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Social Change and Community-based Literacy Programs

by

Denyse Stewart

**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of Adult Education, Community Development and
Counselling Psychology
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of
The University of Toronto**

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Abstract

Social Change and Community-based Literacy Programs

Master of Arts, 1998

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Counselling Psychology

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of
The University of Toronto

This work seeks to examine the claims made by community-based adult literacy programs in Toronto about social change in relation to adult literacy work. The study focuses especially on the claims made by the staff of community-based literacy programs.

Based on discussions with five other literacy practitioners, I question the possibilities of social change and literacy, often called “critical literacy” or literacy from a critical perspective. While I started by asking how social change is possible and looking for concrete answers for practice, I “ended” by examining why we even claim to engage in social change, and grappling with a framework that is more about processes.

Acknowledgments

While I take responsibility for this thesis, it was not just an individual endeavour.

There are many people that made it possible. I am thankful to all my friends, family, fellow students, co-workers, participants in the program where I work and professors with whom I have engaged.

Before starting this thesis I was thinking of backing out, but Kathleen Rockhill, my education advisor and the second reader for this thesis, made the process of a thesis seem manageable. I am thankful for her ideas and encouragement, which enabled me to work on this thesis.

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I was encouraged by the enthusiasm that several literacy practitioners had about my thesis, especially those I interviewed and those with whom I participated in a number

of literacy gatherings. The interviewees were generous with their time. Thank you.

Suzanne Methot provided me with very concrete support by reading over all of the papers I wrote at OISE, including this thesis. I am truly appreciative of her time and the patience she showed when I didn't have the patience to edit my own work.

All my friends were extremely supportive of my work. I have to thank Women in Tights, a group of Black women who are contributing to the creation of place I call home; myself. They also provided me with support and enough distractions that made many things seem possible.

Never to be forgotten are my other families. My mother, father and brothers always assumed I could do anything, including this thesis. To my partner, who never pressured me, I am thankful. And to our baby, in my womb, who is shaking up my world, a reminder that there are different ways of recreating ourselves.

Last but not least, I am thankful for the love in my life that makes all things possible.

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Chapter 1

Conclusion: It is only the beginning

After working for three years on my M.A. including one year on my thesis (on a part-time basis), I still do not *know*. I began this thesis with questions around the application of social change on a day-to-day basis in my place of work at a community-based adult literacy program and at the end of this thesis process I still don't have an answer. However, while this is the end of the thesis process and the end of the course work, it is not the end of my own process—my own search and inquiries. The process I engaged in for this thesis, especially the interview process, was very interesting and helpful.

You may be wondering why the conclusion is at the beginning when it is "supposed" to be at the end. One of my biggest struggles has always been and continues to be wanting an answer, rushing to the end, and in so doing missing out on the process. Hence the setup of the chapters is one of my learnings, as I work on coming to terms with one of my struggles. The inquiry in which I have just engaged for this thesis does not have an end. The end can be the beginning and the beginning the end—which in fact makes it a circle, a process of continuous energy.

By the time I wrote my thesis proposal I had let go of the idea that I would find or

even look for a definitive meaning of social change and how to practice social change in a community-based literacy program. The following is an excerpt from my thesis proposal.

I am doing this research to help me grapple with a number of questions I have about alternative practices. There is a lot of literature that talks of many pedagogies but it has not provided answers about the day-to-day—nor can it or should it. Answers have to be conditionally and collectively developed, which is what I am hoping I can be a part of through this research. My expectation is not to get an 'answer' but to be engaged in constructing alternative pedagogies with my eyes as wide open as possible (Stewart, 1997b, p. 12).

I have been working in the field of adult literacy, in a community-based program, for six-and-a-half years¹. Community-based adult literacy programs are often defined as programs based in the community², run by a board of directors, primarily reliant on volunteers, learner-centred³, grounded in a community development model, and operated from a critical perspective. Over the last three to four years I have been questioning the claims that community-based adult literacy practitioners make about our practice at community-based adult literacy programs, and about literacy work in general—as a place for social change. I have not felt as if I were engaging in social change. There is a huge disparity between what community-based adult literacy

¹In Chapter 7 I talk at length about my journey writing this thesis.

²The notion of what determines “community-based” has always been unclear to me.

³See Chapter 3 for a discussion on learner-centredness.

programs are claiming to be about—an alternative to the mainstream, progressive (the macro perspective)—and what I was seeing in the community-based literacy field on a day-to-day basis of practice (the micro level). Not only was I questioning the disparity between the macro and micro, but I also wanted to know if it—social change—i.e., literacy from a critical perspective, was possible and if so how. I decided to take some time to look at my practice at a community-based adult literacy program and at the basis from which I work.

I had set out to figure out how one engages in social change through literacy work, but now it is not social change in and of itself that is of primary interest to me. As I listened during my interviews to how people struggled to talk about their vision (an end) and how to get there, I questioned my own notion of any end in and of itself. The most important learning for me, during this process, was a questioning of my own frame of reference—the place from which I am working (in a community-based adult literacy program).

I suppose that the central moral dilemma of being an educator is that one is in the business of trying to change other people, and that therefore a relation of power is formed that is unavoidable. At the same time, we can never fully predict what the consequences of our efforts will be. There is a secular belief that greater knowledge necessarily will lead to a good society, a man-made utopia, that increased education will save us, will lead us to the Truth. But that is certainly yet to be proven (Schapiro, 1995, pp. 43-44).

Much has been learned from radical, liberatory, critical pedagogies about issues of power and about recognizing that learning is not a neutral project. However, the radical, liberatory and critical pedagogies are still based on the idea of moving people in a predetermined direction toward what is considered an ideal end, such as empowerment. Who decides on this direction and the "ideal" end?

The development model of education is very much about changing individuals, but it is only certain individuals that are seen as needing to change. In some circles, the language is about the "dispossessed", or, in the case of adult literacy programs, about literacy learners/students. If there is an ideal end, Schapiro says, there are also controlling connotations (1995, p. 31). A predetermined end can be seen as a "regime of truth"⁴ whereby people are measured according to that truth. Foucault's concern, about regimes of truth is, "not that everything is bad but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism" (quoted in Gore, 1993, p. 343).

⁴Foucault argues that "each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true" (in Gore, 1993, p. 55). Gore sees society also at the local level, for example at the level of pedagogy. I extend this concept of society to programs and fields and, in this case, to the community-based adult literacy field.

What alternative is there to a development model? I propose that we frame literacy work within the context of freedom and resistance to regulation. This would mean not focusing on an end but on the processes of resistance and a way of living a life. Yes, there may be goals that one may choose to work on, but those goals should never be seen as an end in and of themselves, since the methods/processes/ways of life in which we engage would be the focus. Whatever the goal, we could never claim aberration.

It is very important that community-based adult literacy workers find spaces to work with one another, to converse, to interrogate, to dream, to struggle over meaning, to work and to create as opposed to consuming what is provided by so called "authorities" and "experts". These spaces should be in multiple places: in our homes, in our programs, with co-workers, with participants and, yes, even with funders. It would be interesting for a literacy program to engage in a dialogue within its own program over an extended period of time about these questions. Such a program would engage in discussions of frame, of shared meaning and about practice, thereby engaging in creating the program as a space of practice, a place "apart" from the status quo, i.e., a place where we could work on recognizing our positions and making them visible, and where we could work on seeing ourselves and our work fully implicated in regulation and working at a process of freedom.

Freedom is not liberation, a process with an end. It is not liberty, a possession of each individual person. It is the motor and principle of (her or his) skepticism: the endless questioning of constituted experience (Rajchman in Schapiro, 1995, p. 45).

I now focus on what it means to understand the making of ourselves as subjects, how we are regulated⁵, how we regulate others⁶ and the possibilities of freedom as a process of living life. What does it mean, for instance, that there are no innocent positions (i.e., positions that are not implicated in power relations and in controlling others) and that there is nothing that is inherently right or wrong? What does it mean that these notions are very much based on our own individual meanings of life?

Heeding Foucault's words—that we ask how are subjects created—and working with a process of freedom and resisting regulation, I believe that the practice of those often considered to be agents of change—literacy workers/adult educators—has to be examined within the process of their project. I have often found that community-based literacy staff are invisible in the process of literacy work in terms of our own

⁵In relation to governmentality, to be regulated refers to how individuals and/or groups are directed, i.e., made into subjects. Governmentality, based on Foucault's analysis, is all the ways by which society is organized to direct individuals and/or groups. It is not restricted to the popular notion of government.

⁶To be a regulator is the role we all play in directing each other. This is not only in reference to overt means of directing others but also the “invisible” ways, i.e., disciplinary methods, by which people are directed, including self-regulation.

process—our work for ourselves, as opposed to the work we do for others.

hooks says that workers/educators/teachers should be active in a process of self-actualization. This process of self-actualization "emphasizes well-being. That means that teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers (sic) students" (1994, p. 15). I would argue that a process of self-actualization is necessary if workers/educators are to be conscious of ourselves as subjects. We must recognize not only how we are regulated but how we regulate ourselves and others.

Other questions that I have and was not able to answer in this project centre around:

- If no system is innocent, how do we work to counter regulation in our lives?
- How do we heed Lather's challenge of "rethinking the role of teachers with liberatory intentions [and asking] how we can position ourselves as less masters of truth and justice and more as creators of a space where those directly involved can act and speak on their own behalf" (1991, p. 137)?
- How do we build a body of knowledge and resources to interrogate languages that run counter to our frame—freedom—without becoming

professionalized?

- Where do we dream? And how do we let our dreams and desires have a place in our practice?
- In other words, how do we question what we do in an ongoing way?

I am working at realizing Rajchman's idea of freedom. It is a very challenging notion given that it is a big paradigm shift—it is thought much easier to work with a known, and it can be a slippery concept when an individual works to apply the concept of freedom in day-to-day life. In addition to Rajchman's idea of freedom, I question how I can hear and engage in Freire's call for dreaming as part of what we do. Freire says, "Dreaming is not only a necessary political act, it is an integral part of the historical-social manner of being a person. It is part of human nature, which, within history, is in permanent process of becoming" (1994, p. 91). What are your dreams?

Chapter 2

The research process

The process of meeting and talking with people was the most exciting part of this project. I interviewed five people on a one-to-one basis using a semi-structured format. I also participated in a literacy gathering that came together about the time I was preparing to interview. All of the people involved in the discussions were or are still involved in a community-based literacy program in downtown Toronto. In one way or another, everyone identified with the idea of doing adult literacy from a critical perspective.

Originally I had planned to gather with five people in a focus group to talk about and to work through issues about literacy practice at the site of community-based adult literacy programs, as well as the claims that these programs have made about social change. However, at the same time as I was thinking about the group process others were organizing informal literacy gatherings, where, as one practitioner said, people in the field could "get together to talk about how we hang onto/develop a critical edge in literacy work". Some of the same people I was considering approaching to be a part of my focus group were a part of this gathering. I felt that it would have been too redundant, having two groups, and I did not feel I could ask this gathering to be focused on my agenda and formatted in a way suitable for my information collecting,

for my thesis. So I participated in the group as a literacy worker and researcher, and I recorded the gatherings with the participants' consent.

The first literacy gathering was in February 1997. The gatherings were free-flowing, with no fixed agenda or schedule. The number of people in attendance varied from gathering to gathering, from eight to twelve. They were held on Sunday afternoons at a private residence. These gatherings were not on "paid time", which is significant in relation to the question of critical literacy and social change, and the fact that all the attendees were involved in literacy in a paid capacity. Two people involved in the gatherings, who can be referred to as "old timers" in the Toronto literacy field, took on the responsibility of organizing the gatherings.

I had planned for a group dialogue as a way of working through a number of questions and issues for this project. A group dialogue format would have allowed people to give both a response to a question and to actually engage in a dialogue and work through issues with each other, not necessarily coming up with any conclusions, but to have the benefit of engaging with others. In addition, this structure would have addressed the issue of isolation and the desire literacy practitioners have for a forum for dialogue. The latter concern was addressed by the literacy gathering.

As an alternative to engaging in a group dialogue, I decided to do semi-structured one-on-one interviews. I interviewed five people for this project, most of whom I had known beforehand, with the exception of one person whom I had met through the gathering. The people I asked to interview were those I had heard talk about their own struggles with issues of critical literacy, and who I felt comfortable approaching. In addition, I wanted a mix of people. I interviewed two men and three women, four of whom were white and one a person of colour. All of the interviews were done in people's homes. Given the time that people were spending with me for the interviews I did not ask them to spend more time travelling to my home or somewhere else.

I decided to record the interviews on audio cassette and to take notes at the same time. I did not plan on transcribing the interviews in their entirety, thinking it would not be necessary given that I would have notes from the interviews. However, during the first interview I found I had a hard time taking notes. I felt it was a barrier to engaging with people. So I abandoned the idea of taking copious notes. Thus, without the notes from the interview I decided to transcribe the interviews in their entirety. This was helpful in terms of listening to what people had said, but it was also a long process.

I met with everyone twice and three times with one person to complete the interview questions. On average, each session was two to two-and-a-half hours long. Everyone

felt it was beneficial to break the interviews up into more than one session, since they would have been too long otherwise. The other benefit to breaking up the interviews was the time it allowed people to reflect on the discussion, enabling a richer discussion overall. Because I had not planned on transcribing the interviews, I did not offer people the chance to read the transcripts. However, one person did ask to look over their interview transcript so they could make changes, which I agreed to do. No significant changes were made to the transcript by that person, however. I had not thought through what I would have done if the person had changed the transcripts in any significant way.

Although I transcribed the interviews in their entirety, I did not transcribe the recordings of the gatherings. The discussions at the gatherings were not always directly related to my inquiries, so I only transcribed selected parts of them, sometimes in the form of main points rather than word-for-word transcription.

The interview process was very interesting. On one level it was very helpful that I was an "insider", in that I also work in community-based adult literacy and knew several of the people involved. The claims made on behalf of community-based adult literacy programs are constructed by us, the community-based adult literacy practitioners. In other words, I was studying myself. I was as much implicated in the claims made as

the people I interviewed.

The position of "insider" also created a number of challenges, however. As an "insider" I felt I was able to push below the surface of what people were telling me. However, I found that I struggled along with the interviewees to try to find resolutions to my inquiries. I was confusing the type of interview I was after. The interviews were set up to be semi-structured, but at times I pushed for a lot more dialogue and analytical engagement about what was being said. I felt restricted by the structure I thought I should follow with each interview, thinking it was "good" process to be asking all the interviewees the same questions. Sticking to an interview guide was made difficult by the fact that I knew most of the interviewees, which resulted in a certain amount of informality. In addition, because I had heard people speak on the topic beforehand, I was sometimes surprised by what they did not say in the interview. A few times people really opened up when the interview process was officially over, the tape recorder was turned off, my bags were packed, pen and paper put away and I was ready to leave. When I started the writing process my focus had shifted slightly and I no longer was focusing primarily on what the interviewees had said at the time of the interview, but rather on how the discussions had helped me think about process and practice.

Another challenge that I experienced as an "insider" were the assumptions that were made on the part of the interviewees and myself. We would often assume that we knew what the other was talking about. At times I felt we should be creating a glossary of terms that we take for granted. I also felt as if some people were holding back, however, and I'm not sure if this was because I am an "insider". It seemed as if some people were reluctant to reveal parts of themselves to someone who is known to them and their colleagues.

I struggled for a long time with how I would present people's voices in this thesis. I didn't want it to be just a critiquing of what people had said. This had to do with the fact that I know these people and will continue to work with them. I felt it would be more helpful to talk about my learnings, which were nourished from the interviews and dialogues in which I engaged with my colleagues.

One of the biggest technical problems that I experienced with the interviews was blank tape. With two of the interviews there are parts that just did not record and I was unaware of it at the time. Even though I had the essence of the discussions (i.e., what I remembered as the main points, which were complemented by sketchy notes), it was a loss given that I had decided to transcribe all of the interviews in their entirety.

Another aspect I struggled with was the recognition of what Briggs calls particular speech-event types⁷. Briggs talks about the interview as a particular speech-event type and says one has to take this into consideration in relation to the meanings of knowledge taken from the interview (Briggs, 1986, p. 3). In addition to the observations made earlier, how else did the interview process influence what people were saying? How much of what was said was based on what people thought I wanted to hear? How comfortable did they feel in that structure, talking about particular issues? I don't know the answer to these questions, but it would have been interesting and perhaps helpful to have engaged in such discussions as part of the interview process.

I had two questions on which I wanted to focus when I began the interview process:

1. What do literacy workers understand as alternative pedagogical practice? What is their vision and what do they believe are the possibilities of community-based programs?
2. What are the ethics, that is the relation to oneself, of community-based workers, and how are they implicated in the claims made about alternative practices?

⁷Briggs argues that it is significant to take note of interviews as a particular type of construction, with implications—implications that are often not noted in terms of the kind of information that is generated and gathered. He argues that what is said in an interview should be seen as "interpretation which is jointly produced by interviewer and respondent" (1986, p. 3).

After the interview process, I pared down the scope of this thesis to focus primarily on the first question. The second question is still relevant and considered somewhat throughout the thesis but not in the detail I had planned. (I believe the second question can be a thesis in and of itself.) After the interviews I did not feel I had the necessary material to interrogate questions about ethical practice in community-based literacy work. This had to do with what Farnsworth-Alvear has talked about, how she was "ill-prepared to learn from... more idiosyncratic presentations of self" (1997, p. 75).

I struggled with how to represent and use the interviews as part of the final product, the thesis. Was I to present all the ideas people spoke about and then give my opinion? Should I be presenting people's voices by way of including significant transcriptions in the document? In the end I came back to why I was engaging in this process. The process would be helpful not only to me but also to others in the community-based adult literacy field. As a result, I decided I did not want a long document, nor did I want it just to be critique of what the interviewees said I wanted to present a frame from which to work that could be helpful to others in the adult literacy field, a frame that is an alternative to regulation, as well as possibilities for our day-to-day work, inspired by the interviews.

Profiles

Everyone I interviewed and all those who were a part of the literacy gathering were ensured anonymity after signing consent forms. All five interviewees are university educated. One has an undergraduate degree, one has a masters degree, two have doctorates and one is working on a masters. In addition, three of the people have their teaching certifications and did in fact teach in mainstream schools, but not for extended periods. While not everyone is presently working in a community-based program, all had worked in such programs for a number of years.

It was reassuring for me to realize that I was not just taking up people's time when we did the interviews, but that the process was also helpful for those engaging in it. As one interviewee said,

What you are probing at is not what is on the surface there for me.... What you are pushing at feels like the inadequacies of my own analysis and, to some extent, what the layers are that I operate from even if I haven't got language for it. It is not what comes initially to mind....

It would have been beneficial had I included as part of my research process connecting with people as I was writing this document, enabling interviewees to have more direct input into the process of interpreting their/our conversations. The most important part of this project is not "the findings" in and of themselves, but the ongoing process of

dialogue in which we engaged with each other.

All of the people at the literacy gathering were university educated. They had been involved in literacy for different periods of time, and all were or are still involved in community-based literacy programs. Not everyone was from Toronto, but every person had lived or worked in Toronto beforehand and had remained connected with the Toronto literacy "scene". The majority of the people are middle class, white women and most are part of some form of family unit (living with a partner, with or without kids).

Interviewees

The following are brief summary profiles of the interviewees as they presented themselves. Because of the condition of anonymity, certain information I felt would easily reveal their identities is not included here. Pseudonyms are used.

Pat

Pat has been involved in a community-based program as a paid staff person for over five years. Pat first became involved in literacy a long time ago (not as a paid job), through other work that was happening through a political party. Pat's involvement in literacy was very strategic in relation to political consciousness. From a young age Pat

was trained to be critical and analytical through involvement in a political organization based on a Marxist-Leninist perspective. This early political involvement and training provided skills in strategy and tactics that are applicable wherever Pat works.

Terry

The central interest in literacy practice for Terry is the process of learning to read and write as an adult, where the relation between the student and the literacy practitioner would be a much "better" one than, say, between a professor and undergraduate students. The main motivation for Terry's involvement in literacy is the teaching itself, and the relationship with students. Terry said, "I have always been vaguely leftish in my politics, but I didn't get involved in literacy because of politics, except there are politics in the relationship between the student and the instructor/tutor/facilitator/whoever it is". The main reason Terry enjoys this kind of relationship is a politics of personal behaviour, which Terry referred to as a gut politics, based on a "view of society, a view of how people should relate to each other in society, and a certain egalitarian thing".

Terry has been involved with tutoring since high school. Terry's interest in literacy is not restricted to a paid job, since Terry has a general interest in literacy and reads about it in her/his "leisure" time. Ideas that influenced Terry's political stance include

not wanting to be part of an elite; Hugh Newton's statement that if one is not part of the solution then one is part of the problem; the Vietnam war as an act of imperialism; and experiences of racism.

Sam

Sam got involved in literacy because of a love for reading, and because she/he wanted to help someone learn to read and develop a love for reading. Sam started tutoring in university as an undergraduate student and from that first experience started questioning the notion of literacy as "good". She/he always assumed an eventual career as a teacher. Sam works in literacy at different sites with a lot of focus on community-based programs, and has stayed in literacy "partly because it is a way to work with poor people, a way to work with people who get ignored and put down".

Chris

Chris is the first in the family to go to university. Chris says that there wasn't any particular path early on in terms of what she/he wanted to do. A significant part of her/his life, in terms of political development, was during travel, when Chris met political people, artists, and encountered the theology of liberation. It was not until Chris read a book where the author talked about teaching styles and subjects grounded in students' culture and about the possibilities therein that teaching felt right for

her/him as a career path. The encounter with the theology of liberation felt like it "brought together all the different strands of what it is to be human", an important frame of reference for how Chris works. Another influence was Ivan Illich, who talked about deschooling society. Chris got involved in literacy when she/he heard a lecture on literacy from a Freirean perspective. Chris comes from a working-class background, and feels a strong sense of being working class.

Sandy

Sandy had not planned to get into literacy. At university the focus was on community development and community empowerment, and at that time Sandy was involved in solidarity work. Her/his main issue of interest while at university was the idea of a community representing its own history. At university Sandy got involved in a literacy program, and felt it was a way to connect with marginalized communities here in Canada in contrast to international solidarity work, which focused on communities worldwide—and it was a way to connect with people who were poor and marginalized. When the decision was made to focus on literacy, it was based on Sandy's political agenda of being in solidarity with the poor. She/he now feels, however, that it was a time full of naive idealism.

Chapter 3

Discourses of literacy and community-based literacy

Literacy perspectives

Harold Alden's analysis of literacy has been very significant in Canada. It is the general framework often used when adult literacy practitioners talk about their work. I will provide a summary here of the three perspectives as laid out by Alden (1982): liberal, conservative and critical. Even though his work was done over fifteen years ago it is still considered to be a foundation of the Canadian literacy field. It was the frame that was shared with me when I started working in literacy. Alden's analysis continues to be presented to new tutors, and all of the people I interviewed for this thesis also referred to it. A grounding in Alden's work is necessary if one is interested in the history of theoretical perspectives and the development of adult basic education in Canada.

Liberal

Alden argues that the liberal perspective makes a direct link between the difficulty in reading and writing and poverty. Basic education, then, is seen as an effective anti-poverty strategy. Alden argues that those who are embedded in the liberal perspective believe that adults suffer economic hardship primarily because of their low educational attainment. At the heart of the liberal argument is the belief that "illiteracy" is the

primary cause of poverty and unemployment.

[The] lack of basic education is one of the most important obstacles preventing adults from achieving adequate employment and income, and this explains much of the observed poverty and unemployment in Canada. Based on this reasoning, it is suggested that literacy and basic education constitute a particularly effective anti-poverty strategy (Alden, 1982, p. 5).

This perspective draws on data that show an association between people's low income and their level of education, and takes as a conclusion a cause-and-effect relationship where people's educational level is the reason for economic hardship (Alden, 1982, p. 36).

Alden states that there are three assumptions that form the basis of this perspective.

First, one's income level depends on one's productivity as a worker which is a function of one's human capital (including attainment of basic education). Hence, those with inadequate basic education will experience higher levels of unemployment and poverty (Alden, 1982, p. 36). Second, a rise in technology levels results in a rapid rise in educational requirements for jobs, recalling the first assumption—that poverty and unemployment persist for those with low levels of education (Alden, 1982, p. 37).

Third is the assumption that a "culture of poverty" exists whereby even though there is some recognition of "imperfections" in the economic system—which play a significant

role in the creation of poverty for those with low levels of education—and wherein the poor remain poor because they "reject the larger society and reproduce their own socio-economic status as a result" (Alden, 1982, pp. 37-38 and Luce, 1996, p. 4).

The liberal perspective argues that individuals are "deficient" and can be "fixed" with a remedial strategy composed of literacy training, adult basic education, job-skill training and life-skills training (Alden, 1982, p. 40). The goal here is to help "impoverished adults... become more socially competent and more productive and stable as workers", thereby breaking "the self-perpetuating poverty 'cycle' "(Alden, 1982, p. 41). This approach, Alden states, has also been built into a "community development" approach

where there is participation of poor [people] in groups or communities in the assessment of needs and the planning and provision of the new opportunities. ...[T]his form of community development is essentially aimed at enabling a group or community to achieve accommodation within, rather than to radically transform, the prevailing socio-economic system (Alden, 1982, p. 41).

Conservative

While the liberal perspective argues that "illiteracy" is one of the main causes of poverty, the conservative perspective argues that "illiteracy" is distinctly a secondary cause of poverty (Alden, 1982, p. 9). Proponents of this perspective reject the remediation strategy as an anti-poverty approach (Alden, 1982, p. 49). Conservatives

argue that it is not environmental and institutional factors that lead to personal deficiencies. Rather, individuals are responsible for their relative successes and failures. Conservatives deny that greater social equality is possible. In fact, they argue that

a capitalist economy bestows success according to the ambition, ability and hard work of the individuals who compete in it. Therefore, if some individuals remain poor, it is because they have not demonstrated these qualities (Alden, 1982, p. 49).

Conservatives argue that the anti-poverty strategies developed by liberals can never be successful because there is nothing that can be done for some people who suffer "defects" either of a moral or genetic nature (Alden, 1982, p. 50). In addition to the problems of individuals, conservatives argue that education needs to go "back to the basics" both in subject matter and methods (Alden, 1982, p. 52). In addition, they argue for less government involvement (i.e., cutbacks and deficit reduction) and propose that literacy projects be looked at as more a "profit-making venture" or through a volunteer campaign financed by private charities (Alden, 1982, p. 52).

Critical

The critical perspective argues that "both illiteracy and poverty are the products of the capitalist economic structure" (Alden, 1982, p. 9)—distinctly different from both the liberal and conservative perspectives, which place blame on the individual. In the

critical perspective, "illiteracy" is viewed as more of a social problem than as a problem of personal inadequacy or disadvantage. This perspective does not see the issue as "a technical process of compensating for cognitive skill deficiencies", as the adherents of the liberal perspective do (Alden, 1982, p. 9). The basis of this perspective is socialist and Marxist in nature. The term "critical" comes from Paulo Freire and his concept of "critical consciousness" (Alden, 1982, p. 8).

Its adherents share the view that the Canadian economy and its labour market are far from fair, and that in fact they constitute the primary source of poverty and unemployment. They add a new variable—the distribution of the economy (Alden, 1988, p. 64).

Adherents of the critical perspective believe there is a correlation between "illiteracy" and poverty. They see "illiteracy" not as a cause but, rather, as a reflection of inequality and, to some degree, as a reinforcer of it. Alden argues that it is not only the philosophical and humanistic assumptions one has to consider, but, importantly, an analysis of the political economic implications—otherwise one slips into the deficiency model (1982, p. 64). Adherents of this perspective argue that "'illiteracy' is itself not the key variable—it is just one aspect of a much larger problem" in this class society (Alden, 1982, p. 74).

Community-based literacy

Community-based programs are one of many types of providers of literacy programs offered in Toronto. Others include boards of education, public libraries, community colleges, labour unions and private enterprises. There are three primary elements that constitute community-based programs, as documented by Elaine Gaber-Katz and Gladys Watson in *the land that we dream of...*⁸ :

- literacy from a critical perspective;
- learner-centredness; and
- community-building.

Literacy from a critical perspective

Community-based literacy programs are based on the critical perspective framework provided by Harold Alden, as summarized earlier. In addition, Gaber-Katz and Watson talk about the vocabulary that programs use as indicative of this perspective.

"Literacy" is used, rather than "illiteracy" and "adult learner" or "student" is used instead of "illiterate" adult. The authors state:

[T]he word literacy conveys the notion of both process and content, more at the societal level than at the individual level. It is frequently understood to encompass the notions of advocacy and community education. In contrast, the terms illiteracy and illiterate adult seem to convey an absence or a deficit within

⁸*the land that we dream of...* is considered a cornerstone document in Canadian community-based adult literacy programs.

the individual and imply that illiteracy is primarily an individual, education problem.... It implies that, with increased literacy provision for adults, the literacy community will have righted any wrongs society may have committed, such as overcrowded classes, poor instruction, and (mis)labelling. What it does not convey is the notion that society, by its very structures, excludes some people and pushes them into lives of poverty (1991, pp. 31-2).

Another important aspect of the critical perspective as embodied in community-based programs is social change⁹ and empowerment. Gaber-Katz and Watson have found that many practitioners are frustrated in their attempts to realize those goals. They suggest that while it is clearly a goal for *practitioners*, it may not always be a goal for learners, which leads them to question "whether the practitioner has a role to play in encouraging learners to consider literacy from a critical perspective, and how this critical perspective can be integrated into their learning program" (1991, p. 35).

Gaber-Katz and Watson (1991, p. 35) list what literacy practice from a critical perspective looks like in community-based programs. Programs based on a critical perspective assist learners to

- improve their basic skills in reading, writing, numeracy, communication, life skills, abstract thinking and general knowledge;
- increase their critical abilities;
- build self-confidence;
- increase their understanding of self;
- participate more fully in society;
- create language and culture;

⁹"Social change" as defined by Gaber-Katz and Watson means changing the social structure, as opposed to learners just talking about taking charge of their own lives.

- enhance the quality of their own lives; and
- work toward empowerment and social change.

It is interesting to note aspects of the list in relation to the three theoretical perspectives outlined by Harold Alden. Alden would put things like helping learners with life skills and abstract thinking squarely in line with the liberal perspective. In addition, Gaber-Katz and Watson do not relate the critical perspective to socialism and Marxism, a key aspect of Alden's analysis. This difference between Gaber-Katz and Watson, and Alden speaks to a number of areas. First, it draws attention to the difficulty that many programs face in realizing theory in practice. It is interesting that Gaber-Katz and Watson do not discuss the socialist and Marxist application as outlined by Alden even though they state that their frame is based on Alden's work. Second, programs do not engage in discussions about their social vision and what it means in practice as an integral part of their practice. Community-based adult literacy programs and their staff have a difficult time articulating the relationship between their social vision and their day-to-day practice—this was evident in the interviews in which I engaged for this thesis. Third, practice is not easily divided and categorized in neat boxes as laid out by Alden. In Chapters 5 and 6 I talk about what kinds of practice I see possible in community-based programs.

Learner-centredness

Learner-centredness is central to community-based programs. It is seen as an alternative to teacher-centredness which dominates in more formal types of education.

Other aspects of learner-centredness are

- the learner is the centre of the learning process;
- a deep respect for learners;
- a belief that all can learn;
- learners set their own learning goals;
- learners are involved in the decision-making of the organization; and
- learners are involved in determining their own curriculum.

Learner-centredness is supposed to be practiced whether learning takes place in a one-to-one situation or in a small group. The curriculum is based on where a learner is situated in terms of education, what they want to learn, their strengths and life experiences (Gaber-Katz and Watson, 1991, p. 8).

Gaber-Katz and Watson, in their research, found that learner-centredness means that programs

- listen to literacy learners and elicit stories about their lives;
- believe that everyone can learn;
- emphasize equality among learners, volunteers, and staff;
- encourage learners to become involved, both in the program and in the community;
- ensure that learning will be relevant;
- provide a range of programming options¹⁰;

¹⁰One-to-one and small-group tutoring are the types of program options to which Gaber-Katz and Watson refer. All community-based adult literacy programs in Toronto provide one-to-

- assist learners in setting their own learning goals and measuring their own progress; and
- ensure that learners' interests and needs determine the curriculum (1991, p. 9).

Community Building

[C]ommunity-building encompasses an exciting and creative process whereby people gather together in learning relationships that aspire to be equitable, just, and tolerant. This is the first step to building communities that are equitable, just, and tolerant (Gaber-Katz and Watson, 1991, p. 49).

The idea is to work for "the highest form of relationship among people". The idea of "community" here encompasses the following meanings as stated by Gaber-Katz and Watson (1991, p. 50):

- geographical location, that is, the community as a particular neighbourhood;
- feelings that are shared between people and the atmosphere that is created;
- commonality of interests and concerns shared by people within the program, that is, an interest in learning or teaching reading and writing, or an interest in social change; and
- resources that can be brought into the program from the community, such as people, money, services, and information.

This understanding of community is based on the process of community development,

one tutoring facilitated by volunteer tutors as a core of their programs. It is a structural component of community-based programs. This will be an important point when we look more closely at how programs work.

"a process that involves collective action by community members to strengthen the community" (Gaber-Katz and Watson, 1991, p. 50). The notion is larger than programs and is based on the larger community or neighbourhood to which programs are connected. Gaber-Katz and Watson state that, according to their research, there are several aspects to community building in relation to programs:

- are located in the community at convenient locations, are open at convenient times, are responsive to community needs, and co-operate closely with other neighbourhood services;
- foster the development of common interests and goals;
- encourage literacy to be understood and practiced as a social process;
- create a sense of belonging;
- draw upon members of the community to share responsibility for the education of other adults within the community;
- help learners to acquire an understanding of self in relation to society; and
- work to build supportive communities (1991, pp. 50-51).

The above description of community building is thought to be unique to community-based programs. One of the interviewees, who not only worked in a community-based program but also in a board of education class, talked about community-based literacy as a unique site:

The difference between a board program and the community program is that you can create a community within the [board] class, create that community of people doing something, creating their own literacy within the class, but it just stops there. It doesn't extend at all into the community; it doesn't have any life outside of the hours of the class. A community program has the opportunity to extend that into other areas, for example to governance of the program.

The above three elements—literacy from a critical perspective, learner-centredness

and community building—are considered core values and unique to community-based literacy programs. Today, a community-based program would describe itself structurally, in summary, as "run" by a board of directors; offering one-to-one tutoring with some small-group instruction; tutoring primarily facilitated by volunteers; learner-centred; independent and working from a community development model. In addition, one will find a range of staff structures: collectives, hierarchical and split-level participatory democracy. What Gaber-Katz and Watson do not talk about is the idea that community-based programs are not only about a philosophical perspective, but also a specific structure.

Gaber-Katz and Watson note that the three basic elements of community-based literacy programs are not without their contradictions during implementation. One contradiction arises between what programs aspire to do and what governments (the major funders of programs) are willing to fund, and what governments demand for the money provided. For example, programs talk about being supportive to learners, but governments often interpret this to mean "hand-holding" and deem it inappropriate as a funded program activity. Many of us who are practitioners see such contradictions in our work, yet hold onto the theory, as this staff person indicated:

I'm talking all theory here. In theory, community-based programs are more independent. They can be more directed by community rather than the funders, by the Ministry or whoever.... In theory, a community program should be more

independent from whatever the fad of the day is coming down from the Ministry, but in practice... It is possible for the Ministry to hold a big club over the community programs especially now with the new legislation [the amalgamation of Toronto and outlying areas into a megacity]. If community programs can establish some sort of economic base that would be... but that seems very difficult to do. The theory is still there.

Even with the recognition of contradictions, workers in community-based programs somehow articulate themselves more as a political site than other education sites.

There are many examples, however, where this is not necessarily the case, as one practitioner states:

So in some ways I'm not sure that ultimately it is one structure or another that makes the difference. It feels like you can create different possibilities in different structures.... It feels like there are different sorts of possibilities in different structures, but I don't feel like the community-based programs any longer is somehow the pinnacle of what makes political sense to me.

Definition of Literacy

As with all definitions, literacy is no less contestable and no more universal. The definition that one applies to the work has everything to do with the perspective/frame from which one works. Alden, who primarily supports a critical perspective, sees literacy as complex, more than a technology, something that must be considered in the content of culture. It is important to put forth Alden's definition or assumption of literacy given the significance of his study in relation to those who talk about literacy from a critical perspective.

[R]eading and writing are complex social practices [that] touch on many levels of our social existence in a literate society like Canada, and cannot be understood in terms of their effect on any one level alone. For example, from one point of view, reading and writing together constitute a 'technology of the mind', a highly sophisticated set of skills involving the manipulation of 'visible language', [that] can be considered through psychological concepts like cognition and intelligence, and physiological ones like perception. From another point of view, since reading and writing make use of language—a system of symbols [that] serves as the medium of expression of meaning, indeed of human consciousness itself—they are closely bound up with cultural and ideological phenomena. On a third level, reading and writing constitute part of the 'means of production', i.e., they form 'tools' in the process of production, distribution and exchange of goods and services in a predominantly literate society like Canada, and so interweave with economic practices. On a fourth level, the political, writing forms one part of the 'network of power', in Poulantza's terms. For example, he points out that 'in a certain sense, nothing exists for the capitalist state unless it is written down...' (1982, pp. 13-14).

Alden argues that because of the complexity of reading and writing it would be problematic not to adopt an holistic framework. He says that literacy cannot be reduced to one level of understanding, for example, seeing it only as a set of cognitive skills (i.e., a technical matter) (1982, p. 14). However, I believe this is how literacy is commonly thought of by the "public"—as a set of cognitive skills seen as a purely technical matter needed by everyone to have a "good" life.

Even though Alden's work is significant, it is not "the Bible" by which practitioners operate. It has, however, formed the basis of much discussion for people in the field. Those with whom I engaged for this project seemed very supportive of Alden's

perspective and, of course, have their own "take" on what literacy is. As two interviewees said,

When I think of literacy I believe that it has a lot to do with helping people develop skills that would facilitate their interaction with their environment. It is supposed to enhance people's capacity to interact with their environment. That for me is a more generic way of saying it, or at least defining it so that it doesn't matter wherever people find themselves, they are better able to interact with their environment. In many ways, that is what education is supposed to do. One of the difficulties with the notion of literacy, as it is commonly defined, is that it does have a limiting sort of perception, or contributes to that limiting perception, that it is only tied to reading and writing. I think, historically, that education has a sort of broader perspective.

I think there is always a cognitive way of looking at it and a social way of looking at it. I think I am probably different than some literacy workers in the amount of emphasis I put on the cognitive part of it because that power for me is a cognitive power. I think maybe people feel that but don't talk about that as much as I would. You can think of literacy in terms of behaviours, in terms of social interaction and learned social behaviour, or you can think of it more abstractly as a technology, as a cognitive technology. People who support a critical view of literacy have tended to dismiss the cognitive view of reading and writing.... Once you recognize that cognitive part you can see that there is something inherent in literacy itself. By literacy I mean just the technology of reading and writing, and having that available to you has a power in its own right.

It is also interesting to note that some people talked about literacy as a place when asked how they understood literacy. This implies that people would primarily "work" on improving their reading and writing in a literacy program. In the next chapter I will be exploring in the notion of how societies are organized in a programmatic nature and what that means for our frames of reference. This practitioner talks about literacy

as a place when asked what literacy is,

What I think is commonly understood as literacy is where I was at the start, more a sense that people just need to learn a skill, and that would shift things. I suppose my concept now is much more around literacy as a tool with which you can work around some sort of analysis. Reading with people what they say and how it compares with their life feels like it helps to open that up and helps you to understand how other people understand their lives while writing about yours and talking with others and so on—it feels like it has potential to be about getting a different perspective on your life. I don't think literacy has to be the form to do that. I don't think you have to be literate to do that. It feels that it is a space that is acceptable for people to go to and to some extent at least people are paid to do that.

This chapter has been about discourses of literacy. As with any discourse there are contradictions (some would say challenges). I question some of the claims made by community-based programs as well as the effect of those claims. I am primarily interested in the frame of social change and empowerment, and the possibilities thereof. The impetus of this project was the feeling that I was not living up to the social change aspect of my literacy practice. I needed to reflect on that. I believe now that the whole frame has to be examined before plunging into doing social change work through adult literacy. Alden's analysis is helpful in questioning much of what is considered the dominant theory of education, however, it is limiting in that it does not move us into understanding regulation and how all people are implicated. Alden's analysis would have us believe that we have free choice as to whether we are regulators or regulated. I argue that the pivotal position for choice is not in whether

we are regulators or not, but in working to counter regulation while recognizing how we are implicated. Gore provides a word of caution regarding pedagogy.

The regulative aspects of pedagogy are overwhelmingly difficult to throw off, and so the possibilities for 'emancipation' and 'liberation' in the name of pedagogy (assuming we even know what these terms mean and whom is to be liberated or emancipated from what) are restricted partly by their very location within pedagogy (1993, p. 10).

Many of us working in community-based programs felt secure in the belief that we offer an alternative to the formal education system, which we see as highly regulatory. Many of us have not problematized that the very programmatic nature of society is a technique of government, that is, a technique of regulation and governance¹¹. Nor have we considered how the programs we work in/for are part of the techniques of regulation. Many literacy practitioners have never really looked at ourselves as forms of government. To do so would mean questioning ourselves as regulators and as regulated. I argue that we need to add this equation to the literacy discourse before we talk about any kind of social change (if this indeed remains the goal).

¹¹The notion of governance is based on Foucault's analysis of governmentality. Governance is not only about political structures or the management of states, but it is about the ways in which individuals and/or groups are directed (i.e., governed). An example of this is the language used to measure and categorize people and their learning by giving them grades. People's learning can then be compared, measured and evaluated as "good" or "bad". See Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion.

Chapter 4

Frame for my practice

No discourse is inherently liberating or oppressive. The liberatory status of a theoretical discourse is a matter of historical inquiry, not theoretical pronouncement (Jana Sawicki in Gore, 1993, p. 50).

Sawicki refers to a lack of innocent sites for any discourse—all are suspect. This is the starting point of my analysis and search for a frame by which to look at the discourse of community-based adult literacy programs. Community-based programs and, more specifically, their staff (literacy workers/adult educators) often claim that their work is about social change—liberation, emancipation and empowerment—where the inequalities of Canadian society are examined with a strong anti-poverty analysis. As discussed in the previous chapter, this is often referred to as a critical perspective. This critical perspective is about positioning community-based adult literacy programs "outside" of and in opposition to "the system". I argue in this chapter that this positioning is a claim of innocence that is in fact not possible. None of us is ever "outside" of the system if one looks at the system as not defined by popular notions of government but, rather, looks at government as all the ways that individual and group fields of action are structured.

I have often been troubled by the work that is considered to be about social change. At

first I did not believe that I was doing social change work and I questioned how I could do that at my place of employment in a community-based literacy program.

Now my questions are more focused on the meaning of social change: For whom is the change intended? Who will be the agents of that change? What change are we/am I talking about? What is the end result of the change? How should we/I approach the change? Where are community-based programs placed in this change? What is the role of education in social change? And does this critical (social change) frame succeed for community-based programs?

I have also been troubled by education's placement—and specifically, adult literacy's placement—within a development discourse of change. Much of this discourse talks about working with poor people in a way to "empower" *them*, so that *they* may become more critical and thus resist the oppressive structures surrounding *them*. While community-based programs and people who work from a critical perspective argue against such a deficit model, it is often difficult to avoid. Literacy programs exist to help people improve their reading, writing and numeracy from a basic level. People come to a program because they are seen and/or see themselves as not having a skill; a skill that has a high value in society, and which is often paralleled with intelligence. This is often the starting point and we, the staff, are always trying to work ourselves and the students out of that deficit position.

Community development is often put forth as an alternative to the deficit model of education. Can we say that a key aspect of a community-based program is ending poverty? Or is it to recognize what poverty means in relation to learners, and how the distribution of wealth affects all of us? If we were to argue that one of the goals of community-based adult literacy programs is to end poverty, what would that mean? Community-based adult literacy programs are not organized enough even to begin asking the meaning of and possibility of ending poverty. Part of the limiting structure of community-based adult literacy programs is the need for funding, primarily provided by the government. It is a need that programs have not been willing to sacrifice given that their lives depend on it. This need for funding is one of the means by which programs are directed. Besides the structural considerations of funding, when we talk of ending poverty we should ask who is talking and for whom? Who will be doing the work and for whom? We first need to be engaged in these and more questions if we wish to move away from "theoretical pronouncements", heeding Sawicki's advice.

Connected to this notion of the possibility of social change at a community-based site is the need for an examination of the site as a program, and its relationship to how society is organized. It means that we need to understand or, rather, to examine our understanding of power, the organization of society as a form of governmentalization,

and the contradictory place of workers in that organization. An alternative to talking about social change is talk about how we are regulated, are regulators, and the possibilities for freedom.

Power

One of the claims made by community-based adult literacy programs who argue for social change is that they work to "empower" learners who are "powerless". This notion is based on the idea that power is something that one possesses. Gore, however, uses Foucault's work to argue that "power is exercised or practiced rather than possessed, and so circulates, passing through every related force" (1993, p. 52). From this perspective, we are asked to look at power as a net as opposed to a simple hierarchy with power flowing only from the top. Gore believes power is a set of relations that both enables and impedes. According to Foucault, the workings of power is elaborate and pervasive:

The omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere... power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society (Foucault in Newman, 1997, p. 22).

One can see that with this understanding of power there are no innocent sites or

bodies. There is no place "outside" power. It is not enough to say that "the government" has power and is restricting our choices and if we changed the government there would be a redistribution of power. Any position we take, and all relations thereof, must be examined. Also, Foucault argues that integral to this understanding of power is the ability to examine the making of subjects. He says we need to ask, "How to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, [and] how to become the best possible governor...." (Foucault, 1991, p. 87).

If we are to question all sites, positions, relations and the idea of governance, then questions about how society is organized will follow. In my study, the question of power, then, becomes larger than just the site of a literacy program. Programs are not exempt from regulation but are in fact a form for regulation; an aspect of governmentality.

GOVERNMENTALITY¹²

I will utilize Rose and Miller's framework, which analyzes power and whose work is based on Foucault's notion of governmentality. The focus of much of Foucault's work was on how human beings are made into subjects. He argued that to understand how

¹²This section is based on an earlier paper (Stewart, 1997a).

people are made into subjects, one has to understand how power is organized as regulation through and on our bodies—one needs to look at the "art of government"¹³ if one is to understand power. Foucault says that central to such an analysis are questions of governance.

Government is the historically constituted matrix within which are articulated all those dreams, schemes, strategies and manoeuvres of authorities that seek to shape the beliefs and conduct of others in desired directions by action upon their will, their circumstances or their environment. It is in relation to this grid of government that specifically political forms of rule in the modern West define, delimit and relate themselves (Rose and Miller, 1992, p. 175).

Rose and Miller's reference here to government is not the popular notion we refer to as political governments. The popular notion of government is but one aspect of government given in Foucault's notion of governmentality. "Governmentality... is all those procedures, techniques, institutions and knowledges that constitute an ensemble empowering such political programs and policies" (Johnson, 1993, p. 143). Rose and Miller address the problematics of government in terms of "political rationalities" and "technologies of government". By this they argue that it is important to look at the various direct and indirect regulatory mechanisms that give effect to government. The indirect mechanisms allow primarily for "government at a distance"¹⁴ through the

¹³The art of government is the ways in which people are directed, i.e., how we are regulated (including by ourselves).

¹⁴Government at a distance is regulation without disruption of the notion of autonomous characteristics. This form of regulation, Foucault argues, is the method of the modern form of

linking of individuals' and organizations' conduct to political objectives. An example of government at a distance would be the ways that community-based adult literacy programs self-regulate themselves. Decisions are made by community-based adult literacy programs and their staff about who is "worthy" to enter programs, how long people can stay in a program and about guidelines of efficiency. All are done in the name of funders, even when the activities are not directly requested by the funder.

Miller and Rose argue that today we have a "particular way of thinking about the kinds of problems that can be addressed by various authorities" (1993, p. 76). This allows for a programmatic form of governmentality wherein government is organized in accordance with "problems" that must be fixed by programs and expertise (literacy, for example, or poverty). There is an "eternal optimism that a domain or a society could be administered better or more effectively, that reality is, in some way or other, programmable" (Miller and Rose, 1993, p. 78).

Political rationalities are one of the problematics of government. Political rationalities are "morally coloured, grounded upon knowledge, and made thinkable through language" (Rose and Miller, 1992, p. 179). It is the know-how and language that

government. There is a shift to disciplinary power, meaning that power becomes internalized by all people and we then self-regulate ourselves (Foucault in Gore, 1993, pp. 52-53).

makes government possible, which allows for the "formulation and justification of idealized schemata for representing reality, analyzing it and rectifying it" (Rose and Miller, 1992, p. 178). It is language that constructs knowledge in such a way as to render "aspects of existence thinkable and calculable and amenable to deliberated and planful initiatives" (Miller and Rose, 1993, p. 77). We in community-based adult literacy programs say/claim that the focus of our work is about social change, constructing equal relationships with students and seeing the connection between poverty and literacy. All this is the language we use to claim that we are different and outside of the mainstream, thereby enabling ourselves to be positioned as innocent. The result of this positioning is that we, community-based adult literacy practitioners and programs, are not implicated in a process of regulation and so we do not need to examine how we are placed. The result is that we do not look at how we benefit from the job we have—of "fixing" the problem of literacy—as so-called "experts" in relation to students, the people to be fixed.

The other problematic of government, according to Rose and Miller, is the technologies of government. Technologies of government seek to "translate thought into the domain of reality and to establish the world of persons and things, spaces and devices, for acting upon those entities about which they dream and scheme" (Miller and Rose, 1993, p. 82). Technologies do not only implement political rationalities,

which are articulated through programs, but they are a part of the construction of knowledge that objectifies and enables reality to become calculable and administrable. It is "the complexity of mundane programs, calculations, techniques, apparatuses, documents and procedures through which authorities seek to embody and give effect to government ambitions" (Rose and Miller, 1992, p. 175). One example of a technology of government is the desire to measure success in ways that are considered "tangible". Examples of how this is done in a literacy program are to measure how many new words a person has learned, or to construct curriculum based on linear progress that can easily be measured. A community-based adult literacy practitioner working to fit into this model of measurement and documentation may also try to work social change into the model. This has been manifested in the creation of self-esteem curriculum, or in measuring an increase of self-awareness and self-confidence, all means to measure that the work we do proves successful and efficient to ourselves, to students, to volunteer tutors and to funders.

Expertise is one technology of government that is historically linked only to government. Its role is to "[enact] assorted attempts at the calculated administration of diverse aspects of conduct through countless, often competing, local tactics of education, persuasion, inducement, management, incitement, motivation and encouragement" (Rose and Miller, 1992, p. 175). The construction of such expertise is

what makes modern forms of government possible. Expertise is positioned as one of the solutions to dealing with "problems"—through the delivery of programs handled by "authorities".

Political rationalities and technologies of government are interdependent, so to analyze them is to see the networks that "connect the lives of individuals, groups and organizations to the aspirations of authorities" (Rose and Miller, 1992, p. 176). Rose and Miller believe that we can understand the process that legitimizes government by analyzing political rationalities, technologies of government and their interdependence. In addition, the role of "experts" should be problematized regardless of the claims made about their position. Mitchell argues that all figures—including those figures of resistance who claim to stand outside the "state" and refuse its demands—must be examined (1991, p. 93).

The framework of governmentality is a real shift for me and has challenged a lot of my own assumptions. Numerous questions have been raised about notions of "good" and "bad". The framework has helped me in thinking about any work in which I engage (in this case, community-based adult literacy) as work of continuous questioning—questioning of what I do and how I do it. Hence, there is no end point in and of itself that I am working toward. It is very challenging using Foucault's framework and I

sometimes feel as if the non-stop questions provide no real answers. So I find myself asking what the point is. However, here lies the beauty of the framework: no one can claim to have the one answer for all time that is applicable to any situation, since one is continuously questioning the work.

Chapter 5

What can we do? Don't check your dreams at the door

Check your dreams at the door. We want to bring our dreams to work with us but then we get swamped by institutional maintenance so we never get to negotiate or talk about our dreams.

The above statement by one of the participants at the literacy gathering is indicative of the frustration felt by many practitioners. This frustration has everything to do with who we are, our expectations about our jobs and the regulation that we experience.

The next two chapters (5 and 6) are based primarily on the interviews I conducted for this thesis. They expand on the previous chapter, which was my own framework. The interviews assisted me in thinking more concretely about community-based adult literacy programs as a site for social change. It also raised a number of questions that I throw back to all who read this and who continue to work in adult literacy.

Identity

Languages of resistance "are the ways in which we reveal to ourselves and others that we are questioning the story" (marino, 1997, p. 22). How do people who work in community-based adult literacy programs reveal to themselves and to others that they are questioning the assumption of education as neutral and adult literacy as a site for social change? How do we refer to our practice? Do we call our practice critical?

Several interviewees tackle these questions:

Sometimes one says Freirean because it is an identifiable indicator that at least separates you from the others. In terms of that big division, I am Freirean rather than non-Freirean. Within my own practice, it is fleshed out by other things. I don't think it is inconsistent, just more fleshed out. It can be a useful shorthand, but after you have dis-identified yourself with the other groups I think it is really important to look at your own practice and go beyond that easy tag.

The reason for using that word [critical] is to try to find some way of characterizing what people are doing that isn't that [performance outcomes demanded by political governments].... It is a code word. So, when I say [critical] I would expect certain people to show up.

I don't think I [have a name for my work]. I mean I do sort of think of it as critical, and there is literacy for social change. I struggle with the whole concept of empowerment and not liking that and yet thinking that sometimes it does denote people that are questioning something.... Yes, I call it critical literacy. In some ways, I think I don't get caught up on particular words and I much more think that there is a range of words that tell me that somebody else is struggling to think about how you not preserve the status quo. Any words that indicate that would make me assume somebody is an ally or a fellow traveller or something. We may not do things exactly the same, but we at least have some sort of shared direction.

It is interesting to talk about codes of identification as opposed to a definite name, considering Rose and Miller's discussion on language as a form of political rationality.

It can be beneficial not to state one's practice in definitive terms, in fact—it is much harder to measure, harder to be judged and more difficult to turn around on the very people who use the terms (ourselves, as we work on directing ourselves and those in

"authority"). For instance, at a meeting with a group of community-based literacy practitioners, a government official from the Ministry of Education and Training stated, in support of learner-centredness, that learners were not asking for critical literacy, but were asking solely for technical assistance. The official's viewpoint was that literacy is only a set cognitive skills divorced from other social considerations. Reflecting on the discussion on governmentality and that of political rationalities, the official's viewpoint of literacy, and the language he used, works at creating knowledge that places people—both adult literacy practitioners and learners—in neat little boxes. In effect, the official constructs a space that directs literacy work in a particular direction that has more to do with, in this case, easily measuring "success" in terms of numbers rather than seeing people as people in all their diversity.

In community-based programs we call ourselves many names: literacy practitioner, literacy coordinator, literacy worker, literacy animator or adult educator. I don't have any strong feelings about any of the terms, but have often referred to myself as a literacy worker, a label that was given to me as a job title rather than a personal identity marker. In fact, I had not thought much of the name/title/marker until hearing some people's concern with the use of the term literacy worker to refer to themselves.

I am not quite sure what it means to be a literacy worker. I think it is a title the field has adopted and used in a lot of different ways. I'm never quite sure why

or where it came from, but I have never bought into it. I don't think I have ever used it in referring to myself. If I had to fill out an application form or something, I would usually say I'm an adult educator. That is what I say. And one of the reasons for this is that I see adult education as including literacy and being a lot broader. It also includes, for me, popular education and participatory research.

The same practitioner said,

[T]here is a value associated with the label, and certain labels in society have higher values. Depending on what it is I have to do, and because in my day-to-day life I do so many different things, it is in fact possible for me to select a range of different labels to use depending on the situation. But yes, it has a lot to do with the fact that there is a value associated with the label. So literacy worker, for example, outside of the field could raise the question: What is that? An adult educator—people may not necessarily grasp the full meaning, at least in the way I mean it, but they have a general idea what it means. And then there are times when I use the expression "consultant", again depending on what it is I'm doing. Because I also do consulting work privately.

Another view of the term as seen by another interviewee:

When I first started I was really into aligning myself with the bottom, so I thought that I was a literacy worker—I'm nothing, I'm with the people. I was quite into that whole thing. Then later on I started really wanting to have a good-sounding title and I found it hard when people asked me what I did. When people didn't get it or wouldn't understand I kind of wanted something better. I sometimes call myself an adult educator, although I don't feel like an educator, but if I want to feel pumped up... An adult educator is someone who works in education with adults, so it is pretty broad. Literacy worker denotes someone who has their heart in the right place. An adult educator might, but they have got skills, etc. I don't think the title [literacy worker] reflects the extent and breadth of what we do, [because] we are also tutor trainers, outreach workers.

I believe it is beneficial that the field has not come up with a generic title to refer to

people who work in literacy programs even if some of the contestation has to do with claiming expertise. However, this point is debatable, because there are waves of discussion about increased professionalization of the field. This wave is very much about gaining greater legitimization by those in authority, which we should be very cautious about because with it comes greater regulation—regulation in the form of formal accreditation, strict guidelines of qualification, and professional association.

Heeding Foucault's argument about the need to look at how we are made as subjects, it is interesting to note that literacy practitioners say their focus is on learners.

There is a tendency to emphasize what we do and say for others rather than what we do to ourselves or ask others to do to themselves. In our efforts to move forward beyond (specific forms of) oppression or, recently, to work 'across differences' in specific contexts, there has been a tendency toward a lack of reflexivity (Gore, 1993, p. 154).

The above has been "true" in my experience. The exceptions have been practitioners talking on the one-to-one level, or the informal literacy gathering (which was outside of the main literacy field discussions and outside of paid time, primarily because of the threat of negative repercussions by the government), both of which have not generally spilled over into the field. Normally, we don't have in-depth discussions about ourselves—how we place ourselves in relation to learners/students, about program goals, or the work we are doing. Much of this has to do with a lack of space and time

to have the discussions. This sort of discussion is often felt not to be "work" and as too "self-absorbent". However, there are many who want to engage in such a discussion, and are finding places to reflect. One challenge is for the discussion to move beyond isolated places to influence our practice and programs. It is interesting that practitioners are more comfortable talking about what we think learners should be doing, but we are wary about how we relate with our co-workers about who we are, about our dreams and about areas of work—in relation to our dreams/beliefs/vision—because we believe co-workers may have the idea that we are trying to "change" them.

A number of literacy practitioners are very reflexive about their practice. This reflection, however, is done primarily on a very personal level. Many of the people that I spoke with for this thesis have been questioning their expectation of social change in community-based programs for some time, as illustrated by this comment.

I feel that conflict—between having gone into something that I feel is social justice and then continually ending up in positions where I feel I'm a social regulator. It is really hard.

A number of people have resolved this conflict by either reframing how they see literacy, or by leaving community-based programs or literacy altogether. Lather asks an important question that moves us away from traditional notions of literacy, a difficult question given how we are positioned differently in relation to other

participants Lather asks, "How can we position ourselves as less masters of truth and justice, and more as creators of space where those directly involved can act and speak on their own behalf?" (Lather in Davis, 1993, p. 79) This is a question I hope I can engage in with myself and with others who remain working in community-based adult literacy programs.

One worker talked about the relationship between practitioners needing to be employed, and its relationship to claims of social change.

[For those of us who went into literacy for social justice issues] we also are fearful of stating that we are workers who need to make money to support ourselves and our families and that what we have is our labour. I think we as individuals work for social justice in different kinds of things we do, but we too easily equate that with why we chose [to work] in community literacy programs. They overlap a bit at times but not always. I think we are reluctant to talk about needing work; how much work we need. We might have a choice to step out of literacy programs when they become too conservative but we might not. I don't have a choice to leave my job right now if I want to support my family.

This quote speaks about a very important aspect of why we work in literacy—to get paid. It is a job. This is not to be taken lightly. We are working people, and as such we have invested in the programs in ways not restricted to the idea of an alternative site of practice. This aspect of our identity is significant in relation to other participants (learners/students and tutors) in adult literacy programs. We have a very different investment in maintaining the programs as viable structures. Our paid

position in this structure is more "permanent" than both learners/students and tutors, who are generally volunteers and/or more transient in their association with community-based programs. In addition, as workers we benefit from our involvement in programs in quite different ways. At times, this connection (that of paid work) can restrict our choices—an aspect of governmentalization, as we protect the structures around us. The "necessity" of paid work is very powerful in terms of how we direct ourselves and are directed. Choices that are made on behalf of programs, to the benefit not only of learners but very much to the benefit of "workers", are very much about maintaining the programs' funding base. This consideration directs what is said or not said and how it may be said as well. For instance, the language used to talk about learners and goals in relation to employment may have nothing to do with the student but everything to do with what the government is requesting (and is very often part of its political campaign promises).

Vision

Literacy as a site for social change and/or educational practice

Can literacy be a site for social change and/or educational practice? Several interviewees have reflected on this question:

I was hoping it would be different from social work and it wasn't.

Another practitioner says,

I don't know if I still think my activism is in literacy.... I see in my own mind a bit of a contrast between a year when I was at X organization, when I felt like I was committed to change, and I would have said 'I'm an activist'. I was in touch with all the demonstrations that were happening, but somehow I would say that I don't feel I'm there anymore, and part of me would say 'Oops, perhaps I've become stale and professional', and part of me would say I don't know if that is what creates change, do I think demonstrations make all the differences? And, well, I still think it enough that I will go when I feel that. I think I have questions about what it means to be an activist.

Many of us have questions about what it means to be an activist, and I am not about to answer the question definitively. Neither will I define what activism is, and what we should be doing in our programs to "deserve" the label. Possibilities for social change in community-based programs lay in how we look at the notion of change. The possibilities lay not in the project of changing society in the sense of changing the structure of society, at least not in any immediate and direct way. The possibilities lay in educational practice. This focus on educational practice was shared by three of the interviewees here:

I think in some ways I am first and foremost an educator. So even though I said I like literacy because it means working with poor people, with people who get ignored and excluded, a central piece for me is the idea of how people change their conception of things, and how both their conception of others and their conception of themselves changes, and so education that feels challenging and respectful feels like it is the core of what I want to do.

Just as in traditional education, it is possible, based on the perspective of the establishment and the teachers, to introduce neo-colonial ideas, racist ideas, pro-business-capitalist-oriented ideas. Likewise it is also possible in the

community-based sector to introduce a framework for working with social justice issues. So it is more a question of context and example and experiences, and how people are taught, and the process. So there is a social justice component that can be integral to our work, and which can form part of the education that happens within literacy. This should be reflected in the content, approach, process and framework. But not in terms of activities—it's not possible, not realistic. We cannot afford to run the danger, or the risk of continuing to create the perception that we are a movement or social justice organizations.

We still have to be accountable in educational practice if we are trying to do education rather than indoctrination, even if you are working within a site where there is a vision for social change. If you are working as an educator then one has to be accountable to certain educational practices and values.

Community-based programs are not the only places where critical perspectives and social justice work are possible. What we gain by holding onto the idea of uniqueness of possibilities at our sites is the construction of our identity, but at the expense of not interrogating what we are actually accomplishing. Yet we have had to make such arguments (of uniqueness) to funders to ensure that funding continues. There is value in working in any place, especially when we consider that there are no innocent places.

One practitioner reflects on the notion finding spaces to do critical work in literacy:

I used to think that there were spaces in community programs; I still think that there is potential for some of those spaces, but I don't think [community-based programs] always create them. I used to think that there weren't spaces in the institutions, and yet I think there can be some very interesting spaces—perhaps because it works more solidly in educational frame, and given that education does create some possibilities for 'counting' in this society then it at least looks like a different access to some of the things that count. It leads me to think they both [community-based programs and institutional programs] have potential for

spaces, especially if we think critically about whether they are meeting our dreams or not. I suppose the frustration now is, does anyone have the energy to be asking those questions? On the other hand, when we didn't think we were so threatened were we asking those questions and were we convinced that we were on a roll towards social change?

One of the interviewees talked about community as "A community only if it sees itself as a community. A community-based program is a program that is based in that community's sense of itself." This is a very tall order to fill. Community-based programs have been frustrated by the notion of "community-based" because the programs have never achieved this and are not sure how to. Yet this idea has been the basis of much of the programs' claims of social change. I would argue that community-based programs connect with and create a number of networks, and by their physical space the people involved connect to a number of other networks, so personal networks are formed that may not have otherwise been possible. These very networks hold potential in terms of how we see ourselves and how we construct ourselves. I am not saying this is good or bad, but I am saying that there are new and different relations that are formed.

Many of the interviewees talked about the challenges in the meaning and making of community. This interviewee talks of community-based programs as a place where connections can be made:

I have had a real sense that I used to believe very strongly in community programs as a place where you can create community; create community across differences and across hierarchies and try to model something that looks different. I'm not sure community programs have done that. I suppose I believed in community programs [in terms of] how they drew from a range of people in the community, and I suppose I felt it was as much of an education for the volunteers as for the learners. As part of the education process for the volunteers was the education that happened to me through working in literacy, some of that shift of preconceptions and stereotypes, and the class- and race-based understanding of who got to 'count'. Plus, just some of the opening up of being with people you wouldn't otherwise through your normal life be with, and that whoever you were as a literacy volunteer was part of the education process, part of the value of what went on in a community program. I suppose to some extent I still think some of that happens there, but I really struggle with whether enough of that happens. I think one of my senses of tension is that whole tension around community programs as places of community activism versus places of education. Whether when we push into doing it better should we be pushing for teaching the reading and writing better, or is it that the education that is happening is everybody's education?

There are possibilities in the way we engage in our practice, in how we connect with each other, in the kind of environment we work at creating, in the opportunities that are created and, hence, the potential that flows from such activities. There is also potential in the learnings that are gained by all of us—not just learners in terms of reading and writing, but for everybody in terms of connecting with people with whom we may not have connected otherwise. There are also possibilities in our lived experiences. Letting go of a developmental model means that there are no guarantees, but that there is always work to be done.

Movement

There are those who argue that there is a literacy movement and those who say there is not a literacy "movement" *per se*. I do not believe there is a movement, nor is there much potential of one. One of the interviewees also argues that there isn't a literacy movement:

There is this perception that community-based literacy organizations are doing social justice work. I agree that there is an element of that in our work. I think where it becomes problematic is when we start thinking of community-based literacy as a movement. I think it becomes tricky because some people get involved because they think of it as a movement when, in fact, it is far from that. The funding supports that literacy organizations get do not allow for that to happen and, in most cases, literacy organizations do not have the capacity to effectively carry out some of the basic features of a movement. I think the most that our organizations can do, very often, is to participate in an activity that someone else has organized. In terms of taking a role in the forefront, such as organizing social justice activities, it is really hard, so I think it is important to steer away from the perception that this is what community-based literacy is all about. It isn't.

Who is or will be a part of the movement? It would likely be primarily a movement of literacy workers/adult educators/practitioners, those at the forefront, who are continuously working to get learners "on board". As I discussed earlier, learners in general have a different sense of identification with a literacy program and the literacy field than do staff. Consequently, questions arise about who would mobilize for action—learners, volunteer tutors and/or staff? And what would be the basis of action and who would be setting the direction? These questions are relevant to the construction and reproduction of a movement and given that there seems to be a lack

of any sense as to how to answer these questions, I don't see much future of a literacy movement.

In addition, literacy programs have tended to stay away from a lot of direct political action mainly because of their funding base and their financial dependence on government. In fact, the advocacy work has focused primarily on funding. I would argue that there are possibilities for literacy programs to connect with other movements, but not to create a movement of their own primarily because of their dependency on government funding. However, this question of movements is deeply connected with the idea of an activism based on working toward changing the structure of society. If people were to decide to engage in that activity in literacy programs, it would mean working differently. Based on the interviews, as well, most people did not see much future in a literacy movement and were hard pressed to talk about what it would mean to be a movement. There is no consensus, of course, on this issue, and it would be beneficial for practitioners to engage in dialogue about it given that it is thrown about in the field so often without really undergoing examination as to the meaning of literacy as a movement.

Access

A central aspect of literacy work should be and is that of accessibility for those who

want to work on their reading, writing and numeracy. For some people, both learners/students and tutors, this means coming to a place where they can connect with other people. This means that the reading and writing may not be the primary concern. Central to this point of access is the creation of opportunities, which each person could decide to use as they see fit.

Access is a concept continuously threatened by many factors. The main funder of adult literacy programs in Ontario, the provincial government, has its own ideas of what programs should be achieving, the frame of the program (fixing a problem—that of reading and writing), the one-to-one tutoring relationship, "legitimate" goals and the idea that literacy programs are not a place for therapy¹⁵. The provincial government argues that literacy programs need to be accessible for people who are ready and serious for training, anything else is considered to be hand-holding. "Ready and serious" are those who do not have "issues" that would act as a barrier from achieving success in a literacy program. The government would see such things as homelessness, addiction, experiencing abuse and hunger, to name a few, as issues that people need to resolve before people can become "serious" students. These people that the government claims as having issues are considered to be taking up space and

¹⁵Jenny Horsman has been doing research on the relationship between literacy and survivors of trauma, specially women in her work titled *But I'm Not a Therapist* (1997).

limiting access of those who should be and want to make progress.

Place: Belief in possibilities

I have argued that community-based literacy programs are not inherently about social change. They do not hold a monopoly on that which is "good" or "political". All sites have possibilities (as defined by their participants). The challenge is often to figure out what those possibilities might be. Several interviewees talked about what they saw as possible at community-based programs:

To work as if you are always in preparation to live in a [socially just] society and talking about it.

I do get quite fascinated with the idea of community programs as places to create some vision of a society: be a microcosm of a society... if we were really more conscious about it as a place that tries to undermine the hierarchies and to think about how everyone gets valued, and how everybody judges everybody else.

A place where [there is a] wholeness of vision, wholeness of practice, working collectively with all the differences and tensions.

[The] kind of vision one has and [how you'd] like society to look like, that dictates a certain way of working so that one realizes that here and now in the place where one works or tries to, it is not [a goal] one day, but here in our little group, we are trying.

This idea of the here and now is very powerful. It is very much about a place of

practice where one is continuously working in the present to realize the possibilities of greater freedom as a process. The idea holds in it a deep responsibility to those involved in terms of how they work, and therein lies one of the advantages of many community-based programs: they are smaller and have greater say in terms of how the organization is run, and who is hired, which allows for greater possibilities for the creation of spaces of dialogue given their intimate nature. Within the creation of the work and learning environment lie much opportunity for realizing a place of possibilities. The problem with this is that workers can become too self-centred and gaze inward, where we create our own regimes of truth that are about pronouncements and not questioning our practice. Regardless, this is an important idea if people are working together in a site where there is room for creativity, reflexivity and the critiquing of each other's work.

Another aspect of community-based programs as a place of possibilities is the idea of shifting hierarchies, or looking at who is valued. This questioning of hierarchical systems has many possibilities in terms of how we relate to each other and, as well, how we perceive ourselves. As one interviewee said,

In some ways I feel like I do put some of my energy in that very individual place, but with a strong sense that it is not just about individual willpower and it is not just about individual self-actualization—because there's this broader picture that is about the ways in which people view themselves and inequalities,

that they don't just believe they are stupid.

Unless we shift all of the hierarchies, every single person could learn to read but still be at the bottom of the hierarchy.... Unless we shift the values, we don't shift what counts, who counts.... In a just society I would want to imagine that it has to be about much more than shifting the government—it has to be about shifting the whole concept and direction of paid work, and about shifting who is valued and what sort of thinking is valued.

To dream

We often don't talk about our dreams in relations to our jobs, yet it is in our dreams that much of our imagination and creativity is fed. Without dreams our work becomes stale; we experience burnout and possibilities are reduced. One practitioner presents a very insightful perspective on why we don't talk about our dreams. The practitioner's reference was specific to envisioning social change:

Is it that we worry that none of us can really quite do it?... I think we don't [talk about dreams] to some extent because we would each worry at how stupid it sounds, how naive it sounds and what do we unravel when we really try to unravel it? And can we bear to say that we don't really have an analysis of whether literacy leads to change, while continuing to say literacy is for social change?

Another reason why we don't talk about our dreams/goals (and these are not necessarily end points) is because of the threat of funding withdrawal, and the time that is spent on meeting the demands of funders—demands such as the collecting of statistics, measuring, defining, and countless other paperwork to prove that one is efficient, capable, and the program successful. Time spent documenting the cognitive

aspect—teaching—means less time for envisioning possibilities and reflecting on *how* we work.

A part of the process of dreaming is to recognize the structures in which we work and to see them for what they are. One interviewee talks about the idea that no structure is without problems, including community-based programs.

[A]ny kind of structure is a problem; any kind of organizational structure presents opportunities and problems. Yes, it is true that some [structures] have more potential than others, but you can't put your faith just in the structure, you have to be working against the structure. Any structure tends to become a problem, to create problems at some point. Even a staff collective is not immune to that.

Chapter 6

What can we do? Implications for practice

Implications for practice were the starting point of this project for me; it was also the hardest place to figure out. I am constantly reminding myself that there is no correct answer or a right way to work. There are things we could do to enable us to be questioning ourselves: we can continuously look at our work (both frame and practice), we can look at how we work and how we are placed. It is important to me that the interrogation of our sites not only be on an individual level but approached jointly with those with whom we work if we are interested in working beyond ourselves.

Action

Participation and relationships

A key aspect of community-based programs is their relationship with participants, the focus on learners. In fact, learner-centredness is one of the key reasons that many staff got involved with the programs. Community-based programs are often felt to be less regulatory because people come of their own choice—they are adults, and there isn't a law requiring them to be in "school", so they can leave when they decide to.

This relationship is defined as a commitment to learner-centredness. Learner-

centredness is one of the sacred aspects of community-based programs and is seen as an alternative to teacher-centred curriculum. This commitment by literacy programs to the concept of learner-centredness is a strength, and if learning is looked at as a process that we all have to work at, there are many possibilities, especially in relation to enhancing opportunities for freedom. However, for learner-centredness to work we have to recognize what it means in terms of what it takes from all parties. Ironically, it is not a process in which many of us—students, tutors and staff—have much experience. Even though we may talk about it, we may hardly ever have practiced it. As staff, however, we often have more experience with learner-centredness than do volunteers and learners. As a result, staff are often working at convincing learners and tutors of the benefits of such a practice. For volunteer tutors, who are at the programs for a relatively short period of time, it is often easier to use the methods that are most familiar to them, and most often, those methods are not learner-centred, but are based on more traditional methods of teaching where the student is seen to have a deficiency that is to be corrected.

There are methodological arguments made on behalf of learner-centredness, but there is little to show that people learn "better" using this methodology. Consequently, we should be cautious in arguing for learner-centredness only on the basis of methodology, i.e., that people learn better and more. The other reason for using

learner-centredness is based on our political frame of reference—recognizing the problems with hierarchy, and opening up spaces for people's own voices.

Another aspect that complicates this notion of learner-centredness is that of choice and control of the learner. In Horsman's research on literacy and trauma, the notion of people, especially women (her focus), having control over their/our lives is complicated by their/our experiences of abuse (Horsman, 1997). Trauma, Horsman says, "entails being controlled by others and being out of your control" (1997, p. 11). Trauma is one example that complicates notions of choice, learning and control. People may have experienced damaging trauma when they come to programs, and so may feel very vulnerable.

Living in a society that assumes everyone knows how to read and write—and if one does not it must be a reflection on one's ability, intelligence and self-worth—is also very damaging. One staff person talks about what the ideal learner-centred relationship would be.

The ideal thing would be if somebody comes in and they know, they have figured out why they want to learn read and write. They have a great deal of self confidence and a sense of direction and they know what they want it—would make it easier for me to see how I could provide something that is useful to them. But that is not a very realistic expectation.... I think it is a very important part of literacy work, the whole emotional part of working through a person's frustration and issues. It is often more fun to work with somebody

who has never learned to read and write... and has no baggage about being stupid or anything like that, so you don't have to work through those issues. But it is a very important part for a lot of people to work through.

People who are receiving their income from the Ministry of Community and Social Services also have limited choice and control. Those on social assistance (i.e., welfare) are required to do something "legitimate" with their time if they are to receive money. This includes such things as entering education programs, conducting a job search or embarking on job training. People then feel they have to participate in programs such as a literacy program primarily to meet requirements of this authority figure (the provincial government). Their "choice" becomes attending a literacy program where one's attendance is reported regularly, or to not get money—money that is not much to live on anyway, and which meets only basic (very basic) needs.

Quite often our focus on learner-centredness is on the learner in terms of their feelings of self-worth. However, this, of course, is not unique to students, but is relevant to staff and tutors as well. What are the choices that any of us have? How free are we? The notion of the free individual is the basis of our society, but it does not recognize regulation in our lives. Learner-centredness claims to be about recognizing people's potential, but it can also result in placing blame squarely on individuals. We hardly ever talk about learner-centredness in reflexive terms, i.e., who we are in relation to

our environment and what this enables.

In addition to the work that has to be done on a personal level, there is also a need to look at the organizational structure and culture of programs. One adult educator who has done a lot in this area reflects on the need for such work. This is another area for us to discuss.

Sometimes there is a reluctance to criticize or look critically, I would say, at the organizational culture and the barriers that it creates, and which deny meaningful participation. And sometimes, looking at the organizational culture doesn't happen because people do not understand the relationship between individual participation and the barriers that organizations create; barriers that indirectly deny opportunities to participate. Sometimes it is really hard to see that big picture, especially if you are part of the organization.

Information, guidance and support

If people are not provided with the information, guidance and support then the risk is they would probably not be much farther ahead [after] the program.... And one of the concerns I have is that for too long within the literacy field, generally speaking, there has been a reluctance to provide the information and the guidance. A fear that the provision of information and guidance is a contradiction to the whole notion of learner-centredness.

Information, guidance and support are complements to learner-centredness. The information that would be provided would be based on what the participants requested.

We as staff are at literacy programs on an average of four days a week, and we do have connections with other organizations that can facilitate access to information,

which could be beneficial to participants. The challenge is how to assist without creating or reproducing relations of dependency.

The question of dependency is an important one when we consider the frame of governmentality. Increasingly, staff are feeling the demands of directing learners into "appropriate" streams of learning as decided by social workers, welfare case workers and government agencies. The processes are becoming increasingly complicated, and the advice of an "expert" is seen as necessary for anyone to flow through many systems. As a result, our position as expert is reinforced while that of participants is increasingly marginalized, and left for others to facilitate. How do we engage with people in a way that doesn't enhance our position as expert?

A place: creating a respectful learning environment

This interviewee talks about an important aspect that is central to the discussion of participation and information, guidance and support:

I do think part of what makes a community program at its best is continually questioning and attempting to figure out how you make a respectful learning environment that challenges and works for everyone and opens up questions about power and difference and so on.

There is the potential in community-based programs to do this work, but we have not

exercised this potential. It is necessary that we make use of our place, where the structure is not definitely defined. We do not have to have classes, we do not have to work one-on-one, we do not have to do groups, we can decide on the groups we wish to have, we can decide on how much emphasis to put on one-to-one. There are possibilities for working in ways that look at creating respectful learning environments based on learners' desires.

One of the barriers toward achieving this is isolation— isolation of learners, of workers and of other participants. There is a dearth of space to talk about issues such as the kind of environment we want to create. Space and time is needed to share visioning, to explore, to critique, and to dream. Even within programs, people may not be of like mind (in terms of shared meaning), and so much time is spent working on creating shared meaning so as to work at getting at the practice. It would be to our benefit to have a space or spaces to interrogate our work.

One staff person talked about the importance of literacy gatherings:

Why a group like this is very important to me is, first of all, just to keep myself sane and to get a perspective about all the stuff that is happening around us. Second, that there is a possibility that as we meet together we will start to organize in an activist way.

hooks argues that wherever we find the spaces, they are "crucial that critical thinkers

who want to change our teaching practices... talk to one another, collaborate in a discussion that crosses boundaries and creates a space for intervention" (1994, p. 61).

I would personally gain much from talking with others about the frame I'm working from, and would benefit from feedback on what frame means to them and to talk about application in a concrete way.

Connections

Education is not the motive for change. I think it has value as part of something greater, but it is not like 'educate the masses and we will get.' That is one of the limitations. I think one works with a knowledge of that limitation by connecting one's work to a larger movement. Knowledge of limitations enables one then to situate one's work to increase its effectiveness of contributing. There are responsibilities: to increase one's own knowledge, and to reflect on practice, and to make time for reflection on practice on one's own and with others who are trying to do the same kind of work. I think a responsibility is to seek to connect one's work as an educator in multiple ways whether it is with other progressive educators, whether it is with movements. Critical reflection on your own work and to support each other.

There is a lot of potential in the connections we make. Part of making connections addresses the issue of isolation that many literacy practitioners experience, and the issue of addressing larger issues that are seen to be of concern—for example, a lack of affordable housing—and that workers have felt frustrated at not being able to be involved in, given the constraints of the location of our work.

I think a lot of the current isolation for people in the literacy field is because they didn't make those connections with the other educators at every level of education who espouse those values, who see the role of education in democratic society, who value community and inclusiveness and all of those things.... I really wanted to talk with other educators about the outcomes thing, and to have a real theoretical and deep critique of it in larger educational terms. There are all kinds of people in the school system who are trying to do stuff.

The above quote speaks to the point that community-based programs as a site are not unique in their political perspective. The question is not just the site but the people who work in different places, and how we can work together if there are shared interests, such as realizing the constraints of the society in which we live.

There is also the need for literacy programs to make connections in the general education system because for some learners that is their goal; to leave a literacy program and go into that system either for the first time or return to the general education stream. As one practitioner said,

So I think I have moved to the point of recognizing that we have to think of points of transition, we have to think about how to make those connections. Perhaps in the process we will have a different kind of impact on the general education system. The bottom line is that the individuals who use our services are facing more demands in terms of the skills they need to function in society, to find jobs, and so forth. The best we can do, in addition to helping them develop their reading and writing skills, is to help them figure out how to [access] general education or training system out there so that they won't feel totally at sea. That may necessitate some changes in terms of how we develop community-based [programs], how we define learner-centredness, and so forth. I think literacy from a critical perspective is still very critical to all of that, but in terms of other areas, in terms of the academic skills we focus on, and how we

link whole language, how we make literacy learner-centred, there is a need to rethink. For myself, I have started rethinking how to make those connections so that people are better prepared to operate in the general education system if they have to move on.

We often struggle with connections between literacy programs and the general educational system. Often the emphasis is on how literacy programs should adjust themselves so that students can make a transition as easily as possible to upgrading programs, either in college or a board of education class. There is little discussion about what these places of transition might be doing to welcome learners who may have experienced the general educational system as oppressive and damaging. As a result, upgrading programs and systems are not examined, and students have to adjust.

The possibilities for connection can be looked at on a personal level and on an organizational level. What are the possibilities for educators working with each other regardless of the site in which they are located? What are the possibilities for organizational connections to meet the learning goals of participants? And what are the possibilities of different and similar people coming together with shared vision?

Perhaps the question should really be, how do we realize the many possibilities that exist?

Influence the mainstream

The roots of literacy analysis recognize that the structure of the formal education system has much to do with the difficulties that adults experience with reading and writing. Community-based literacy programs have provided critical perspectives on the formal education system. Primarily, the language of the formal educational system is about education as neutral, and it is often defined in linear terms about where students should be heading, at what pace and at what level (grades) (recognizing that there are people at formal education sites that resist this, what I am referring to are the voices of authority who are the key producer these regimes of truth). Structures are not set up to take the whole person into consideration. An example of this is the fixed structures and timelines that are associated with mainstream schooling—people have to fit into them, and if one does not, one is seen as not ready to participate in such structures. This results in some people being seen as never ready to learn.

There is work that can be done in influencing the formal education system through making connections on both on the organizational and personal levels. There are several practitioners in the formal education system that may share the perspective presented here, and alliances might be made that would be beneficial both to the literacy field and the formal educational system. One important pedagogical area could be around learner-centredness. Often, but not necessarily, content in mainstream

schools is fixed, based on a middle-class, white, male perspective regardless of the world's diversity (not to mention the classes' diversity). Learner-centredness has the potential to have many effects on process given that it is based on respectful dialogue with those involved in the process of learning. Learner-centredness is very much rooted in Lusted's understanding of pedagogy. As a concept, she says,

Pedagogy addresses the 'how' questions involved not only in the transmission or reproduction of knowledge but also in its production. Indeed, it enables us to question the validity of separating these activities so easily by asking under what conditions and through what means we 'come to know'. How one teaches... becomes inseparable from what is being taught and, crucially, how one learns (in Gore, 1993, p. 4).

Professionalization

In social work, because of our intense need to 'help' people, be it advocating for them or counselling them, pedagogical discussions are subordinated to fighting for a 'cause'.... Other practitioners and agencies do the same—housing help centres do this in relation to 'saving the poor', or foodbanks in 'saving people from starvation'. We forget that it is neither the food bank nor the housing help centre that 'they' need—it is food, and housing. The agencies are institutions, tools to achieve these fundamental things (Phillips, 1995, p. 50).

Phillips here speaks to the conflict of interest inherent in the work of adult educators—in Alden's words, as a "professional group", how educators are placed differently in relation to learners.

There is also the concern, though, that pedagogical discussions can be had in a way

that leads to increased professionalization of literacy practitioners. While it is important for us to engage in a dialogue, we should be careful of the claims of expertise in terms of what is enabled and for whom. I am not saying that we can avoid the claims to expertise, but I do wonder if it is possible, and, as we make those claims, to ask why and for whom. It is possible that we engage in discussions that leads us to understand that there are a set of skills necessary to work in a particular way (even learner-centred), and that the resulting focus on educational practice can lead us to becoming consumers of processes, skills and documents.

We must use caution, through, so as to ensure we move to counter the political rationales of governments. One technique is to seek increased legitimacy of ourselves as educators, in the form of increased professionalization, in the hope that our voices would have more weight. While this is possible, we have to look at what our moves enable and not. The direct result of increased professionalization is enhanced regulation—not the desired effect.

It would be in the community-based literacy field's best interest to spend less time professionalizing the field and work on complicating it as a strategy to counter regulation. It is not to literacy practitioners' benefit (given the context of freedom as a process) to harmonize skills, an aspect of professionalization that would be considered

necessary to the work—and a technique of government. Otherwise our work becomes just that of technical competence, where the focus is on things—explicit forms of knowledge that can be observed.

As an interviewee said,

Wholeness and inclusiveness is a constant challenge to one's practice. How [do we] engage in a process where everyone's reality has a place. If it raises contradictions you don't just sweep it under the rug—this is a challenge, how do we deal with it? I'm not saying this in a liberal way, to include just anybody with any kind of vision because I would only want to work in a program where there is a clear and articulated vision, so that you can tell people this is what this program is about.

I have more questions than I have ideas about what we should be doing in practice.

An important piece of the puzzle is to find the spaces and the time to engage in dialogue. Literacy work is not only helping someone to improve their reading, writing and numeracy in and of themselves—it is very much about pedagogy, the process in which we engage. It is a dialogue in which we need to engage with people in our programs, in the literacy field, in the general education field, and with other organizations. The continuing challenge is to find the time and space in engage in these discussions.

Chapter 7

My journey

I did not have a plan of action regarding what I would be when I grew up. In fact I'm still asking myself that! It always amazes me when people have a clear path toward what they want to be or are—for example, some people talk about always knowing they would be a poet, a writer, or had a career plan toward becoming a teacher, a doctor, a politician. Me, I knew that I didn't want to work in the corporate sector, in a business that was full of formalities (underline formalities). I didn't plan to work in literacy, or in a community-based literacy program, and who knows how much longer I will be employed in that field.

While I was doing my undergraduate degree, there was always the question of what my focus of study should be. In the back of my mind I often thought of teaching, but then my father's voice would emerge, discouraging this path—he was a teacher himself. I don't think I felt a "calling" for teaching, but I did feel something similar and there wasn't anything else that was "calling" me. In my undergraduate year I tutored high school students through a Caribbean Students' Association. I didn't do this as part of a career plan but as a contribution to/participation in my own community.

I realize now, as I reflect, that a lot of my participation in groups was very much about trying to find a place for myself, a place of connection. I never felt that I was connected to mainstream spaces, for example, in the university itself. I became involved in community radio through another Caribbean organization. It felt good; I liked it. This led to a part-time job at a community radio station, in the Spoken Word Department, while I was still working on my undergraduate degree.

When I graduated with a B.A. in Economics and Mass Communications, I still was not sure where I wanted to go. I figured I would return to school to do a Masters. It seemed like a "good" thing to do, but I wasn't sure in what faculty, so I decided to work for a while. A job became available after my graduation, at the community radio station, so I worked there for two years.

Some of the very things that I loved about working in the community radio station were the very things that caused me to leave—the informalities, the loose structure, the easy-going pace and the self-direction to name a few. Working at a campus radio station is a very transient job—no one I knew stayed there as a "career". It offers low pay, minimal benefits, lots of work and burnout. One of the wonderful aspects of the job was the diversity of issues and diverse people that one engaged in and with (I regretted leaving for this reason). People in the Spoken Word Department generally

espoused a politics of "the left". It was not necessarily well developed or complex, but we all knew the lines of appropriate questioning and what was okay. Literacy was one of the issues to which I was introduced, among other things.

In addition to talking about literacy at the radio station, I had a friend who worked in a community-based literacy program. I thought at the time this is something I could try. I was looking for a job, with better pay, in the non-profit sector, something flexible and easy going. I didn't have any experience tutoring, however, so as a result I never got any interviews for literacy jobs. After applying for one job, I started volunteering for the same program and assisting in the outreach through the community radio station where I worked.

I went to the tutor training session, but when I began to work with a learner I did not remember much of what was covered in the session. When I tried to apply some of the techniques with a learner the facilitator/teacher of the class was not supportive. (I worked one-on-one, but in a class setting. We were both a part of and apart from the class during the tutoring sessions.) The most I remember from that experience were the personal relationships I formed with the students, who were mostly Caribbean.

I soon shifted from tutoring one-to-one to supporting a literacy group. After doing this

for a year, I got a job at a community-based adult literacy program. While most programs are stand-alone programs, the one in which I am still working is part of a larger multi-service agency. I was hired as a Literacy Program Worker (the official job title), meaning I am a front-line worker, doing such things as intake¹⁶ with learners and tutors, training tutors, matching and supporting tutors and learners, and all the paperwork that goes with that. When I started working with the organization, I was affected by how "white" the organization was. This had a distancing effect on me. In addition, the literacy field itself was also very white—staffed mainly by white people. This created, in my mind, a dichotomy between the program and the community, and it raised questions about which "community" is referred to in the label "community-based".

I went into the job fairly "green". I didn't have a specific social or political understanding as to what literacy/"illiteracy" meant, even though I had an understanding of inequalities, about the notion of people reaching their "full" potential,

¹⁶An intake is the entry point for participants, both learner/students and volunteer tutors, into the literacy program. It is a process where a staff person meets with a new learner/student's to assess the learner/student goals and their reading, writing and math ability, and to talk about what the program is about. If the student's expectations are similar to what the program has to offer, the learner becomes a participant of the program. The goal of an intake is very similar for volunteer tutors. Staff talk with them about the program and about their goals as a tutor, and why they want to tutor. If there is a "match", the tutor is invited to be a participant in the program.

of oppression and colonialism—albeit in a universal sense. I did not have a specific critique of literacy discourse. As part of my on-the-job training I was taught the program's perspective, which is that literacy is a right. The program claims it subscribes to critical literacy and to an overall community-based perspective (as discussed in Chapter 4). I took all this at face value, and saw the literacy work as a job and my community involvement as outside of the job.

I have now (1998) been involved in adult literacy as a staff person at the community-based level for six-and-a-half years. After about three years in the job I started to feel restless and unsure about the claims made by community-based literacy programs, claims that I was also pronouncing. I did not feel I was engaged in community building or actually realizing the goals of critical literacy: I was not seeing these things in my place of employment and I didn't know where they were happening (except in books). I believed in a general way the statements about links between social change and literacy, but what did it mean on a micro level? I wanted to realize that. I was at the point of leaving my job, because I wasn't getting much energy from it and I wanted a change. Instead of leaving, however, I went to OISE to reflect on my work, on literacy, on community-based practice, and on the possibility of "progressive" work.

When I started my questioning, I wanted answers on how to realize the macro social

vision at the micro level—the theory in the day-to-day practices. I felt I should be talking to other people, people who talk about social change, about alternative practices, about critical literacy, a critical perspective—perhaps they would help me figure out how to realize my vision. However, not only was I questioning my practice and the practice of others, but I also questioned our frame of reference. My questions were numerous and scattered:

- What are the claims community-based programs make?
- What do literacy practitioners want to accomplish?
- What are the tensions of working in a community-based literacy program and in working for resistance?
- What is the social vision that we imagine? How does this connect with our practice?
- What do literacy workers understand as alternative pedagogical practice?
- What is our vision and what do we believe are the possibilities of community-based programs?
- What does it mean to be an alternative to mainstream educational models using resistance to the status quo and social change as a frame? What would our work be in a literacy program?
- What are the possibilities, what are the spaces, what are the limitations?
- What are the problems with the mainstream?

- "People are poor because they can't get jobs because they can't read or write" and "people have difficulty with reading and writing because they are poor".
What are the differences between and implications of these two statements?
- What do I want literacy programs to do?
- What do we understand learning to be?
- What is the lens from which I am going to work?
- What do literacy workers consider as an alternative to the mainstream?
- What do we call this alternative, and what is the implication of the name?
- What is the practice in which we engage?
- What histories are drawn on?
- What are the limits of our work?
- How do I place myself?

My questions of practice are not unique. Alden said he engaged in his thesis because of his conflict with the notion that it is "possible to work for the development of new literacy opportunities for adults while putting aside the question of the political orientation of the methods, content and objectives of the classes or projects" (1982, p. 18). He went on to say that it has been argued that "all programs that effectively help [students] to become literate are equally valuable regardless of their political orientation" because "the problems of illiterate [sic] adults... are to a large degree the

result of the simple fact that they cannot read or write" (1982, p.18). While my questions and Alden's are not the same, they both focus on possibilities of literacy programs as a site of struggle. I question some of the claims made by community-based programs about politics. I question how the politics fit into the work of community-based programs.

I am no longer just looking at practice, but I am also continuously looking and questioning my frame, my social vision and my claims about what can be done. At the beginning of this specific journey, I wanted definitive answers. I was planning to have these answers by the time I was finished with this thesis and at OISE. I no longer desire any definitive answers that can stand on their own, for all time. There is a lot of literature that talks about many pedagogies, but the literature has not provided answers about the day-to-day—nor can it or should it. "Answers" have to be conditionally developed, which is what I am hoping I can be a part of through this research and as a course of practice in my journey. I am working on constructions with my eyes as wide open as possible. To do so means that one is continually questioning, hence equally important are the questions we ask of ourselves and our practice.

[I]n the modern era legitimate political power has resided in the obedience of subjects.... It is the obedience of the citizen-subject that reproduces the legitimacy of power in the modern state. Consequently the actions of

subjects—the self, the body—become the objects of new disciplines and technologies, which are, in turn, the products of expertise in the form of personal-service professions (Johnson, 1993, pp. 142-3).

This notion of "new disciplines and technologies" on the citizen-subject was a significant shift for me in terms of how I saw myself, my job and the claims of community-based programs as political sites of social change. This notion rocks the very foundations of our claims, and the notion of where power lies, how we are all implicated, and how none of us is innocent. Gore explains why pedagogical sites should be interrogated (as should all sites):

For critical and feminist pedagogues, pedagogy is a major site in which to attempt educational and societal change, to attempt to enact visions of different worlds. In this context, pedagogy's appeal is frequently coupled with the modernist temptation for structural and universal explanations and solution (1993, p. xii).

It is my hope that by continuously examining my position and my claims—as much as is possible, recognizing our own contradictions—I can heed Gore's advice about the dangerous nature of all truth regimes. However, she says that while regimes of truth are dangerous, they are "perhaps less so to the extent that one becomes conscious and sensitive to the specific dangers of one's work. It is with this project in mind that I attempt to uncover specific effects of domination, of critical and feminist pedagogy discourses" (1993, p. 68).

I would have liked to have talked with the different players (learners/students, volunteers and staff) in a community-based program, however, time did not permit for such a broad scope. I decided to focus on literacy workers/adult educators because many of the claims made on behalf of literacy programs are constructed by us, which underscores the importance of looking at who we, as literacy workers/adult educators, and how the claims that are made about alternatives are tied to how we construct ourselves.

Others who have engaged in looking at literacy and social change believe that looking at who we are is important. Campbell says that at the beginning of her study she thought participatory literacy practices were the locus to alter power relations between workers and students, and create new roles for both parties. She says, however, that the "findings [indicate] that identity politics play a pivotal role in the transformation or reproduction of power relationships between literacy workers and students." She says that, "who are we in relation to the students and their issues" is a question that needs to be posed by literacy workers so that they can recognize and explore their privileged position in relation to that of the students (1995, p. 174).

The following two questions were my starting points for this thesis:

1. What do literacy workers understand as alternative pedagogical practice? What is their vision and what do they believe are the possibilities of community-based programs?
2. What are the ethics, that is the relation to oneself, of community-based workers, and how are they implicated in the claims made about alternative practices?

As I engaged in the process, my emphasis became the former with the latter on the back burner, but still on, though simmering. I still believe the second question to be an important one and feel that it should be a research project in and of itself. As evident throughout this work, it is not possible to separate the two questions from each other completely.

There are a few things that have not changed since I started on this journey, and that continue, in addition to what has been said already, to guide whatever work that I do—at least I believe they should guide any work that I do. We can all live fuller lives as defined by ourselves. I hold on to this strongly, and believe it is applicable to all areas of my life including my job. For me "fuller" also means greater freedom, a continuous process, especially if you believe that we live in a constructed world and that we are all constructed. This greater freedom, for me, is about living a "better" life. I recognize that none of the terms I use are neutral, and that no one has a monopoly on

them—they have and can be used by the strangest of bedfellows. All this, for me, means to dream. I am learning to dream, to really dream, and to work at realizing my dreams.

I don't know if this thesis was helpful to you, if it has contributed anything to people who are working in literacy, but I do hope it proved helpful for those who did read it, especially for those who spent significant time with me and agreed to be interviewed. I must remember that this finished product is but a small part of the process in which I engaged and in which I will continue to engage.

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