such problems. Humanists believe that the highest fulfilment of human nature is evidenced in growth, self-actualization, and collective responsibility" (154).

Within the humanist philosophy of education, the learner and educator are seen as partners in the learning experience. Lowy and O'Connor suggest that because of this reciprocation of learning and sharing, the "hierarchial patterns are decreased" (157) between the learner and the teacher. "Conflict and confrontational situations are acknowledged as normal....In fact, conflict and harmony, dissent and consensus, are expected to

permeate the learning environment and to stimulate as well as invigorate the learning process" (157-158). Critical theorists would, of course, wholeheartedly agree with the humanists in their insistence that there be a partnering and reciprocation of learning between the learner and the educator. However, they would not accept the conflict and power relationships as completely normal nor envision it as a positive influence on the learning process. I do believe that at some point we must accept that there will always be power relations in our learning environments and society, however, I also support the critical theorists in their argument that we must critically question the conflict and power relationships in order to determine how they are impacting upon our learning. Simply admitting conflict and power exist is not enough nor in doing so are we being truly critically reflective. After all, is learning truly meaningful if it has been subject to the distorting influences of power? Those who support the critical paradigm would answer no it is not.

While I do not agree with the lack of importance the humanists place upon critically questioning the influences power and conflict can have upon our learning and what we believe and assume to be true, there are many other facets to the humanist philosophy of education that I find extremely important. During the course of the foregoing literature review I found myself becoming increasingly intrigued by a number of the ideas that Harry Moody puts forth. Moody is deeply concerned not only with

the lack of educational opportunities available to older adults but also with our lack of understanding of why the educational programs for older adults are important in the first place. Moody believes strongly that the ultimate purpose of education is the search for meaning in one's life and obtainment of self-actualization. Simply, self-actualization refers to the realization of one's potential. Moody also argues that old age represents a unique time in life for learning.

He explains,

> Education for older adults is distinguished from all traditional varieties of education by the peculiar location of learning at the end of the lifespan rather than at the beginning, which gives it a very different quality from the learning of childhood or early adulthood (Moody, 1985:32).

Moody reasons that it is only after have we accumulated a life's worth of experience and wisdom can we truly come to understand what the search for meaning has been in our lives. It is also at this stage that we can engage in a "more meaningful form of activity: contemplation and re-synthesis of the self, now disengaged and liberated from the limited forms and social roles required by tasks originating outside the self (work, child rearing, etc.)" (11). He asserts that if we focus on continuing the activities that we have engaged in during the earlier part of our lives then we may miss out on our chance for self-actualization. "Preparing for a second career, just as much as the pursuit of travel, crafts, recreation, can be a way of avoiding the fundamental life-task of old age: to encounter who we are" (Moody,1975:10). It is true that if we are not

reflective about our activities they can become meaningless or "time-fillers" and we can waste much time and energy on them. Focusing on such activities may result in lost opportunities for examining the meaning in our lives. It is also important to note, however, that while Moody would support meaningful reflective activity and believe it is necessary, his belief in the ultimate purpose of education still lies in the quest for inner integration.

Moody appears to advocate a form of education that is characterized by a desocialization in later life (Moody,1985:34). Obviously, he believes education in later life should be inner directed and focused. This does not mean, however, that Moody spurns education for older adults that is not focused on inner growth and fulfilment. In fact, he suggests that many forms of education are necessary, however, he believes that the search for the understanding of the meaning in one's life should be the ultimate purpose of education in the later years (1987-88:7). He even suggests that conceptualizing the role of old age in this way will lead to new visions and respect for the later years of life. He states,

> A vision of old age as the fulfilment of life might well imply a major role for learning in the later years. Yet this justification of education would be very different from the prevailing views of education as `something to do' or a way of filling leisure time. The lack of a serious justification or sense of purpose for education in old age may explain why education for older people currently attracts only a small minority of the elderly (40).

The recognization on the part of society that old age has an

important role is necessary. Unfortunately, at this time society often views old age "as a limbo state, an absence of meaning in life" (Moody, 1986:22) particularly because we often equate "meaning" with waged work. The conceptualization Moody proposes for the purpose of education in later life is very different than what is commonly thought of as older adult education today. Moody concedes that it will be difficult for those who think similarly to see this vision of learning in later life realized. He notes, "if this lofty ideal is to be a reality, educators will have to undertake a systematic philosophical analysis of the meaning and purpose of education in the last stage of life" (35). Moody would obviously agree with James E. Thornton who urges that "we need to know about the nature of the human `being' as a meaning-making organism in the context of aging" (Thornton, 1986:87). As educators, Moody believes we should promote the study of the humanities and the social sciences in later life. He feels that such study will lead to important growth and development on the part of the learner. He writes, "In the fields of philosophy, religion, psychology, and literature there are elements that can only be grasped in all their depth and richness by individuals who bring a lifetime of personal experience to their study" (1975:11).

Perhaps the best way to summarize the humanist philosophy of education is to contemplate Lowy and O'Connor's answer to the question, "Why educate older adults?" They answer,

> ...as a society we must provide educational opportunities to older adults not because they will

> necessarily provide material or non-material resources, not because older adults may continue to be productive contributors to society- although it is good when this happens. We should educate older adults, first and foremost, because they are human beings who have value and dignity in their own right and whose `late freedom' makes it more than ever possible to find nourishment in learning" (158).

I truly value the humanist philosophy of education regarding its respect for the uniqueness, autonomy, and the experience of the learner, the awareness of the diversity that occurs as we age, the importance of the search for meaning and self-actualization in later life, the belief in the potential and abilities of all individuals, and the commitment to trying to illustrate why education in the old age is important. These latter notions are very significant to a re-creation of our conceptualization of learning in later life. The humanists also deserve tremendous praise and credit for the magnitude of writing and thought they have contributed to the discourse of learning in later life. It has been the humanists, much more than the critical theorists, who have written so prolifically regarding the purpose of older adult education. There needs to be similar commitment and concern made within the critical rationality of adult education to address the lack of meaningful older adult education, as there has been within humanist thought.

While there are a number of writers in the humanist tradition who have a great deal to offer to our discussion of older adult education, Harry Moody has impacted my thoughts and beliefs the most. I agree with Moody that later life is a unique

time of life for learning. Throughout our lives we constantly search for meaning but I do not believe that we can fully contemplate and recognize what this meaning has been in our lives until we reach old age. In later life we often have more time for contemplation and we bring to the learning experience our life experience and acquired wisdom. For this reason, I also agree with Moody that it is often in old age that we can learn from the study of the humanities most meaningfully. In later life, we are faced with many changes. It is necessary that we look back upon what has given us meaning earlier in life so that we can find new ways to recreate this meaning again in our lives. In essence, later life is often a process of the reintegration of meaning. We must engage in life review in order to achieve this. I also agree with Moody that the realization of personal potential or self-actualization is vital for happiness and acceptance in later life.

However, should the quest for self-actualization be the ultimate purpose in later life and in later life education? I cannot adequately describe how long and how deeply I have struggled with this question. While I do believe it is the ultimate challenge of later life, I do not accept that a desocialization from past roles is necessary for us to truly contemplate the meaning of our lives. Moody argues that a second career or travel can be a way to ignore the search for self-actualization (1975:10). To a point I believe this to be true. However, I also believe we can be very active in old and new

roles and still engage in life review and the contemplation of meaning. While I do not believe we have to follow the adage "You **MUST** keep busy as you age in order to be happy", I still believe activity that is not inner directed is also vital in old age. Just as our wisdom and life experience enhance our own personal understanding of meaning, they can help society "transcend decline and move in new life-affirming directions" (Friedan, 1993:629). Older adults with this wisdom and life experience can provide insight into societal problems and help us to understand what we can do together to make our world better for all. While I believe Moody would support collective responsibility and social contribution, I do not believe he places enough emphasis on the role, possibilities, and necessity of social activism in later life to help create a better world. This leads to the underestimation of the ability of the older adult to help us to reshape our world in more life affirming ways. Friedan notes that change....

> ....given the way our society is now, will require creating new social structures and political policies. One thing is certain. We cannot even begin to help create the new patterns that are needed if we are barred in age from participating in the institutions that carry society forward (629).

Friedan proceeds to describe the impact the voice of women is having in every field of thought and practice in "transforming the male model" (629) and how this empowerment in later life is also needed.

> For these same reasons, we must seek the *empowerment of age*, new roles for people over sixty, seventy, eighty in work and business, public roles and private sectors,

> church, synagogue, and the volunteer cutting edge of the community, which use their wisdom to help solve the problems of our whole aging society. But I do not think we can seek the empowerment of age on the same terms as the women's movement, or the black civil rights movement, or the revolutions against oppression in the past. There is a danger in seeing age as a `special interest group', even though it has already become clear how much power it might mobilize (630).

I believe to concentrate primarily on the inner directedness of later life is to underestimate and forego the enormous possibilities later life can offer social advocacy and activism. In fact, I am convinced that "new" roles for older adults will be recognized and valued by society by focusing on "outer dedications" . The search for meaning and realization of potential will not be impeded by this type of action, rather it will be enhanced. I agree with Friedan as she states, "Life review, whether it is accomplished alone or with the help of others, is a way to say yes to our lives, and can lead us to `integrity' of self, but not, I think, to `generativity', new roles for older people in society" (629). While I believe that life review on its own will not lead to new roles for older adults, just as I do not believe a focus on social activism alone will either, I do believe that a balance between life review and activism will.

Moody claims that the emphasis on social activism and advocacy in later life is aligned with the views of the "enlightened upper classes" (1986:21); it is a way to try to fight or rebel against aging. While this role is often more expected in the "upper classes" it is not always undertaken as a

method to fight against or deny one's aging. It is often expected of the "enlightened upper classes" because society often only recognizes wisdom that comes from formal education. As adult educators we must make known the values of all types of education and life experience so that this type of activity in later life can be assumed of all older adults. If we do so, we are then affirming the ability and the importance of learning for all older adults. We are also encouraging all older adults to offer us guidance and insight and fostering a new and recognized role for those in later life.

Moody stresses that there is a vital need within us for life reflection in old age. I suggest there is also a need within us in later life to question society and exhibit concern for the fate of humankind. It is in the eloquent words of Florida Scott-Maxwell from her book The Measure of My Days that I find proof of this. Florida Scott-Maxwell was in her eighty-third year at the time she wrote the following passages.

> Age puzzles me. I thought it was a quiet time. My seventies were interesting, and fairly serene, but my eighties were passionate. I grow more intense as I age. To my own surprise I burst out with hot conviction. Only a few years ago I enjoyed my tranquility; now I am so disturbed by the outer world and by human quality in general that I want to put things right, as though I still owed a debt to life. I must calm down. I am far too frail to indulge in moral fervour (1968:13-14).

and...

> How could we react to suffering and joy with anything but the full range of our possibilities? With my thoughts stabbing like spears it might be supposed that I have waited for my eighty-third year before I noticed mankind. This is not so. I never found it possible to

> ignore man's plight even when I was busy living it, and now in my idleness it has me by the scruff of the neck. I have to endure it as though there was a final bite that would yield a last drop of understanding blood. Can this be true? What must I see? (1968:81-82).

The tireless work and dedication of Doris Marshall also illustrates the importance and the concern for society in later life. Marshall has worked over the last four decades challenging the negative images society has of aging in a multitude of different roles and positions. In her work she has tried to promote aging as a meaningful experience with tremendous potential and realizations. Her beliefs and dedication are illustrated in the following lines:

> I can also say that I see and am glad that not all old people have succumbed to the prescribed social image, the prescribed role. Even so, I believe that most of us do protest in isolation. It is my great hope that, while there still is time, more and more of us will refuse to accept what is prescribed in our later years. And that more of us will, by this refusal, be drawn into a strong and active amalgam of awareness and caring for all the people in our world. We need to put forth a more humane image of what it can mean to be old and alive. We need to be actively shaking things up in the search for a new social definition and a new social reality (1987:129).

As adult educators we have a lot to learn from both the humanist and critical theorists. We must value, as the humanists argue, the search for meaning in later life. However, we cannot only focus on the inner realizations of the individual in later life. I do not believe that the humanists would expect us to focus ONLY on the inner search for meaning, however, their concentration on self-actualization and life review leads us away from exploring the possibilities of social activism. Perhaps the

realization of potential will come in the giving to others and the caring for the welfare of our society. As Friedan suggests, "It would be a violation of our own wisdom and generativity to empower ourselves in age only for our own security and care. It would be a denial of the true power of age" (635). So the question remains, is it possible to value both theoretical viewpoints in our reconceptualization of older adult education? To this I answer an emphatic yes! Our approach need not be limited to one theory. If we are to construct a useful and meaningful philosophy of older adult education we must recognize the different interests and needs in later life and be as encompassing as possible. Rather than seeing humanist and critical theory as polar opposites we would be better served if we looked at how they compliment one another. In fact, it appears that what is needed is a balance between the two. Later life need not be active vs. inner directed. Both are complementary and necessary.

I strongly advocate all forms of education, however, I believe there should be a strong emphasis in later life learning upon the search for meaning, as well as the tremendous potential and relevance for social activism and advocacy in the later years. At the core of our programs we should stress this. The result will be empowerment on the part of the older adult learner and a recognization on the part of society as well as the learner of all later life offers. I firmly believe that it is from the older adults themselves that we can learn the most. This appears

to be a simplistic and obvious assumption. Unfortunately, it is often not taken literally. It is absolutely amazing how many educational opportunities for older adults are created and offered without any input from older adults themselves. Their insight and guidance is the most integral part of the enterprise.

I do not believe the humanists place enough importance upon the critical questioning of the influences power and conflict can have upon our learning and what values and beliefs we hold to be true. It is necessary to critically question the educational situation of the disadvantaged older adult and the older adult in general. We must critically question the power relationships at work in order to understand how we can begin to foster the conditions for social change. As adult educators, it is vital that we motivate, encourage, and support older learners to question why society does not truly value learning in later in life. If we critically question we do not accept conditions or situations because "that is the way they are". By being critical, older adults will be questioning the negative stereotype that you become less useful to society as you age. Too many older adults "buy into" this pervasive and negative image that they are too old for new learning opportunities. However, if they open themselves to critique and question not only the negative societal image, but also how it was created, then they will be able to see past it and begin to rebel against it. To critically question the both the negative stereotype and how it was created is the purest form of critical reflection. As

educators we are indebted to Paulo Freire for his insight into the necessity for this depth of the critique in our practice.

> This is critique in its strongest and most contentious form. It calls into question not only our premises which undergird our understanding of the world, but also the process by which those fundamental understandings are developed. It attempts to reveal the ways power shapes understanding in the hope of fostering better, more democratic forms of learning and understanding (Plumb, course notes 1997:63).

If we do not take our philosophy of older adult education beyond a focus on inner-directed learning, there will be no change in the "learning role" of older adults in our society nor will there be support for meaningful social activism in later life. As adult educators I do not believe we directly evoke social change. Rather, we foster the conditions for social change and transformation. Focusing on this ability allows us to work systematically towards creating lasting and tangible change in our lifeworld. The changes must come from older adults themselves. Our role is to motivate, encourage, and support critical reflection and cooperative and communicative learning and action. The result will be the empowerment of older adults, meaningful learning, and recognition of why older adult education is important. As Sandra Cusack states,

> If we are authentic in our desire to empower seniors and to work with them as equal partners in decision-making processes that effect the quality of community life, critical theory has much to offer in the design of empowering research studies and educational practices. As educators and academics, we must be critically be aware of the relations of power within which we work and of the ways in which we extend legitimate power to others. And, as Gore (1992) suggested, we need to be asking the people whose interests we serve not just what we can do for them,

but what it means to be empowered and how it can best be achieved (Cusack, 1995:319).

Chapter IV
Application to the Problem: A Guiding Philosophy for Older Adult Education

In the foregoing chapters I have presented a conceptualization of what directions, as adult educators, we should move towards in the quest to re-create older adult education. Basically, I have argued for a merging of instrumental and expressive learning and a balance between the humanist and critical philosophies of education in our approach to learning opportunities in later life. As I mentioned in the first chapter, the fundamental purpose of this applied thesis is to create a model which can serve as a guiding philosophy for meaningful older adult education. I also expressed that I hoped this model would transcend specifics and offer a basic guide or outline of what we should consider and value when creating or participating in older adult educational programs. So, perhaps, a guiding philosophy better describes what I am attempting to provide. Before I could create this guiding philosophy, however, I had to "ask some basic questions about what it means for older people to learn and develop in the last stage of life" (Moody, 1987-88:7). That is exactly what I have done throughout the preceding chapters. During the course of the thesis I have become specifically aware of not only the current situation of older adult education, which I clearly pointed out in the first chapter is lacking in both quantity and substance, but also the situation of the disadvantaged older adult. As I also pointed out in the first chapter, the current educational situation for

the disadvantaged older adult is even more alarming. The participation in older adult education is low overall, but the disadvantaged older adult is even less likely to participate compared with their peer group as a whole. It is my intent in this chapter to present what I believe to be the necessary fundamentals that we must value and consider when constructing older adult education opportunities for all older adults. I have decided to approach the discussion of the guiding philosophy I will present, in terms of what older adult education would look like if it was meaningful, valued, and recognized within society, as well as in the field of education. I believe this approach will reduce the number of "we must's" and "we have to's" I would have to use, as well as contextualize the discussion more.

Conceptualizing what older adult education would look like and consist of, if it was valued and made meaningful, was not difficult. What was difficult, were the nagging thoughts of whether or not any of it would actually come true. I continually wondered if I was being naive to think that all these changes could occur, be accepted, and put into practice. Interestingly, the more sceptical or doubtful I felt, throughout this process, the more committed and inspired I became. The more I thought about how difficult it might be to change both education and society's perception of older adults, the more I believed in the immediacy and importance of our actions. I have also come to the conclusion that minor changes, or a few wonderful programs here and there, are not going to make the difference we need. We

require an educational revolution of our current practices and perceptions of older adult education. Through the process of writing this thesis I have become even more impassioned in my belief that if we dedicate ourselves to this revolution, as adult educators, we can foster the necessary conditions for change. While I believe there must be a change in both educational and societal attitudes towards older adult education to truly bring about changes, important and initial steps can be taken within the field of adult education to foster this change. As adult educators we must recognize our responsibility and dedicate ourselves to learning more about older adult learning. If we are to describe and envision ourselves as adult educators, we must appreciate and be inspired by learning that takes place during the complete course of adulthood.

It is obvious from earlier discussions that the guiding philosophy I would envision provides and encompasses a balance between the humanist and critical philosophies of education. Both paradigms provide tremendous insight and theory. It will be clear in the guiding philosophy that I propose that I have been deeply impacted by a combination of these two paradigms in terms of my approach to older adult education.

The Fundamentals of a Guiding Philosophy of Older Adult Education:

A positive and accepting view of aging and death

In an educational system and society that values meaningful older adult education, first and foremost there is an understanding and appreciation of the later years. This point in life is not regarded as something to be feared, nor is it thought of as the time to fill before death. Importantly, death is viewed as a positive and natural progression of life. Today, however, our view is the opposite of this and it impacts greatly upon our conceptions of the possibilities and quality of life in old age. Perhaps we should look to other cultures which do not fear and dread aging and death for guidance. D. Radcliffe quotes Brian Groombridge as stating, "`I find that many American educational gerontologists seem frightened to mention the word death, but that is extremely important" (Radcliffe, 1982;320). As Moody also notes,

> Because old age represents the antithesis of the prevailing values of modern life, there is almost instinctive avoidance of old people, as with the avoidance of death and mortality....We shun and fear old people because, symbolically, they represent our own fate; in their despair, it is really our own that we fear. This intrapsychic process of repression, of unconscious dread and denial, is recapitulated and `writ large' even in the very social institutions and mechanisms that modern life evolves to `deal with' the problem of aging: the enforced segregation of the nursing home and the `gold coast' retirement communities (Moody, 1975:3-4).

Just as we dread and fear death, we dread and fear aging. A more positive and accepting view of aging and death, on the part of

both adult educators and society, is a fundamental necessity for the conceptualization of later life learning as meaningful and purposeful. Within this actualization of meaningful older adult learning would also be the realization that promoting a positive view of aging and death does not only begin with educators, those approaching later life, or those in later life. It begins with children. The fear and dread we associate with aging and death creates an intergenerational gap that is laden with misrepresentations and incorrect assumptions. Instead, I envision the education of children, from the very beginning, regarding aging and death. Moody also notes,

> Children and young people will have to be educated in ways that strengthen, rather than erode, these intergenerational ties. Promoting more positive attitudes towards all stages of life, including old age would be one way to begin. This is a task that must extend from elementary education right on through the most advanced professional schooling...(195).

It is not only educating children and younger adults, but society as a whole. However, I am sure beginning with children would reap tremendous results. Also important would be the inclusion and respect for intergenerational learning. The quality of learning that can originate when the different generations work together is both phenomenal and highly rewarding. It is probably fair to say that both the young and the old have a lot to bring to the learning experience. The young bring the aspiration, desire, hope, and goals of one early in life and the old bring a lifetime of experience, hope, aspiration and acquired wisdom. There would also be a recognition of the significance of learning

with those of the same age. The search for meaning in one's life could be shared with others who are also engaging in this necessary task of later life. This search would also be shared with the younger generations as illustration of the important roles and tasks of later life. In doing so, the younger would appreciate the significance of later life and also gain respect for the importance of finding and searching for meaning in their own lives. Under these circumstances, the search for meaning in later life is valued as an important and necessary goal. Thus, it would obviously be encouraged in education in later life. Even the reality of seeing older adults engaged in meaningful learning and social struggle would have positive effects upon younger generations. It may also lead these younger generations to emulate and follow in the footsteps of the older adults before them in terms of a dedication to learning in later life (Lowy and O'Connor, 1986:167).

Recognition of role loss in later life

Also present in an actualization of meaningful and widespread older adult education would be a recognition and understanding of the amount of change or role loss that can occur in the later years and how these changes may impact the older adult. As Sarkisian notes, "Institutions and teachers both can serve older learners better by understanding the significance of their programs to the lives of people who have experienced important role losses and changes in their lives" (Sarkisian,

1982:192). Educational programs would address these losses and provide a forum for discussing and coming to terms with the different changes whether they by retirement, loss of a spouse, illness etc. Moody suggests the relevance of "mutual aid groups" (204) for addressing particular issues in old age.

> Mutual-aid groups are especially appropriate for certain concerns of old age- widowhood, vulnerability to crime, and coping with chronic illnesses such as arthritis, hypertension, and diabetes, for example. Their experiential learning style offers an approach to education that is tied to concrete motivation for change. Instead of a `hard path' of constantly expanding services for a dependent population, we would opt for a `soft path', where education through self-help build coping skills along with self-esteem (204).

These "mutual-aid groups" would encourage older adults to set up their own programs related to their own particular problems or concerns. The idea of a "mutual-aid group" is definitely not new. They have been gaining immense popularity and membership over the last number of years. Moody makes the interesting observation that it is ironic that "Education for older people is sometimes viewed as a `frill', a view that seems shortsighted indeed, especially at a time when the `self-help ethos' as Frank Riessman has called it, is growing rapidly as mutual self-help groups have proliferated" (1986:204).

Commitment to Lifelong Learning

Another characteristic of meaningful older adult education would be the emphasis upon a lifelong view of education rather than a linear view or the assumption that education proceeds in steps with certain things to be accomplishes at each point in the

lifespan. Harootyan and Feldman explain the difference between linear and lifelong models of education. They write,

> In contrast, a lifelong education model offers a more fluid approach. Rather than linking educational status to age, a lifelong approach to education assumes that persons will continue to learn in formal and informal ways, covering a spectrum of instrumental and expressive needs, throughout the course of a lifetime (Harootyan and Feldman, 1990:350).

Harootyan and Feldman also include an interesting medical analogy from Dr. James Birren regarding the difference between the two models,

> The linear education model can be viewed as a single inoculation that is expected to be adequate for the rest of one's life, whereas the lifelong education model is like a booster shot, in which repeated exposures over time are required to sustain the desired level of protection (350).

Within this view of lifelong education there would be distinct support and appreciation that learning needs can change and diversify. As well, there would be a fulfilment of lifelong learning that is tangible and not rhetorical. Learning in old age would be accepted as "the challenge of human development in the second half of life" (Moody, 1987-88: 6) and attempts would be made to constantly ensure that all older adults were accessing educational opportunities equally. This would be done by the insurance of equal representation of different forms of learning whether they be informal, formal, expressive, or instrumental. "The future well-being and quality of life in an aging society will depend in large part on new thinking and initiatives that promote lifelong education in its broadest terms" (Harootyan and

Feldman:347).

Recognition of the abilities and possibilities of later life

There would also be, of course, a clear understanding of the ability to learn in later life. The damaging stereotype that "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" would no longer be promoted or supported. Obviously, the multitude of evidence to the contrary will have finally won out! As we know, adult educators have been fighting this stereotype for a long time. Older adults will be looked to for guidance in attempts to introduce positive change in our lifeworlds and to provide us with insight into our search for meaning in our lives.

> Given the demographic trends noted, it is clear that education of older adults has another important societal function: preparation for an aging society. Older adults are our most valuable teachers about what it is like to be old. With a growing population of older adults, the society must learn how to adapt its institutions and policies to best serve the needs of future generations of older adults" (166).

I also agree, however, with Lowy and O'Connor that the purpose of education for older adults is for more than the "survival of individuals or societies" (1986:176). Instead, Lowy and O'Connor argue that learning in later life "is fundamentally related to the purpose of human survival, to the development of a human cosmic consciousness toward a greater understanding and role in the future of the universe" (176). Benefits of older adult education would not be viewed in monetary terms or in terms of a new clientele for adult educators. Education in later life would recognized as having a very important purpose. E. Prager cites Payne (1994) as quoting Carl Jung's thoughts on the significance

of later life: "Carl Jung, as cited by Payne (1994), observed that `a human being would certainly not want to grow to be seventy or eighty years old if this longevity had no meaning for the species to which he belongs. The afternoon of human life must have a significance of its own and cannot be merely a pitiful appendage to life's morning" (Prager, 1997:30).

An understanding of the barriers to education

In the re-creation of older adult education, the literature which deals with the barriers to education for older adults will finally have been taken seriously and the barriers will have been addressed. Gerontology research in this area has a great deal to offer educators (Barnes and Wiles, 1980:94). Lowy and O'Connor explain the different barriers,

> The three types of barriers to educational activity for older adults which has been described by Cross (1979) are ... 1) situational barriers (e.g., costs, transportation, physical handicaps);2) dispositional barriers (e.g., attitudes of potential students or educators which limit participation);and 3)institutional barriers (discriminatory policies, inaccessibility, lack of counselling, inconvenient scheduling and registration). Overcoming such barriers, particularly in traditional educational institutions is viewed as a constructive challenge which will eventually prove beneficial for the young and old (140).

Each of these barriers "situational...dispositional...and institutional" would be addressed in conjunction with older adults. It appears that many of these educational barriers are a direct result of not consulting the older adult learners themselves in the first place. Once input is truly valued and

sought from older adults, I do not believe that the barriers will pose such problems. Katherine Hughes notes,

> Overall we consider that there is a growing urgency for educational initiatives and choices to be developed both with and for older people. A variety of models need to be researched and appropriate materials produced both for third-age and mixed age groups. User involvement, consultation and choice need to be at the centre of these activities (Hughes, 1992:100).

Dedication to learner involvement

An educational program that truly valued older adult learning would be characterized by an appreciation for and dedication to learner involvement, both within the learning process and in the planning. When I envision an educational program for older adults, I see the reflection upon one's experience as being extremely important to the learning process and enabling it to be richer. Older adults have accumulated a life's worth of experiences and insight and it is beneficial to learn from such experience. However, I caution against dwelling too much on personal experience. The humanist model emphasises the importance of the experience of the individual, as being paramount to the learning situation, however, from a critical stance I wonder if we can truly learn anything new or explore new ways of thinking if we constantly learn and interpret only in light of our own experiences and perceptions. However, we must also remember that beginning points of enlightenment can begin in personal experience.

Reciprocal Relationship between learner and teacher

The relationship between the learner and the teacher would be one of mutual respect, sharing, and reciprocation of learning. The teacher and learner would be partners in the learning process and it would be recognized that both can and should learn equally from one another. The learner would be able to determine their own interests and direct their own study in ways meaningful for them. I am aware that this description of the relationship between the learner and the teacher resembles much of Malcolm Knowles work on andragogy, which he defined as "the art and science of leading adult learning (or helping adults learn)" (Meyer, 1977:115) as contrasted with pedagogy, which he refers to the teaching of children. However, while the description seems to resemble Knowles' conception of andragogy, I would argue that his concept of andragogy is unnecessary. Many writers would suggest that Knowles concept of andragogy has a lot to offer older adult education. In my opinion, Knowles concept of how adults should learn is lacking and I do not believe it should be utilized in any form of adult education, including older adult education. While I agree with Knowles that the partnership between learner and teacher and self-directedness is very important, it is after this point that I diverge from Knowles thinking. Knowles believes that the teacher's role is only to guide the learning process and not to provide knowledge to the learner. While I appreciate and admire Knowles attempt to resist the "banking approach to education", I believe he underestimates

the role of the teacher. If education were to be completely self-directed by the learner than the learner would only be exposed to what they believe is important for them to learn. How can we learn anything new or explore new ways of thinking if we are approaching education only in terms of our own existence? We need people to inspire us, to question us, and to challenge us to question ourselves. This is the role of the teacher. To open us up to new ideas and to have us challenge our own ways of thinking and interpreting the world. Knowles, however, would stress that the teacher would be interfering in the learning process and leading the learner. I argue, however, that they are not purposefully leading the learner but simply sharing in the learning process. We are constantly learning from others. Knowles states that the teacher and learner must be partners in the learning process. How can they be partners if the teacher cannot truly share his/her own ideas, beliefs, and feelings with the learner? Knowles removes the responsibility of the teacher without fully comprehending the negative effects upon the natural learning process. The teacher is the teacher for a reason. The learner acknowledges this when they come to the teacher to learn. This is not at all the "banking approach to learning". Both teacher and learner are sharing in the learning. The teacher's intention is not to lead the student but to challenge him/her to think in new ways and to encourage the student to be self-directed in their learning together. A positive conceptualization of older adult education would also value the

older adult in the role of teacher, as well as learner. Whether in the role of teacher or learner, however, the older adult provides a positive role model to both children and their more reluctant older adult peers.

Self-directed learning

Self-directed learning experiences in later life may also lead to feelings of empowerment on the part of the older adult. I believe self-directed learning could play a very important role in later life learning because it allows the older adult "to accept their own authority in the educational context" (Wolf, 1994:35) whether this be in the role of teacher or learner. Wolf notes that "anecdotal evidence indicates that it has potential in addressing older adults' needs" (1994). Self-directed learning encourages the learner or teacher to move away from the set learning goals of others and to find for themselves their own learning desires and interests. As Brookfield notes, self-directed learning can enable people to become "proactive, initiating individuals in reshaping their personal, work, political, and recreational lives" (Brookfield, 1986:60). Older adults need more control over their learning and learning opportunities. Perhaps self- directed learning is the key to obtaining this. Obviously, the potential for self-directed learning in later life must be explored further. I did, however, find in Clough's article, "Broadening Perspectives on Learning Activities in Later Life", a very interesting reference to how

self-directed learning could be incorporated into older adult education. Clough was, in fact, explaining an idea that Brookfield had put forth for adult education in general. Clough explains that Brookfield conceptualizes "learning resource centers for seniors" that "support self-directed endeavours" (Clough, 1992:455). These resource centers "would not only serve as an educational resource, it could also be a center where social networks between senior leaders and senior mentors could be fostered" (455). Clough also notes, "Self-directed learning does not necessarily flourish in isolation or independent of a support system" (455). I firmly believe that such resource centers would hold an important place in the actualization of meaningful older adult learning.

Attention to the situation of the disadvantaged older adult

I have emphasized throughout the thesis the special circumstance of the disadvantaged older adult in education. Research has clearly indicated they are the least likely to access more formal types of learning, such as in universities or Elderhostel programs. Heisel et. al. notes: "If educational opportunity for adults is to become more egalitarian, it seems obvious, as Spencer (1980) has noted, that particular measures are needed to attract the older population. Moreover, specific attention must focus on the very old, the undereducated, and minorities" (Heisel et. al., 1980:238). We must improve our educational programs in more formal settings, such as the

university and community college, in order to attract all older adults. We must also focus on developing educational opportunities within the community since there seems to be the indication that it may be through the community that we can best reach the more disadvantaged older adults. That is not to say that the wealthy and educated should access the formal and the more disadvantaged should only access the informal. What I am suggesting, however, is that if studies indicate a preference for more informal learning environments for the disadvantaged older adults, then we should seriously look at developing educational initiatives in our communities. In fact, senior centres are often preferred by older adults as sites for learning. Obviously, we must extensively explore Brookfield's idea of learning resource centers in our attempt to create community educational opportunities and support systems. Our communities offer a tremendous resource. As I mentioned in the first chapter, learning opportunities are available in libraries, senior centres, museums, churches, reading groups, etc. Adele Chene notes that "Community-based groups provide significant learning opportunities for older adults. At the same time, learning opportunities may legitimate, as well as be enhanced by, the new social ties that community-based groups make possible for older adults" (Chene, 1994:765).

When I envision the actualization of meaningful older adult learning for all, I picture community education programs that have been created with community characteristics and resources in

mind, as well as the input of the older adults in the community. As Nelson notes, "A model community program of education for older adults is likely to base planning of adult education activities on careful study of local population characteristics (including assessment of individual needs), then implement activities given a wide range of possibilities from which to choose" (Nelson, 1983:104). Heisel et. al. also note, however, that "the service truly becomes available only when it is combined with efforts to reach out to individuals" (239). Heisel at. al also suggest that as educators we "must abandon the conventional marketing approach" when dealing with disadvantaged older adults (239). They suggest that we

> must employ more personal `social linkage' strategies to overcome the psychosocial and situational barriers that are so formidable for this group (Darkenwald, 1980). Among other things, this requires working with and through the groups and organizations in the community with which these older adults are affiliated such as churches, senior citizen centres, and nutrition sites (239).

Cavanah and Williams quote Laslett as making the similar point that, as educators, we must be aware of the mistaken assumption "that what works for the motivated, middle-class, with a youth spent in education and a life spent with the possibility of re-educating themselves, will work for the much larger numbers of lower class individuals for whom none of these things holds true" (Cavanah and Williams, 1994:83). Obviously, the answer is not in the creation of a multitude of programs. Instead, the solution lies in the attempt to carefully construct programs to meet the

wide ranging needs and interests of older adults. The solution is also not simply in access. As Moody states, "Simply providing more `options' means that well-educated people will take advantage of the opportunities" (Moody, 1987-88:8). An example of a program that clearly excludes the disadvantaged older adult can be found in the following description of The Third Age Community of Learners and Scholars program at the University of British Columbia.

> The Third Age Community, according to its materials, is open to those aged 55 and over or retired. Membership is offered to both men and women who have had `substantial experience in the business, professional, artistic, or volunteer worlds and who now have time and energy for enriching themselves through purposeful cooperative study....Annual membership fees are $350 (Thornton, 1987-88:54).

Unfortunately, some of the best educational programs are geared only towards the affluent and educated, while so many of the educational opportunities for more disadvantaged older adults concentrate on the "filling up of time". It is obvious that the educational situation of the disadvantaged older adult is a very complex issue. Within the span of this thesis I have only been able to direct attention to the vitally important issue and make initial suggestions regarding how we might try to create changes in order to reach disadvantaged older adults. Clearly, the issue of disadvantaged older adults and education could and should be the subject for an entire thesis and investigation. However, it would be both impossible and useless to meaningfully examine older adult education without any dialogue and recognization

regarding the educational plight disadvantaged older adult.

Potential for new roles through the humanist and critical models

Of course, as I have already stressed, the search for meaning is very important in later life and a philosophy of education must focus upon it. Mary Alice Wolf notes, "We may find that the deepest of human cravings, the need to find meaning in one's own experience, often motivates personal learning in old age" (Wolf, 1991:9). As I argued in the last chapter, we need to balance a focus on inner directedness and learning with the possibility for social activism and learning in later life. Just as we need to be inner directed in old age, we also need to concentrate on our "outer dedications". We need to create a balance. Wolf states,

> A fact of life is that we are all interdependent. Each of us needs to be part of a community and to play a part in the world. As we grow older, we find that contributing to others is a means of connecting and of elevating our own self-concept. Erikson (1963, 1982, 1986) points out that throughout adulthood there is a great need to be generative, to care for others, to work for the next generation. When we do not find ways to contribute, we lose our creative inclinations. Erikson (1963, 1986) believes we grow through generativity. If we do not grow, we may become hypochondriacs, self-absorbed and stagnant (Wolf, 1993:12).

The humanist and critical models offer to us the potential to recognize new roles for older adults in society. I do not believe that the two theories are entirely exclusionary. However, I believe we should take the best from each theory to create new and meaningful directions for older adult education. For example, we must look to humanism for insight into life

review, inner integration, the importance of reflection, and the search for meaning. From the critical paradigm we must ask about critical thinking, communicative learning, and social activism. I believe it will be through the acceptance of these notions that we will find validation for the importance of later life and later life learning.

Later life offers tremendous potential for social activism and dedication to helping the next generation make our lifeworld a better place. I believe older adults could offer guidance and insight into our world's problems and how we might go about solving them. That is not to say that at a certain age we suddenly become blessed with the infinite wisdom of the world and older adults are the holders of this wisdom. Age does not determine wisdom, our life experience, and how we reflect upon it does. Even the frailest of older adults could offer to us meaningful dialogue and guidance, if only we would ask and listen.

In an educational environment that values meaningful older adult learning there is a focus on fostering and developing critical thinking in older adults. In fact, Bramwell quotes Stephen Brookfield's belief that "`This praxis of continual reflection may be accurately viewed as a process of lifelong learning'" (Bramwell, 1992:445). As I have already argued, critical thinking on the part of older adults regarding their current educational situation, is necessary in order for positive change to occur. Critical thinking is something we engage in

everyday and it becomes especially important in later life when we are faced with having to make sense of the numerous changes aging often brings (189). "Thus, teaching critical thinking simply reaches out to a process adults have most likely used to some extent, even in an unconscious way" (189). Critical thinking in the learning process also makes the search and realization of the meaning in our lives much easier. Courtenay and Truluck illustrate:

> Learning can inform or challenge existing conceptions of the meaning in life and, in the process, provide an opportunity for acquiring new meaning or confirming currently held views about the meaning of life. Thus, this reason holds potential as an important resource to all learners, including older learners, for making meaning of and about their lives (Courtenay and Truluck, 1997:176).

The authors note that despite the importance of the search for meaning within learning experiences, educational gerontologists have not dedicated much "effort toward instruction that addresses meaning making for older learners" (176). They suggest we must appreciate "the usefulness of critical thinking for facilitating learning experiences in which meaning making is a major outcome" (176).

When I envision meaningful later life learning I envision the fulfilment of critical thinking in the form of communicative learning. Essentially, I see communicative learning as a fundamental premise of older adult education. "In this type of educational experience, emphasis is placed on critical reflection about the learners' basic assumptions, communication to confirm

or challenge their beliefs, and reflective action on the insights that result from the transformation of meaning structures" (187). Added to this would also be the critique of the things that might hinder the learner in the learning process. Communicative learning is the true realization of being critical and reflective. It also encourages us to learn and decide for ourselves what we believe and are committed to. It also forces us not to readily accept other's views of the world and ourselves. As Mezirow states, "As educators, we have an ethical commitment to help learners learn how to think for themselves rather than to consciously strive to convert them to our views" (Mezirow as quoted in Courtenay and Truluck, 187). Cusack also notes, "education has a role to play in developing critical cultural literacy among the growing populations of older adults- to help people understand how organizations and cultures influence the quality of their lives and how to recognize when their creativity and motivation are being eroded" (Cusack, 319). Communicative learning will support and enhance both our quest towards understanding the meaning in our lives, as well as our dedication to social causes and societal well-being.

Obviously the key to this guiding philosophy is learner involvement and the empowerment of the learner. But what is meant by empowerment through education? I agree with Cusack when she states that empowerment comes from education that "provides people with the skills and confidence they need to participate effectively in decision-making processes" (319). Empowerment

also comes from being a critical thinker and self-directed learner. I believe that in order to make older adult education an emancipatory process, we must have a deep regard for the ability of older adult learners. We must also realize that we can help to foster the changes that are necessary in older adult education, but that the ultimate power resides within the older adults themselves to eradicate lasting and tangible change in societal and educational perceptions and realities of older adult education. I also agree with Cusack that "critical theory has much to offer in the design of empowering research studies and educational practices" (319). To summarize, it is quite obvious that,

> A learning society, an aging society where late-life learning flourishes, will not be a society where learning is measured out in credit hours or is tightly controlled by the institutions who have defined education in terms of compulsory schooling, credentialism, human capital formation, or any other terms. To repeat again, the promise of latelife learning is nothing less than the challenge of human development in the second half of life" (Moody, 1987-88:9).

National Advisory Council on Aging of Canada's Recommendations for Older Adult Education:

In addition to all the suggestions that have been made throughout this chapter it is also important that we take into consideration the number of recommendations that the National Advisory Council on Aging of Canada suggests we follow to truly meet the needs of an aging population. I will add to this guiding philosophy of older adult education NACA's recommendations. They are as follows:

- Because education is so valuable in helping adults anticipate, prepare for, cope with and derive benefits from the challenges and changes in their lives, NACA recommends that educational institutions, health and social services as well as cultural and religious organizations develop more educational activities for older adults and remove barriers that limit access to learning by seniors. Wherever possible, seniors should serve as an educational resource by all these organizations.

- Because adequate preparation is important for a satisfying retirement, NACA recommends that unions, employers and governments ensure that retirement preparation courses are provided as an employment benefit to all Canadian workers.

- To maintain the skill level and employability of workers of all ages, NACA recommends that employers, unions and federal and provincial governments encourage and facilitate job-related training for workers of all ages through flexible employment policies and financial compensation of education costs. Educators are urged to adapt educational programs to meet the needs of working adults.

- To further integrate seniors in higher learning, NACA recommends that post-secondary institutions, with support of provincial governments, increase their efforts to attract older adult students into the mainstream of college and university life.

- Because there will be a need for educators trained to teach older adults, NACA recommends that faculties of education include a gerontology component in the curriculum of education programs.

- Finally, to allow literacy-deficient seniors and older adult immigrants the opportunity to participate more fully in society, NACA recommends that federal, provincial and municipal governments, school boards and the voluntary sector develop and implement literacy and basic languages programs for seniors and that local communities, families and friends make special efforts to encourage the participation of seniors who could benefit.

  (NACA, 1990:1-2)

Chapter V
Conclusions: Evaluation, Connections, Reflections on the Learning Journey

The primary concern of this thesis was, of course, to address the current lack of recognition of meaningful older adult education. As I mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, "lifelong learning" has become a popular educational catch phrase within both adult education and society. However, the educational realization of lifelong learning for older adults has been minimal. In both society and the field of education, there still remains a lack of recognition for older adults and the importance of learning in later life. This is the result of our preoccupation with productivity and the measuring of a person's worth in terms of their continued productivity and contribution to society. As Moody notes, "Short term thinking prevails. In an aging society, we will begin to pay the price for this limited view of human development, in the same way that American business is now recognizing the limits of short-range thinking tied only to the current year's balance sheet" (1986,207).

Our rapidly aging society reminds us of the need, now more than ever, to completely reconceptualize and re-create older adult education. As I have also mentioned earlier, the aging society offers us both the chance and the challenge to change our beliefs and practices regarding older adult education. We must examine how we can profess to be adult educators if we do not promote and support meaningful learning opportunities for adults of all ages. As a society, we must examine why we do not accord

learning in later life and older adults with the respect and recognition they deserve.

Throughout the thesis I have attempted to outline possible directions we can take to re-create older adult education. I have also tried to provide reasoning for why we should consider these directions or approaches. Ultimately, I have come to the conclusion that it will be through the merging of instrumental and expressive learning, the balance of critical and humanistic philosophies of education, and the involvement of older adults, that we will create educational programs that actually meet the needs of older adults and will be meaningful learning experiences. I also believe that we must focus on the possibilities of older adult education in our communities, especially when one considers the accessibility and relevance it will offer the more disadvantaged older adults. This thesis subscribes to the view that later life is characterized by diversity and homogeneity and our educational programs must reflect that. There are tremendous possibilities for growth and contribution in later life. To support only one type, form, or philosophy of education would be to negate the relevance and potential of the others. I believe this applied thesis has provided significant reasoning for why we should be as inclusive as possible in our conceptions of learning in later life.

What remains to be investigated and explored?

While this thesis has offered some fundamentals of a guiding

philosophy of older adult education, there still is so much more to consider, contemplate, and initiate. Basically, I have only scratched the surface of what we must do to reconceptualize older adult education. I have offered, however, some insight into what we should consider when taking these steps towards the realization and fulfilment of true lifelong learning and education for older adults. What I have not even touched upon is how these educational programs will be funded. As adult educators, we must not only develop educational programs but also organize the support and funding for these learning opportunities. Obviously, funding will have to come from many levels, including government and the private sector. The state of education today and the almost constant cutbacks and reductions will, no doubt, cause debate over whether or not funding should be allocated to older adult education when there is not enough money for the younger generations who are only starting out in their lives and will be the primary "contributors" to society. As Moody notes, "we risk the danger that young and old might be polarized" (194). A counter argument could be made, of course, that older adults have already contributed to society and still continue to. However, I believe that Moody may offer a better way. He states, "One alternative would be to convince all age groups that they have common stake in educating the next generation" (194). We must begin, especially with our children, stressing the importance of learning throughout life and the need for each generation to

listen and learn from one another. There must also be steps taken within adult education to offer more courses in older adult education and gerontology to adult education students. Our conferences, meetings, and writings must reflect our concern and interest in meaningful education in later life.

I have also not examined how we might go about concretely assessing the educational needs within our communities and institutions. I did argue for the necessity of the involvement of older adults in this process. It is vital to the success of any program or learning opportunity. However, I believe that we often do not truly understand what it is we want until we have experienced all the alternatives. So, as adult educators, we must offer alternative and diverse educational opportunities so that we can better gauge and understand what the need and interests are of older adults.

We must also examine specifically the educational reality of, perhaps, the most educationally disadvantaged older adults of all. Those older adults who are living in a long term care facility. Meaningful educational programs are not a common element in nursing homes. In fact, organized programs are highly rare. As Ian Walker notes, "These elements are, at worst, missing or, at best, grossly under-emphasised, being seen as peripheral and optional extras. Yet these aspects are as essential as physical care in any progressive approach to institutional `care and attention'" (Walker, 1983:43).

Promising lines of future reflective thinking

I believe that the state of the art thinking and practice related to the thesis problem will be found in the recognization of what a balance between both the humanist and critical paradigm can offer older adult education. This combination will offer us, as adult educators, some promising lines of reflective thinking and action in the future. And what will be the applicability of this thesis in the future? Will rising levels of education for older adults mean a change in direction or focus? I have thought a great deal about this and have come to the conclusion that, while I believe higher levels of education among older adults may affect programs and educational interests to a degree, there will still be differences in terms of access and educational advantages. Therefore, I envision the concern for the more disadvantaged older adult being as being as relevant and as important in the years to come.

We must be aware that in an information society, such as our own, that there is the tendency to accord life experience with less respect and worth (Moody, 1986:122). As adult educators, we must do our best to combat this tendency, as well as the "productivity focus" the information society embodies and promotes. However, the information society and its technology also offer positive possibilities for learning in later life. Chronically ill, frail, or homebound older adults may have access to learning sites that would not otherwise be possible without technology (122).

In my work as an educator of front line health care professionals who work primarily with older adults, I find that there is among my students a belief in the need for learning in later life but they also often feel that concern for health care and income should come first. To be fair, my students often work with older adults who are ill or have low incomes and this may lead to their conceptions of what is necessary for older adults. However, we must work past this belief or interpretation and stress that multiple needs are necessary and that old age is not about "merely surviving". As Moody notes:

> We need to create an aging society where people have the material resources to live a decent life and where they can pursue those activities that make life worth living, a society where they are not driven to ask, Why survive?. Late-life learning, I believe, has a strategic role in helping older people meet multiple needs while at the same time giving us all the hope of growth and continued meaning in the last stage of life (1987-88:5).

Reflections on the Learning Journey

I must admit that during the course of this thesis I have struggled deeply with my beliefs as an adult educator. Throughout my master's course work and practice as an adult educator, I have wholeheartedly believed that the critical paradigm offers the most to positive change and growth within adult education. My course work and papers have reflected this strong orientation in my thinking. However, as I began this applied thesis I began to see elements of the humanist paradigm that I felt were both very interesting and important. Naively, I began to wonder if I was not really sure of or not true to my

previous convictions. For a few months I wondered, "Is the focus of this thesis too humanistic ? How can I make it more in line with the critical tradition? What am I missing ?". Unfortunately, I wasted a lot of time and effort on the "theoretical problem" I believed I possessed or was encountering. I have, now, come to the conclusion that there is no need to be divisionary in my approach to older adult education, nor to adult education in general. While I believe strongly in the critical paradigm of education, as is obvious from this, I now believe I can also incorporate and encompass other theoretical beliefs. I also believe that we must do this. If we are narrow-minded and only concentrate on our own particular orientation or tradition, we may miss out on very important ideas and the reflective thinking of those who may think differently than we do. While there are elements of the humanist paradigm that I do not agree with, there are also elements of the critical that I take issue with. I understand now the important contribution and insight the humanist paradigm offers, specifically to older adult education, and how I can balance this with my own beliefs as a critical theorist. I believe that it is this idea of balance of the humanist and critical in older adult eduction that is key.

Throughout my course work, my practice, and my applied thesis I have struggled with the conception of my purpose and responsibility as an adult educator. The process of this thesis has, however, helped me to more clearly see my role and responsibility. I have always felt there was a very important

connection between critical adult education and social transformation. However, I was unsure of my ability or our abilities as adult educators to actually evoke social change. I have not at any time, however, believed that seeking social change was useless or something we should ignore or give up on. I merely doubted the actual impact we could possibly make at times. I wondered, if perhaps, describing the purpose and goal of adult education as education for social transformation could be unrealized rhetoric and generalization. While I believed it should always be foremost on our minds and in our hearts to change inequalities and despair in society, how realistic is it? I wondered if adult education could really change the face of older adult education. Could we cause society to reconceptualize its view of older adults and the importance for meaningful learning in later life? I finally came to the conclusion that this change would require older adults themselves to eradicate these views and stereotypes and then to create new ones. That is not to say that I do not believe as adult educators that we are not responsible or do not have an important role to play. I realized it is our role to ***foster*** the conditions for social transformation and change. Simply stating adult education is education for social change ignores the actual specifics of what we can do to evoke change in our lifeworld. Michael Welton's work has also helped me immensely in my understanding of my purpose as an adult educator. As Welton notes, "Critical adult education practice cannot be identified in conceptually sloppy

and vague ways with `education for social transformation'. Societies are not undifferentiated wholes, and no educational practice ever transforms society!" (Welton, 1995:156). Only by realizing our capacity and capability to foster the conditions for change and transformation will we understand how we can actually, concretely, go about changing society. Focusing on fostering the conditions and enabling social transformation to occur allows us to actually systematically work towards creating lasting change in our lifeworld. The responsibility to transform society resides in all of us. It is inaccurate and misleading to assume adult education is a solution. It would also be inaccurate to assume adult education can solve the problems within older adult education today. All we can do is foster the conditions for change and rely on the older adults themselves and society to make lasting and tangible change in the lifeworld. I agree with Welton that this must be done by addressing and fostering communicative learning and action. As he states,

> But if we understand that the fundamental task of critical adult educators is to preserve the communicative infrastructure of the lifeworld and extend communicative action into state and economic institutions, then we are able to speak in determinate and realistic ways about the enlightenment and empowerment of persons who occupy different roles with different potential for collective self-determination through communicative action (156).

Now more than ever I am confident about my commitment to making our lifeworld better and fostering the conditions for change within older adult education. I believe, however, as adult educators we must engage in critical reflection and communicative

action within our own field first regarding our own beliefs and commitment to older adult education before we can begin to foster changes elsewhere. I strongly believe that this thesis encourages us as adult educators to revisit and rethink our approaches to adult education and renew our dedication to true lifelong learning and all that adult education encompasses.

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