

## CANADIAN ADULT EDUCATION RESEARCH IN THE 1990S: TRACING LIBERATORY TRENDS

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### Abstract

*This article provides a view of the extent to which liberatory themes were evident in Canadian adult education research in the 1990s. Independent analyses of journal articles, conference proceedings, and graduate thesis abstracts were undertaken. Bringing these three data sets together creates a unique montage, one that points to some encouraging as well as disturbing trends. The review indicates that liberatory themes were persistent, but marginal. It also notes the lack of attention given to the analysis of race, class and sexuality in adult education research. This tracing of liberatory trends can contribute to dialogue within research organizations and graduate programs about the role of adult education research in creating knowledge and promoting a more just and equitable society.*

### Résumé

*Cet article se penche sur l'importance des thèmes de la libération dans la formation permanente au Canada au cours des années 1990. Articles de journaux spécialisés, travaux de congrès et résumés de thèses universitaires ont fait l'objet d'analyses indépendantes. La mise en commun de ces trois ensembles de données crée un assemblage unique qui met en relief certaines tendances, tantôt encourageantes, tantôt inquiétantes. La recension des écrits démontre que les thèmes de la libération ont persisté tout en restant marginaux. Elle souligne également le manque de réflexion concernant les questions de race, de classe et de sexualité dans la recherche en formation permanente. Ce*

*The Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education/  
La Revue canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes  
17, 2 November/novembre 2003 1-19*

ISSN 0835-4944 © Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education/  
L'Association canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes

*relevé des tendances dans les thèmes de la libération est susceptible de favoriser, au sein des organismes de recherche et des programmes d'études supérieures, le dialogue autour du rôle que joue la recherche en formation permanente dans le développement de nouvelles connaissances et dans la promotion d'une société plus juste.*

### Introduction

In the late 1990s, during meetings of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE)—particularly in gatherings of the Canadian Commission of Adult Education Professors (CCPAE)—two issues were frequently the topic of debate. First, some argued that the social movement legacy of adult education was eroding in both societal and theoretical prominence. Second, the new prominence granted to feminist theory, post-structuralism, cultural studies, and post-modern approaches was fragmenting, some claimed, the “core” or “foundation” of adult education. We were active participants in this debate, arguing that what we viewed as a healthy development in the field—the emergence of a plurality of theories and methods—not only supported social justice, but was unfairly represented by the rather negative label of “fragmented.”

After these meetings, we found ourselves caucusing about these discussions. Within our own areas of research, we could claim that the role of social movements and the liberatory potential of adult education were both prominent. We wondered, however, to what extent these concerns were shared in the broader field of adult education research in Canada. What we needed was a map of the territory. Each of us had already begun to examine specific data sets: Shahrzad was reviewing the *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*, Tara was examining students' graduate theses, and Shauna was looking at CASAE conference proceedings.<sup>1</sup> Here was a great opportunity to bring together our findings and move beyond our specific data sets to create a more comprehensive view. In this article, we offer such a montage – the result of juxtaposing and comparing our independent studies. We believe this montage can contribute to the discussions about the extent to which liberatory themes—a key element of the social history of the field of adult education in Canada—are still being taken up by adult education researchers.

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<sup>1</sup> Only English articles, thesis abstracts and conference proceedings were examined.

### Contributions, Method and Cautions

Individual researchers are often constrained in the scope of their work because of time and resources; bringing these individual efforts together resulted in a whole that is much bigger than a sum of the parts. We report here on our analyses of three different data sets—data that have not been brought together in previous reviews of adult education research. The inclusion of graduate student theses abstracts, in particular, sheds light on the role of graduate programs in creating knowledge, and illuminates the role of specific institutions in shaping knowledge domains and research orientations. The inclusion of conference proceedings enlarges the framework of published materials and moves beyond the information that can be gleaned when published journal articles have been the only focus (a limited view of the extent of research activities).<sup>2</sup>

We believe this review (of articles, theses and proceedings written in English) can contribute to critical discussions of curriculum, program, and research practices in the field of adult education. We also hope this tracing of liberatory trends will contribute to dialogue within and outside of CASAE about the role of Canadian adult education research in creating knowledge and contributing to a more just and equitable society.<sup>3</sup>

As for our methods, we each brought to our respective reviews an inductive approach, looking for research that had an anti-oppression or liberatory orientation as its *primary* focus. Each of us developed our own themes and categories, with some similarities as well as differences, in how we coded our data. We used a conventional content analysis, counting the number of times different liberatory themes were evident.

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Taylor (2001) included those articles not accepted for publication in his review of *Adult Education Quarterly* thus providing a more inclusive map of the field of research.

<sup>3</sup> Preliminary analyses of our findings were presented at the twentieth anniversary of CASAE, the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education, celebrated in 2001 at our annual conference. (See Fenwick, T., Mojab, S. & Butterwick, S. (2001). Canadian research in adult education in the 1990s: A cautious cartography. *Proceedings of the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education* (pp. 86-92), Laval University, May 25-27, 2001). CASAE is now entering a time of examining its history and development as an organization and what that means for its future. In this, it is not unlike other national and international adult education associations, many of which are struggling to reinvent themselves amidst what may seem to be perplexing new landscapes without, and contradictory currents within.

It is important to note that each of our data sets includes research generated within academic institutions, and thus they do not represent *all* adult education research conducted in Canada. Our review is also limited to research reported during the last ten years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a decade marked by profound social, cultural and economic shifts (as summarized in the following section). Furthermore, it is important to draw attention to another danger in our claim to be mapping adult education research in *Canada*. Bannerji (1997) has written powerfully about the hidden boundaries in Canada that deny "the other" an experience of belonging. "Canada" then cannot be taken as a given. It is obviously a construction, a set of representations, embodying certain types of political and cultural communities which "were themselves constructed in agreement with certain ideas regarding skin color, history, language (English/French) and other cultural signifiers" (p. 24). And so we enter this mapping project wary of the dangers and cognizant of the paradoxical spaces (Rose, 1993) we occupy, and of the need for "a massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 80).

#### **Delimiting the Study: Focusing on the 1990s**

This decade was a tumultuous one where many individuals and communities encountered economic marginalization, where Canada's economy and its workers were assaulted by high interest rates, a low exchange rate for the Canadian dollar relative to the U.S. dollar, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and accelerated global competition. The recession of the early 1990s was followed by a jobless recovery of organizational cost-cutting and downsizing: Canadians were more fixated on securing employment than achieving family and community "balance" (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). Dramatic government cutbacks in most provinces targeted all public sectors, especially health care, education at all levels and the civil service, creating a diminished social safety net (Lowe, 2000). Accelerated technological change has helped polarize the Canadian labour force into those with good jobs, those with bad jobs and those with no jobs at all (and little hope of getting one) (Lowe, 2000). The right-wing Conference Board of Canada helped renew a focus on education as the key to improving Canada's perceived slide in productivity and technology skills; the release of the much-cited *Employability Skills* in 1992 has affected program development in both K-12 and adult education throughout the 1990s (Taylor, 2001). Meanwhile the federal government has maintained a strong emphasis on vocationally-focused lifelong learning to build "human capital" for Canada's economy (HRDC, 2002). Federal policy priorities at the end of the 1990s were

twofold: to improve quality of working life and to promote workplace productivity especially through workplace innovation, including improved human resource management and investment in people (Lowe, 2000).

In terms of equity issues, Canada's multicultural policies since the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms have promoted a liberal approach to "tolerance of difference." Nonetheless, Canadians continue to be exploited according to immigrant status, race, language, and sexual orientation, and excluded from full equity in economic and educational opportunity (Bannerji, 1997). First Nations peoples in Canada continue to struggle against a colonized heritage and cultural and physical abuse that have grossly marginalized their participation in both the economy and public education system. With funding cuts, increased trade liberalization, and privatization of government services, women's issues gradually slipped off the national agenda. By the 1990s, federal and provincial women's advisory councils that voiced gender inequities in the workplace and advocated policies and programs to address these were shut down or disbanded. Eyre, Lovell and Smith (2001) claim that feminist critique of gender politics in education was driven to the back benches in the 1990s socio-cultural climate of Canada.

### **Other Reviews of Adult Education Research Trends**

There has been a fairly consistent interest in mapping the politics of knowledge construction as well as changing themes shaping adult education research and theory. Many of these mapping projects, in various ways, have focused on shifts and trends and have noted the domination of particular worldviews. Handbooks and encyclopaedias are produced regularly amidst critiques of their politics and exclusionary boundaries. Here we provide a brief review of other projects that have analyzed research trends in adult education.

Abstracts of papers presented at the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) between 1971 and 1980 were examined by Long (1983) who found that descriptive studies and program planning and administration concerns were dominant. In 1982, Rubenson explored research from North America (although the exact materials examined was not made clear) in order to analyse "what governs drawing of the map (the knowledge production) in adult education" (p. 58). He found that contrary to some claims, adult education research was not interdisciplinary. Rather, it was still dominated by individual-focused psychology, empirical methodology and isolationism of the field. Dramatic shifts in paradigms of contributing fields motivated Rubenson (2000) to revisit his mapping project of adult education research.

While the strong emphasis on practice-based research continues despite calls for greater emphasis on theory development, Rubenson also notes a major shift in adult education literature to embracing ideas and approaches from other disciplines without critical debate about what they offer.

Paulston (1996, 1997, 1999), while not focusing specifically on adult education, has engaged in a variety of mapping projects, particularly within comparative education as well as educational policy studies, and with a focus on the effects of "the postmodern turn." He argues that there are great benefits to social mapping because it "...makes possible a way of understanding how sliding identities are created, and how the multiple connections between spatiality and subjectivity are grounded in the contested terrain between intellectual communities" (1997, p. 142).

Grace (1999) examined post-war US adult education (1945-1973) and identified ideological perspectives and beliefs governing research that tended to promote coherence, coordination, community needs and professionalization to meet demands of rapid change. Renewed interest in mapping the adult education field is also apparent in the work of Jarvis, Holford and Griffin (2000) who described both fragmentation and growth in the field, as well as new modes of teaching. Taylor (2001) studied both the accepted and rejected manuscripts submitted to *Adult Education Quarterly* between 1989 and 1999, arguing that such an approach offers a more accurate picture of the role of the journal in shaping the field. He noted that increasingly, submissions were based on qualitative research. While gender and diversity were becoming more prominent themes throughout the decade, participation studies had diminished substantially in importance compared to research in the 1970s and 1980s. Like others in earlier analyses, Taylor found that few submissions were historical, and the range of topics had not increased; adult learning was still a focus of one quarter of all submissions. Earlier studies of the content of adult education journals have had both specific and general orientations. Some noted the lack of historical research being done in adult education (Dickinson & Rusnell, 1971), while other analyses attended to the influence of graduate student research (Blunt & Lee, 1994). Hayes (1992) investigated the influence of feminism on adult education publications, noting that feminist thought has had significant impact. Hayes and Smith (1994) found, however, that the discussion was dominated by a liberal feminist orientation which gives "...little attention...to how race, culture, socioeconomic class or other factors might lead to differences in women's experiences and needs" (p. 216).

Other mapping-related projects have also focused on counter-hegemonic interests. The “First World/Minority World” orientation evident in adult education research was a concern for Hall (1994), who undertook an examination of the references cited in proceedings of Canadian and American adult education research conferences.<sup>4</sup> He found very few submissions referring to work from the non-dominant or “minority” world (3.3 per cent in AERC proceedings and 5.7 per cent in CASAE proceedings), and suggested that “the geographic base of our own critical analysis in the era of global integration of production needs to be broadened” (p. 191). Briton and Plumb (1993) compared the creation of adult education handbooks to Euro-centric maps of the world’s “uncharted regions.” Such handbooks, they claim, have remained largely unchallenged because they maintain hegemonic interests located in various associations.

Canadian adult education research mapping projects have been concerned with the extent of research activities undertaken by practitioner-researchers (Garrison & Baskett, 1989) and the scope and nature of academic research activities as well the institutional base of the researcher (Bouchard, 1995).<sup>5</sup> Bouchard found little evidence of research that paralleled Canadian adult education’s historical roots in critical liberatory education and speculated how much this was due to policy shifts in funding adult education research. Welton (1999) reviewed several key adult education publications in Canada and concluded that adult education research “...is not exclusively the preserve of academia.” He further argued that “...no matter how hard we adult educators have tried, we have not succeeded in establishing a full-fledged discipline of adult learning in the academy” (p. 20).

The above-mentioned reviews or mapping projects reflect a diversity of foci and methods of analysis. Such meta-reviews provide macro perspectives on the trends and influences shaping adult education research. We now turn to our review of the liberatory trends in Canadian adult education research in the 1990s, joining with other mapping projects to help researchers locate their own studies and those of their students within the wider territory of adult education research.

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<sup>4</sup> Hall examined the 1992 proceedings of the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) and the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE).

<sup>5</sup> Bouchard's analysis was based on reports prepared by regional representatives of CASAE.

### Journal Review

A review of the *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education (CJSAE)* was conducted for the period of 1990-1999.<sup>6</sup> The decade began with volume four and ended with volume thirteen. Twenty issues were published, three of which were Special Issues. These were volume 5 (1991) on "Critical Social Theory and Adult Education," volume 8 (1994) on "Feminism in Adult Education: Fostering Visibility and Change for Women," and volume 9 (1995) on "Adult Education Research in Canada." Each issue consisted of three main sections: "Articles," "Perspectives," and "Book Reviews." A total of 133 pieces were analysed for this study: 71 articles, 21 perspectives, and 41 book reviews. The majority of contributions were in English.<sup>7</sup> One hundred and seventy one (171) authors wrote the 133 published pieces, with slightly more women (88) than men authors (83).

The diversification of approaches and foci taken up by researchers concerned with the anti-oppression role of adult education guided the review. Anti-racism, feminism, globalization, social movements, social justice, and equity issues were main themes that emerged from this inductive analysis. It is difficult to precisely quantify the data; however, after undertaking a content analysis of all the journal contents for the ten year period, a total of 57 of the 133 contributions (43 per cent) were identified as reporting on research, or discussed anti-oppression and social justice work. It is also important to note that some of the contributions appeared only in a special issue of the journal. The six themes identified from *CJSAE* in the 1990s were anti-racism, feminism, globalization, social movements and social justice, and equity issues.

The theme *anti-racism* encompasses "diversity," "ethnicity," "multiculturalism" and "aboriginal/indigenous education." There is a silence on theories addressing the complex and dynamic relations between race, class, and gender in adult education (Lee, 1993). Queer and disability issues are almost completely absent from the journal. A multiculturalism approach has also remained as the theoretical underpinning of race analysis. Poonwassie (1990) suggests that adult education needs to address racism, ideology, hegemony, and equality of results in a multi-ethnic society like Canada. However, in *CJSAE* of the 1990s, anti-racism is predominantly taken up in terms of multiculturalism, ethnic difference in learning style, and personal

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<sup>6</sup> Rachel Forman and Carole Roy assisted with this analysis of *CJSAE* articles.

<sup>7</sup> Analyses included only articles written in English. French language pieces constituted only 17 per cent of the total.



narrative, rather than as a system of violence and oppression. Finally, there is a dearth of publications on aboriginal issues. In the entire decade there is only one article on aboriginal health and healing (Atleo, 1997).

The articles on *feminism* in *CJSAE* only peaked in 1994 with the special issue (Vol. 8, 1994) and have been negligible since then. This finding concurs with Hayes' results in her survey of the inclusion and treatment of gender/women in British and American adult education journals (1992, 1994). Our review indicates that the field of adult education has not yet caught up with the vast and diverse body of knowledge produced by feminist scholars and activists throughout the world. An in-depth feminist analysis is absent from the majority of studies published in the *CJSAE*.

*Globalization* is introduced into the journal in the 1990s, but appears only marginally in six pieces. Even in these pieces, globalization emerges as a catch-all for describing global consolidation of capitalist power, the hegemony of American-based consumer/corporate culture, and the process of networking state, non-governmental, and market interests across national boundaries. What is described as "workplace policy" or "institutional restructuring" at the beginning of the decade is subsumed under "globalization" at the end of the decade. It appears that globalization has become reified in the literature, and is taken up as an inevitable phenomenon, rather than a set of human-driven processes. A minority of authors dealing with globalization question the role adult education plays in the global expansion of capital.

*CJSAE* began the decade with volume five on "Critical Social Theory and Adult Education" (1991) that included an article about saving the field of adult education from the theoretical crisis of social science, in particular, postmodernism (Little, 1991). Nevertheless, in the rest of the decade, the journal remains more preoccupied with personal change and reflexive practices of people engaged in *social movements* than the social movements themselves. It is evident that participatory action and community development also remain as the most popular approaches to citizen mobilization with more focus on community development than anti-oppression organizing.

There is much overlap between *equity* and anti-racism themes. Equity, however, includes articles that addressed mainly employment equity, access to literacy, and learning. One can observe an interesting trend in the journal; at the beginning of the decade there is more emphasis on workers' education and learning; this shifts to a focus on union education in the middle, and at the end of the decade human resource development (HRD) becomes the dominant orientation.

To conclude, the review revealed five megatrends in adult education in the nineties and a major shift in the theoretical underpinnings of the field. The following three conceptual shifts hint at changes in the way adult education is structured, as well as its changing role in the global political economy. First, at the beginning of the decade, critical theory is frequently used as the framework to deal with equity and social justice issues. By the end of the decade, postmodernism has gained currency as a theoretical framework. Second, citizenship, liberatory, and radical education have historically been central to the character of adult education. Throughout the decade, these concerns give way to debate over the nature of "new social movements," and social movement learning emerges as an area of study. Third, the political economy framework for adult education that is based in Gramsci and Marx is overtaken by "transformative" or "transformation" theories of education and social change. Issues arising from the "new social movements" are subsequently interpreted through lenses of personal adaptation, individual transformation and empowerment, rather than through the more politicized, structure/power conscious political economy framework. This review of journal articles affirms Morin's (1998) argument that a "paradigm shift" has taken place in the field of adult education and further supports Solar's (1998) claim that the field "has become increasingly diversified."

### **Graduate Student Theses**

To examine graduate student theses, the data set was limited to abstracts of all Master's and Doctoral theses in adult education produced at Canadian institutions, whose titles are listed annually in the *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education (CJSAE)* from 1990-1999. While these lists produced hundreds of titles, some adult education theses are excluded. First, the *CJSAE* lists include only those thesis titles submitted by institutions each year, which may not be comprehensive. Second, the *CJSAE* lists normally include only theses completed as part of adult education programs, even though student research in adult education is sometimes carried out in other departments such as nursing or agriculture—particularly where institutions do not offer a graduate program in adult education. Third, an abstract is obviously a limited representation of a research project. While these limitations indicate the difficulties of reviewing graduate student research,

they should not discourage attempts to include this literature.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, for a general overview of thesis themes and approaches, the abstracts generally yielded substantive and detailed description.

A total of 905 abstracts were analysed, including 803 Master's and 102 Doctoral abstracts from a total of 19 Canadian institutions.<sup>9</sup> Each abstract was coded for the researcher's institution, degree (Master's or Doctorate) and year of completion; the context of the study (formal educational institution, workplace, community, or individual development); and the primary and secondary themes forming the focus of the research. Codes and categories were generated from a first reading, then verified and modified through subsequent readings and inter-rater checks.

Feminist-based research or studies interpreting women's experiences maintained a consistently small presence among the overall research themes (as a primary theme in 8 per cent and secondary theme in 6 per cent of abstracts respectively). Environmental issues constituted only 3 per cent of the thesis topics,<sup>10</sup> racism or Aboriginal issues and education were the focus of only 2 per cent,<sup>11</sup> and immigrant adjustment was the theme of 1 per cent of thesis topics. Less than one percent of theses focused on globalization (0.4%) international development (0.7 per cent), poverty (0.1 per cent), and labour education (0.3 per cent). No significant shift was apparent in the themes that appeared in theses from 1990 to 1999.

A word search of all thesis abstracts from 1990-99 available electronically (N=560) was conducted using key terms and their relatives

<sup>8</sup> Some of these graduate theses may have been subsequently published as research articles in *CJSAE* or *CASAE* conference proceedings; therefore, there is possible overlap in these data sets.

<sup>9</sup> Angeliki Lazaridou, Vinton Spence and Steven Preston assisted with analysis of thesis abstracts.

<sup>10</sup> This may be due to the availability in many institutions of graduate programs focusing specifically on some of these areas, such as Native Studies, Educational Foundations, International/Intercultural Education, Cultural Studies, and Environmental Studies, which presumably would attract some students wishing to specialize in these areas of adult education.

<sup>11</sup> The dearth of studies addressing Aboriginal issues is surprising, even cause for serious concern, given their prominence in Canadian public policy and debates of education and schooling. It may be that graduate students pursuing these issues may choose to do so through Native Studies or First Nations programs; alternatively, there may be insufficient support and expertise available among Canadian adult education faculty to encourage research in this area and provide supervision for interested students.

identified through the earlier abstract analysis. While limited, this method provided a quick sketch of references to topics and perspectives. Terms that appeared rarely or not at all were related to race and racism (39), disability (19), labour/union (17), critical theory (2), civil society (2), critical pedagogy (0), and social justice (0). Globalization was mentioned only once.

Very little attention was given to liberatory or social justice themes, although increasing interest through the 1990s was directed to women's experiences. For the most part, these studies adopted a liberal approach of "giving voice" to women's experiences rather than taking up analyses of gendered structures and inequities. Diversity issues related to sexual orientation, class, and race/ethnicity, especially studied from a critical perspective, rarely touched research conducted by Canadian graduate students in adult education. Critical theories (including post-structural, post-colonial, critical feminist and others), postmodern orientations, and concerns related to equity, social justice and globalization are almost invisible.

### **Review of CASAE Proceedings**

Conference proceedings offer yet another, somewhat unique, view of adult education research activities—a glimpse of organizational practices and the conversations taking place.<sup>12</sup> CASAE has historically welcomed a wide range of proposals including those that report on studies-in-progress, as well as completed research and critical reflections or literature reviews not based on empirical work.<sup>13</sup> Time is another element to be considered in this mapping project; conference proceedings offer more of a "work-in-progress" view of Canadian adult education research and paint a somewhat different, perhaps more dynamic picture of research trajectories, compared with journal articles and graduate student theses.<sup>14</sup> In the findings reported below, attention has been given to the changes across the decade as well as the overall picture.

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<sup>12</sup> Conferences are dynamic spaces that have received limited attention by researchers as sites in which to investigate the politics of knowledge creation.

<sup>13</sup> CASAE conference proceedings can be considered refereed; all conference proposals go through a rigorous blind review process. Other adult education conferences give priority to submissions that report on completed research; this has not been a firm requirement for CASAE.

<sup>14</sup> Journals, because of the review and revision process, often present research conducted and completed several years before publication. Similarly, graduate student theses report on research that has been completed (and that may have occurred more than a year before the student graduated).

Proceedings from ten CASAE conferences from 1990 to 1999 (a total of 543 papers<sup>15</sup>) were analysed.<sup>16</sup> Analysis was conducted by a faculty member and a graduate student.<sup>17</sup> Each paper was read and coded<sup>18</sup> with specific attention given to the extent to which authors focused on the liberatory potential of adult education. Conference proceedings were also analyzed to determine authorship. Forty-five per cent of the single-authored papers were written by women and 35 per cent by men; 17 per cent of multiple-authored papers had both men and women authors.<sup>19</sup>

Several topics maintained a persistent but marginal or minority presence during this decade of conference proceedings. Labour and union education issues (3 per cent), studies of literacy (4 per cent) were persistently on the radar, but remained marginal topics; studies that focused on women's experiences were also limited but persistent (6 per cent). Less than 3 per cent of papers focused on First Nations adult education and even fewer studies examined issues related to newly arrived immigrants, low-income adults, and the elderly. Papers that took up class specifically as an element of relations of power and something that shapes access to and the quality of adult education were not consistently present during this decade. There was also consistent but limited attention (4 per cent) given to comparative studies and

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<sup>15</sup> The length of most proceeding's papers was six or fewer pages; these limitations are imposed by proceedings editors. These limits affect what can be discussed; the page limitations can also mean that what gets included is central and not peripheral to the discussion. The conference proceedings data set included a smaller amount of text compared with journal articles and a greater amount compared with graduate student thesis abstracts.

<sup>16</sup> Thematic conferences also took place. The 1994 conference that focused on the "Theory-Practice" relationship and the 1997 conference that focused on "Re-thinking Community: Culture, Solidarity, Survival." Similar to what was found in the review of *CJSAE*, these conferences may have attracted a greater number of papers in relation to these themes, but other foci were also evident.

<sup>17</sup> Lynette Harper assisted with the analysis of the CASAE proceedings.

<sup>18</sup> At the beginning of the process, in order to develop inter-rater reliability, each researcher reviewed a year of conference proceedings, and comparisons were made on the coding process. Subsequently, the remaining proceedings were divided up and each reviewer undertook their analysis individually; frequent communication was maintained during the analysis period to discuss any questions or problems in relation to coding.

<sup>19</sup> The majority of papers (73 per cent) were single authored, 17 per cent of the papers were written by two or more authors, and 10 per cent of the papers were multiple-author symposium summaries. English papers dominated (95 per cent) the landscape; papers written in French ranged from a high of 21% at the beginning of the decade (1990) to 5 per cent at the end of the decade (1999).

investigations of adult education outside the North American context. Globalization was being discussed throughout the decade and began to increase in importance toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, although the number of papers focusing on globalization remained small (6.5 per cent).

Pedagogical issues (planning, instruction, and evaluation) maintained a higher profile during this decade, with 7 per cent of the papers focusing on feminist pedagogical issues. Social justice<sup>20</sup> was an issue and concept that was of primary concern to authors throughout the decade in 32 per cent of the papers. There were several noticeable "disappearances." At the beginning of the decade there were a few studies that looked at agriculturally-related or rural adult education and prison education, but during the last half of the decade, these themes were not present at all. Papers written in French had almost disappeared by the end of the decade. Sexuality was notably absent for most of the decade, with a very small number of papers focusing on this issue in the last few years. Similarly, papers that focused specifically on racism and anti-racist education were not present during the first half but began to enter the conversation in the late 1990s. Like the issue of sexuality, race remained very marginal.

Having completed this initial analysis, it appears that social movements, civil society and community were contexts of concern during this decade but they remained on the margins as did discussions about class, race, and sexuality—reflecting perhaps the relatively privileged social locations of adult education researchers and conference goers. Feminist theory continued to assert an influence, but it was marginal.

As a national organization of a country with French as one of the official languages, the disappearance of francophone papers is disturbing; more exploration is needed to explain this absence. Given that First Nations issues have been gaining more ground within public discourse, it is also disturbing to see how little attention has been directed to the educational, community and learning concerns of Aboriginal peoples. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we also now rarely hear about prison education within the research discourse of adult education—does this reflect changes in policy and reduced funding found in other areas of the social welfare system? Similarly, given the policy

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<sup>20</sup> These findings relate to those papers that specifically discussed the notion of social justice as a key concern for adult education. These papers were not specific in their focus, that is, they did not point to particular social injustices experienced by particular groups and individuals in relation to gender, race, class, etc. Social justice was discussed at a more global or general level in these papers.

developments in relation to immigration, few studies were focused on this policy arena or on new immigrants' learning experiences.

### **Discussion**

Returning to the original concern that sparked this mapping project—the extent to which adult education researchers are focusing on the liberatory potential of adult education—we are somewhat hopeful, but also concerned. We are hopeful because attending to social inequalities does not appear to be simply “fashionable” as some have suggested; it has been a persistent, albeit marginal, theme in the research reported in these data sets across this decade. On the other hand, we are concerned in relation to several issues.

There were noticeable differences when comparing graduate student theses with journal articles and conference proceedings. There were very few graduate student theses tackling issues of social justice and inequality. This raises fundamental questions about adult education curriculum, faculty and funding priorities, but it also speaks to the conservative policies that swept the country in the 1990s. Are there fewer graduate students who bring a social justice orientation because of neo-conservative policy reform that has cut many community-based adult education programs and undermined the non-profit sector? Has the same ideological orientation that has brought cuts to post-secondary education and rising tuition created insurmountable barriers for socially engaged adult educators who wish to return for their graduate studies? Funding cuts and other forces have also eroded adult education graduate programs. Is there, as a result, less diversity (and more conservative views) represented in the adult education experiences and orientations of those who are able to enter graduate school?

As we looked more closely at the liberatory themes that were persistent within adult education research, we had additional concerns. Gender as a central concern with feminist-oriented studies had a higher profile, but it was still marginal. Much of the feminist-oriented research, however, focused on personal explorations, “giving voice” to marginalized issues or groups with little incorporation of the diverse range of knowledge produced by international feminist scholarship. Few if any studies were grounded in an understanding of the intersectionalities of various forms of oppression and disenfranchisement and few undertook structural analyses. Little attention was given to issues of race, class, and sexuality. Studies that focused on issues faced by First Nations, immigrant communities, and those living in poverty, were present but extremely marginalized across the three data sets. Globalization was barely present in journal articles and was slightly more

visible in conference proceedings and graduate student theses; it was named as an issue, but for the most part not analysed in any substantive manner.

Some themes found in our analysis echo earlier mapping projects, while others do not resonate as closely. Taylor's (2001) review of articles in *Adult Education Quarterly* found little to support the argument that the field was "enigmatic, eclectic, and paradigmatically pluralistic" (p. 336), a conclusion also noted by Blunt and Lee (1994). Our mapping project points to a plurality of topics, approaches and theories, although perhaps not as eclectic as some might argue. Feminist theory continues to maintain a presence as Hayes (1992) and Hayes and Smith (1994) noted earlier, but it is far from being considered a dominant framework. Geographically the research remains focused, as Hall (1994) found, on North American theorists and experiences, with some inclusion of Western European contexts and theorists, but very little focus on immigrant and Aboriginal experiences. Theories and research grounded in other geographic, political and cultural worldviews are on the margins of Canadian adult education research, raising questions about issues of internationalization and the need for a broader worldview. The dominance of practice-related research was noted by Rubenson (2000) as well in studies of European adult education research trends – a finding that runs parallel to our analyses, particularly in relation to graduate student theses.

The research trends evident in this decade raise concerns about Canada's collectivist traditions where adult education has been closely linked to social movements, community-based programs, participatory action research, and civic participation. The apparent low frequency of research in these areas, or within the ideology of radical or progressive education/social critique, is disappointing. We echo Welton's (1999) concerns regarding the role of adult education research in providing a knowledge base that supports "...thinking and action ...required to revitalize our participatory, deliberative democratic traditions" (p. 26).

We hope this analysis will be used as a springboard for adult education research organizations and academic programs to examine their own programs and resources and their relationship to the larger field of adult education research in Canada. Our findings contribute to discussions about the politics of knowledge production, specifically how individual and institutional interests shape research. This examination can also contribute to comparative studies of adult education research across a range of geographic locations—a project which seems particularly appropriate given the character of economic and political globalization taking place, supported by rapid developments in technology. We encourage other groups of researchers in



different parts of the world to undertake distinct projects that are linked together by overarching interests. Together, such projects could generate a montage, a series of composite portraits characterizing adult education research. This portrayal may help develop a more inclusive understanding of adult education research, furthering discussions about the role of such research and knowledge production in helping to create a more just global order.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This is consistent with the International Council of Adult Education's new initiative of forming a "Task Force" to undertake a study of the state of world adult learning. This initiative was announced at the Sixth World Assembly of the International Council of Adult Education, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, August 9-12, 2001.

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