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It's About Adult Education And More: It's About
Lifelong Learning For All And For All Of Life

André P. Grace

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IT'S ABOUT ADULT EDUCATION AND MORE: IT'S ABOUT LIFELONG LEARNING FOR ALL AND FOR ALL OF LIFE

André P. Grace

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Abstract

For some time, adult educators have fixated on the divisive notion that lifelong learning is usurping the field of study and practice. Such a fixation not only undermines the value of adult education, but also limits opportunities to see the porous and interrelated nature of public, adult, and higher education. Each of these educational components contributes to the collective of education constituted as lifelong learning for all and for all of life. Working from this perspective, this article explores the notion of lifelong learning as critical action as it considers (1) the emergence of Canadian academic adult education amid the decline of social education, and (2) the dynamics of locating adult education within faculties of education in universities today.

Résumé

Depuis un certain temps, les éducateurs d'adultes--ou andragogues--ont consacré beaucoup d'attention sur la notion controversée que l'apprentissage continu usurpe ce domaine d'étude et de pratique. Cette attention accrue ne vient non seulement dévaloriser l'andragogie mais limite également les occasions de voir les liens étroits entre l'éducation publique, l'andragogie et l'enseignement supérieur. Chacune de ces composantes contribue à l'éducation dans son sens plus large, qui comprend un apprentissage continu pour tous et tout au long d'une vie. Inspiré par cette perspective, cet article explore la notion de l'apprentissage continu comme un élément critique de notre société en touchant tout d'abord l'émergence de l'andragogie au Canada avec le déclin de l'éducation sociale et, ensuite, le positionnement de l'andragogie au sein des facultés d'éducation dans les universités d'aujourd'hui.

Introduction

In an autobiography I wrote a few years ago (Grace, 2007), I reflected on my journey as an educator who has worked in public (K–12), adult, and higher education. I have been a classroom science teacher (Grades 7 to 12), a vice-principal, a facilitator of teacher development with a school board, a community educator, and an academic adult educator.

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Like so many others I came into adult education in a roundabout way. This is not unusual. Since adult education is a broadly construed educational formation innervated by interdisciplinary perspectives and practices across its formal, informal, and nonformal learning domains, the field of study and practice is a gathering place for many who "have fallen into the company of adult educators" (Welton, 2011, p. 9). Moreover, the route to becoming an adult educator is hardly prescriptive, despite efforts to professionalize the field in the era of modern practice. Indeed, the road to adult education is one where challenge and reaction often blur field parameters and priorities (Grace, 2012, 2013a, 2013b). In those precious moments when adult education emerges as an inclusive and caring engagement in education for instrumental, social, *and* cultural purposes, the desired end of the road is collective reflexivity and proactivity bent on societal change and cultural transformation (Grace, 2013a).

How did I find my way into adult education? While facilitating the continuing professional education of teachers, I became immersed in literature on how adults learn, reading such key academic adult educators as K. Patricia Cross and Stephen D. Brookfield. Both emphasized learning as a social construct in which matters of context, disposition, and relationship play out. My facilitator role energized me to co-learn with teachers as adult learners who wanted to learn, too. This experience nurtured my deep interest in social education, which focuses on the recognition, respect, and accommodation of learners in life, learning, and work contexts. For me, social education is about building a practice of lifelong learning as critical action with instrumental, social, and cultural dimensions (Grace, 2013a). In this critical formation it is also about interrogating and resisting undemocratic and unjust forms of learning in educational work focused on social change and cultural transformation. Here responsive and responsible social educators help learners build knowledge and understanding to sustain themselves. In this process learners become rich not only in skills and information that can help them be job ready, but also in social and cultural knowledge needed to be life ready in a contemporary change culture of crisis and challenge (Grace, 2013a).

This focus on lifelong learning as critical action takes me into the busy intersection of public, adult, and higher education. None of these educational constituents can lay sole claim to lifelong learning. This would be exclusionary and detrimental to the sum of learning as a lifelong and lifewide endeavour. Furthermore, those working in adult education should not fixate on the divisive notion that lifelong learning is usurping the field of study and practice (Grace, 2013a). Indeed, this fixation has long been a concern of adult educators (Grace, 2013a). It was certainly noticeable as we moved into the new millennium. At that point a contingent of adult educators questioned whether lifelong learning was "an alternative route for adult education," perhaps even prefiguring its demise (Miller & West, 2001, p. 13; Wilson & Cervero, 2001). In part, Miller and West saw this uncertainty as a global consequence of governments and corporate interests giving primacy to lifelong learning as instrumental learning for new economies. Such a fixation on lifelong learning not only undermines the value of adult education, but also limits opportunities to see the porous and interrelated nature of public, adult, and higher education, each of which contributes to the sum of teaching and learning across the lifespan. Like higher education and schooling for children and youth, adult education ought to be regarded as a constituent of lifelong learning unencumbered by any hierarchy of educational formations. While each

constituent has meaning and value, its real merit lies in what it contributes to the collective of education constituted as lifelong learning for all and for all of life.

For many educators in academe, it is common to have navigated multiple educational and work roles over the course of a career. Working with this reality in this article, I explore what it means to be an academic educator committed to promoting lifelong learning as critical action across public, adult, and higher education. This theme is interwoven in two larger discussions: (1) the emergence of Canadian academic adult education amid the decline of social education, and (2) the dynamics of locating adult education within faculties of education in universities today.

Academic Adult Education in Canada: A Historical Conspectus

With Harvard University founded in the United States in 1636 and Université Laval founded in Canada in 1663, academic adult education is a relative newcomer to the North American university scene. As an emerging entity, the field of study has developed a little more slowly in Canada, where the first master's program (introduced in 1957) and the first doctoral program (introduced in 1961) were established at the University of British Columbia (Grace, 2000a). In the United States, Teachers College, Columbia University, conferred the first doctorate in adult education in 1935; by 1962 fifteen universities offered graduate degrees in adult education (Grace, 2000a). By 1970 seven Canadian universities offered graduate programs in adult education, with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE, introduced in 1965) and Université de Montréal (introduced in 1969) bringing the number of universities offering doctoral programs up to three (Grace, 2000a). In discussing the emergence of Canadian academic adult education, Alan M. Thomas emphasized the importance of (1) building theory; (2) elucidating field foundational discourses; (3) interrogating ways the university constricts adult education and its role in challenging systems and structures; (4) investigating the social, political, and economic contexts impacting adult education; and (5) designing adult education with students and the community in mind (cited in Grace, 2000a). These emphases, with a particular gaze on ways universities and governments continue to undervalue and marginalize adult education (Grace, 2013a), remain critical considerations in the design of academic adult education today. They challenge us to contest neo-liberalism as an ideology and practice that has bounded adult education in particular ways in institutional contexts, creating a crisis sidelining social education in the rush to emphasize learning for work as a vital economic endeavour (Grace, 2012, 2013a).

In the 1950s and 1960s prominent Canadian adult educators like J. Roby Kidd, who exalted Canadian adult education as a movement with purposes, goals, and methods, placed value on education for the whole of life that extended over a learner's lifetime (cited in Grace, 2000b, 2012, 2013b). Education did not have to be restricted to schooling for children and youth. In advancing the idea of lifelong learning, Kidd did not position adult education as something less; rather, he positioned it as a constituent of something more (cited in Grace 2000b, 2012). Kidd was very aware that the Canadian field, like the US field, was marked by public misunderstanding that positioned adult education as culturally inferior to public education – schooling for children and youth – and higher education (Grace, 2012). Like many contemporaries he used the notion of lifelong learning to uplift adult education. Still,

minimizing adult education remains a cultural reality (Grace, 2013a). The field of study and practice has to be in continuous subsistence mode. When Kidd emphasized learning across the lifespan he was linking adult education to a perennial focus on community building and survival that, pragmatically, could enable the survival of adult education itself (cited in Grace, 2000b, 2012). Here field maintenance meant that adult educators had to synchronize learning priorities with changes in economics, science, and technology, all of which were key change forces impacting life, learning, work, their dynamics, and their possibilities (Grace, 2013a). With regard to academic adult education, the field of study had to be recognized as a university enterprise involved in more than community education; it had to build presence and place as an academic entity concerned with researching how adults learn and advancing professional training and development (Grace, 2012). This techno-scientized positioning of adult education in the university was in stark contrast to the field's historical role in university extension. As Kidd (1956) noted, adult education had a significant history of making many academics uncomfortable. He recounted that university extension had been first to challenge traditional notions of learning in academe.

Efforts to systematize Canadian academic adult education began in earnest in the mid-1970s when James Draper (OISE), Gordon Selman (University of British Columbia), and other university adult educators formed a consortium to initiate discussions to create a national association to advance Canadian-based studies in adult education (Grace & Kelland, 2006). Their collective efforts resulted in the creation of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE) in 1981. The founding conference was held in Montreal, and the first president was Gisèle Painchaud from Université de Montréal. While the intention was to advance CASAE as a bilingual organization, the francophone presence has not been strong in the emergence of the association. Indeed, CASAE has largely developed as an anglophone academic association serving an eclectic field defying particular parameters in terms of form and function (Grace & Kelland, 2006). When the Adult Education Consortium met in October 1977, Draper related that some 90 faculty members in Canadian universities, with about half working part-time, taught one or more courses in adult education (Grace & Kelland, 2006). As Grace and Kelland relate, at this time nine universities offered master's-level studies, including the University of Alberta, the University of British Columbia, Dalhousie University, the University of Guelph, the University of Manitoba, Université de Montréal, St. Francis Xavier University, the University of Saskatchewan, and OISE. The configuration of universities offering master's programs changed somewhat over the next few decades. The University of British Columbia, Université de Montréal, and OISE also offered doctoral studies. In 1984 Dalhousie University became the fourth Canadian university to offer a doctorate in adult education.

However, the growth of academic adult education in Canada was not a smooth or linear progression. By the mid-1980s graduate adult education was under threat at the University of British Columbia, Université de Montréal, and OISE, which had its PhD program deemed insufficiently academic and rescinded during this period when a "circle-the-wagons mentality and beleaguered mood prevailed" (Welton, 2011, p. 3). By the 1990s times of turbulence appeared normalized for Canadian academic adult education. During this decade the field of study was rationalized out of existence in various Canadian universities, including Dalhousie University, where I was engaged in doctoral studies in adult education when its School of Education was axed.

As academic adult education emerged in Canada, the techno-scientized dimension of its emerging practice was influenced by the increasingly professionalized culture of academic adult education taking hold in the United States, where many of Canada's academic adult educators had been trained and/or previously employed (Grace, 2000a, 2012, 2013b). Despite academic efforts to professionalize the practice of Canadian adult education, the Canadian Association for Adult Education – the practitioners' arm – was instrumental in maintaining a field of practice constituted as a regionalized jumble of uncoordinated educational activities impacted by local problems, resources, traditions, and institutional and social structures (Grace, 2013b). Lifelong learning as a way to conceive engagement in professionalized adult education primarily remained a concern of the field of study. Both Canadian academic adult education and its US counterpart seemed bent on producing lifelong learners whose frequent visits back to the learning treadmill would keep them prepared to contribute to economic progress and, to some degree, social and cultural advancement (Grace, 2013a, 2013b). All in all, academic adult education's commitment to lifelong learning as a process and outcome was intended to remedy the ills of a change culture of crisis and challenge (Grace, 2013a).

Today the value of lifelong learning is once again highlighted in academe as a way forward in neo-liberal times. When adult and higher education, and even schooling for children and youth, buy into contemporary neo-liberalized lifelong learning, it is generally to promote learning that advances the economic, with any advancement of the social relegated to corollary status. Whether we work in academic adult education or teacher education, this perspective on learning is expected to guide our own practices as pragmatic educators. To help them in contesting what amounts to a dismissal of social education and a devaluing of educators under neo-liberalism, educators across the educational spectrum ought to turn to the larger history of North American adult education for insights. From Eduard Lindeman (1926/1961) to Moses Coady (1939) to Myles Horton and Paulo Freire (1990), there is a rich 20th-century history of constructing and engaging in adult education as social education that has the potential to transform education and culture. In Canada we are proud of our history locating adult education as a community-based and critically oriented enterprise (Grace, 2006). Our field of study and practice emanates from a historical design intended to advance ethical practices and the political ideals of modernity – democracy, freedom, and social justice – in local, regional, and national contexts (Grace, 2006). While at times Canada's expansive geography has worked against adult education as a cohesive national entity, the field is nevertheless indelibly marked by world-class regional social education initiatives such as the Antigonish Movement that emerged in Atlantic Canada (Coady, 1939). Students in faculties of education need to know this history as part of the social history of Canadian public, adult, and higher education shaping the discipline today. This history can deeply inform their own development as social educators in times when social education as education for full citizenship has been sidelined in the rush to prioritize the instrumental and the economic (Grace, 2009, 2013a).

Locating Adult Education within Faculties of Education Today: Possibilities amid Problems

As the above historical conspectus indicates, Canadian academic adult education emerged during the second half of the 20th century, seeking presence and place as a field of study

within the larger discipline of education in which higher education and schooling for children and youth were established educational constituents. Following a trajectory similar to the emergence of US academic adult education, Canadian academic adult education emerged as a lesser educational formation, a designation fixed by an engrained cultural stereotype of adult education as remedial education for uneducated and undereducated adults (Grace, 2012, 2013b). Even today, academic adult education is far from a tour de force in university or community contexts where adult education is often perceived as displaced by lifelong learning in its neo-liberal iteration (Grace, 2013a). Still, there is much that adult education can contribute to building knowledge and understanding across the discipline of education and beyond. Indeed, there is great diversity in contemporary issues and trends shaping adult education as a field of study and practice (Merriam & Grace, 2011). Relative to adult education as a concept, construct, process, and social enterprise, these include:

- deliberating the meaning, place, and relevance of adult education transnationally amid an increasing global focus on lifelong-learning policy and practice since the mid-1990s;
- revitalizing emphasis on the foundations of adult education in an effort to understand the field of study and practice as one that has historically been (and still ought to be) broadly encompassing of social, cultural, instrumental/technical, and other forms of education;
- examining field identity politics and the status of community education in relation to the contemporary presence and place of historically marginalized groups, including people of colour, sexual and gender minorities, Aboriginal peoples, and other historically disenfranchised populations who have challenged adult education to make space for them;
- exploring the relationship between adult education and education for citizenship in the face of neo-liberalism;
- investigating the impact of critical and postfoundational discourses on adult education as a field of study and practice impacted by matters of context, disposition, and relationship;
- weighing the pluses and minuses of constituting adult education as a professionalized practice; and
- turning to history to explore people, politics, and ideas shaping academic adult education during the 20th century and into the present moment.

These days, locating adult education within faculties of education remains part of the larger dynamic of locating adult education in culture and society where it has been perennially misunderstood and undervalued. When academic adult educators speak about the emergence of the field of study, they often discuss how it appears historically at odds with higher education, which usually gives primacy to the intellectual over the organic. Academic adult education is about both. As a reflexive engagement the field of practice has tended to be the driving force for the field of study that it informs. However, both have often been reduced to reactive mode so they aren't rationalized out of existence (Grace, 2013a). For example, for four short years (2005–9), we had an Adult Learning Knowledge Centre in Canada. The Canadian Council on Learning used the centre to link

academic and community adult educators through projects intended to advance grassroots social education for an array of populations often deemed vulnerable in terms of their ethnocultural, geographical, and other defining locations (Grace, 2013a). While the organic nature of these ventures was highlighted and research was used to inform projects, funding disappeared with a change in the federal government. This is an example of a politics of dislocation at work, once again demonstrating that adult education is at the mercy and whimsy of those institutions holding the purse strings.

The assault on adult education appears to happen everywhere. Contributing to an erosion of educator sociality in universities, sometimes faculty colleagues focused on public education have relegated academic adult educators to the margins of education in academe (Grace, 2013a, 2013b). At a pragmatic level this is because faculties of education primarily exist to prepare teachers to engage in schooling for children and youth. This purpose means the discipline of education is preoccupied with philosophies, policies, and pedagogies shaping education for individuals *before* they become adults. Still, the move from childhood to adulthood is a nebulous transition not easily demarcated or understood in psychosocial and cultural contexts (Grace, 2013a). For example, the Chief Public Health Officer's (2011) fourth annual report on the state of public health in Canada described youth as individuals aged 12 to 19 and young adults as individuals aged 20 to 29. Elsewhere, Employment and Social Development Canada characterizes youth as 15- to 24-year-olds (Canada Employment Insurance Commission, 2013). These nonparallel delineations beg two questions that adult educators need to ask and answer: When does adulthood begin? When are individuals old enough to be considered adult learners?

In a further erosion of educator sociality in universities, academic adult educators have sometimes dislocated themselves. Since the early days of the field of study, some have engaged in self-ostracizing in faculties of education by speaking about the failures of schooling in a backhanded attempt to uplift the value of adult education (Grace, 2012, 2013b). This has not been helpful. Academic educators, whether their focus is on public (K-12) or adult education, ought to remember that faculties of education are often considered lesser faculties in universities, perhaps especially by those in other professional faculties. Solidarity is needed to stand against such devaluing of education from the outside.

One Way of Being an Academic in Education Today

Where do these realities leave me as an academic educator who wants to use the discipline of education to make life better *now* for children, youth, and adults across social, cultural, economic, and political contexts? Maybe a commitment to some reconfiguration of lifelong learning could be a way forward if lifelong learning was revised as critical action in the holistic sense that I described earlier and expand upon here (Grace, 2013a). As a concept and practice, lifelong learning as critical action is an engagement in instrumental, social, and cultural forms of education. As I construct it (Grace, 2013a), lifelong learning as critical action emphasizes ethics, diversity, inclusion, and the political ideals of modernity – democracy, freedom, and social justice. It takes up matters of context (social, cultural, economic, historical, and political factors that impact policy making and implementation); disposition (the attitudes, values, and beliefs of educators and learners that moderate lifelong learning); and relationship (interactions among learners variously positioned in demographic and geographic terms that impact learner access and accommodation). From

these perspectives, lifelong learning as critical action works with diverse learner populations navigating challenges in life, learning, and work contexts.

Sexual and gender minority (SGM) learners constitute one multivariate population of learners historically relegated to the outskirts of education and culture. Canadian academic adult education has much pedagogical, political, and cultural work to do to advance SGM inclusion (Grace, 2013c). To intersect the intellectual sphere of ideas and the organic sphere of social action, the field of study should continue to turn to critical pedagogy and critical adult education in efforts to locate SGM emancipation within an ethical pedagogical project concerned with recognition, justice, place, accommodation, and transformation (Grace, 2006). These critical discourses can inform strategic political engagement. Historically, however, sexual and gender minorities have usually engaged in community learning outside the formal and the intellectual, relying on grassroots public pedagogy as a pedagogy of place and community where they can hone roles as change agents in their work to transform culture and society (Hill & Grace, 2009).

For SGM and other historically disenfranchised learners, the call to engage in education for social inclusion, cohesion, and justice is also a call for academic adult educators to build on the field's history as community-based and critically oriented education for ordinary citizens. In this work in classrooms and beyond, these educators need to be change agents, intersecting roles as vocal and visible public intellectuals and proactive cultural workers (Grace, 2013a). They have to use language that not only critiques, but also provides new ways to articulate issues and open spaces for queer being, becoming, belonging, and acting in the knowledge-culture-language-power nexus. Here academic adult educators need to build alliances with schoolteachers, community educators, social activists, and cultural workers in a process of building queer knowledge and understanding as foundations for cultural transformation (Grace, 2013a). This process is about invoking new language, engaging social theory to frame social action as a strategy for solidarity and progress, and invigorating ethical practices grounded in learning as a right that recognizes, respects, and accommodates sexual and gender differences. In drawing on the best of critical pedagogy and critical adult education, this work fuses the intellectual and the organic in processes of thinking and acting to create a better world (Collins, 1991; Freire, 1998, 2004; Giroux, 1997, 2004; Welton, 1995). With emphases on understanding sexuality and gender beyond heteronormative and genderist constructions, and transgressing the symbolic and physical violence constituting everyday expressions of homo/bi/transphobia, adult education can emerge as a site where intellectual and cultural labour connect to bring SGM emancipation to fruition in classrooms and other communities. This is lifelong learning as critical action for sexual and gender minorities (Grace, 2013d; Grace & Wells, 2011).

In my work with SGM youth, which is an ongoing project with intellectual and organic components, lifelong learning as critical action brings philosophies, policies, and practices from public, adult, and higher education to bear on meeting the broadly construed educational and cultural needs of these vulnerable youth (Grace 2013c, 2013d, 2013e). Many SGM youth have been excluded in family, faith, school, and other social contexts. If they have reached the age of majority and are still in high school, they may need help in transitioning from school to work. If they are dislocated in life contexts or victims of violence, they may need the community education and support consequential to involvement in a Gay–Straight Alliance club in their schools or in an SGM youth group in their communities. These SGM social spaces constitute sites where education for citizenship

can occur so SGM youth can learn about their rights as persons and citizens, where to find supports in institutional contexts, and how to protect themselves so they are safe and secure. To ensure these outcomes I educate caring professionals – school administrators, teachers, school counsellors, psychologists, community workers, and social workers, among others – to build the knowledge and understanding needed to work with SGM youth. The goal is to have these youth transgress marginalization, bullying, other stressors, and risk taking like cutting, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide ideation so they can survive, build assets, and show signs of thriving (Grace & Wells, 2011).

Community-based and critically oriented forms of adult education have much to offer here. Academic adult educators working to educate and prepare caring professionals can shape ethical, inclusive pedagogy within the field's historical emphases on social education as education for citizenship, learner autonomy and self-directedness, and social justice, cohesion, and inclusion. As they shape meaningful and worthwhile pedagogical and cultural practices, they might engage critical adult educator Michael Collins's (1991) influential text *Adult Education as Vocation*. In it Collins calls on adult educators to be critical inquirers who challenge notions of instrumentality, efficiency, and productivity driving neo-liberal forms of education. He also positions education as a medium for interrogating systems and structures that would limit learning as a democratic, critical, and reflexive engagement. Collins holds that adult educators have a responsibility to make judgments in the interests of engaging in ethical practices in learning and work contexts. These perspectives have import for all academics wishing to shape critically progressive pedagogies that make a difference across public, adult, and higher education. In (re)positioning adult education as critically progressive education, critical adult educator and queer activist Robert J. Hill states that the core purpose is to help learners become problem solvers (cited in Grace, 2012). For Hill (2010, 2012), education shaped this way is a public good and a form of social education tied to generating social policy that engenders holistic living. Here learners link well-being to educational access and success, a good living that sustains self and dependents, comprehensive health, a secure home and surroundings, and the right to be, become, belong, and behave in terms of one's characterizing subjectivities.

In shaping critically progressive education for sexual and gender minorities, Hill (2010, 2012) believes our involvement in social movements is informative for honing social action bent on change. For Hill (2012), social movements constitute primary spaces where sexual and gender minorities can engage in informal and nonformal social learning focused on improving queer well-being and inclusion. This amounts to engaging in lifelong learning as critical action as a dynamic engagement that interrogates exclusionary policies and practices in education, culture, and society; heightens communication in the intersection of the moral and the political; and monitors challenges as it explores possibilities for cultural transformation (Grace, 2013a; Grace, Hill, Johnson, & Lewis, 2004).

Taking It to the Community: Keeping the Intellectual and the Organic in a Dynamic Relationship

Engaging lifelong learning as critical action in my own educational and cultural work is intended to engender commitment to the mobilization and social inclusion of SGM learners as historically disenfranchised learners. Contesting the history of omission and violence marking SGM experiences in formal education for youth and adults (Grace & Wells, 2011;

Hill & Grace, 2009), it is crucial to revitalize public, adult, and higher education in crafting social education, social action, and cultural work that benefit sexual and gender minorities as a multivariate and vulnerable population. This critical action drives social programming developed and offered by the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS), which I established in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta in 2008. At iSMSS we use research to inform social programming and energize inclusive, ethical, and engaged educational and cultural practices that make the contemporary world better *now* for SGM children and youth and their families. This is an engagement in critically progressive social education that focuses on (1) individual and group agency in an emancipatory context and (2) social education and action for the public good (Grace, 2012, 2013d, 2013e).

Most SGM youth know the daily distress caused by marginalization that entrenches fear, mistrust, helplessness, hopelessness, and a sense of being alone. These youth often experience schooling and legal, medical, and government services as fragmentary and insufficient to address the stressors, risks, and trauma associated with living with adversity induced by heterosexism, sexism, genderism, and homo/bi/transphobia (Grace & Wells, 2011). iSMSS employs a uniquely holistic model that brings to bear the collective strengths of research, teaching, advocacy, policy making, and community outreach to develop programs to protect SGM youth and meet their needs. Institute researchers draw on such disciplines as education, medicine, law, social work, and psychology to (1) design programs to assist youth directly and (2) help teachers, health care providers, community agencies, and government and institutional policy makers build knowledge and understanding. iSMSS research highlights the fact that, with mentors, resources, and supports, certain SGM youth survive and thrive despite the daily stressors, risks, and barriers they encounter in their schools, families, and communities (Grace, 2013d; Grace & Wells, 2011). These youth are growing into resilience. By developing a resilience toolbox, SGM youth can become self-respecting and self-confident individuals who actively participate in creating change for themselves and others. Although much still needs to be learned about helping SGM youth in this process, current iSMSS research clearly demonstrates that those who set realistic goals and engage in problem solving with people who are supportive and collaborative become self-reliant and happier, even in cases of complete family and societal rejection (Grace, 2013d). I share this important finding in teaching undergraduates in caring professional faculties, including beginning professionals in teacher education.

iSMSS helps hundreds of SGM youth annually to overcome challenges and thrive through our research-informed programming for them. This outreach includes Camp fYrefly (www.campfyrefly.ca), our summer residential, community-based leadership camp for SGM youth (Grace, 2013e, Grace & Wells, 2007), as well as our year-round Youth Intervention and Outreach Worker program that includes the Family Resilience Project. This project is our latest community education and outreach endeavour. When children come out as members of sexual or gender minorities, families often have few resources and limited professional supports, with access often dictated by socioeconomic status. When a biological or foster parent, or other significant adult in the life of a child or youth, needs assistance, iSMSS works to meet their needs. The Family Resilience Project uses a holistic model to deliver supports to SGM youth and their families and caregivers by providing social learning opportunities via workshops, group meetings, and networking coupled with offering integrated university, government, and community supports and services. All families can benefit from learning about resilience research as well as specific

resources and supports that can improve their SGM child's overall health, happiness, and well-being. Findings from research on growing into resilience are also relatable to working with Aboriginal youth, youth across ethnocultural differences, and other youth whose differences may make them vulnerable. In sum, the Family Resilience Project aims to (1) identify and strengthen resilience-based protective factors for families to support their SGM children; (2) provide research, advocacy, and professional supports to help improve the health, mental health, educational attainment, safety, and emotional well-being of SGM children and youth; (3) create safe spaces for parents and youth to network with peers in efforts to help them effectively navigate the coming-out and coming-to-terms processes; (4) reduce youth homelessness and street involvement by helping parents and caregivers to provide nurturing home and in-care environments that effectively support SGM youth; and (5) inform public policy and community advocacy. When a youth needs mentoring or counselling; housing or help to mediate schooling or work; or medical, legal, or police assistance, iSMSS helps them connect with these supports.

What we learn from iSMSS research and experiential learning focused on our youth programming is used to inform our work in teacher preparation as we offer workshops to students in such undergraduate courses as adolescent development and ethics and school law. Student teachers get first-hand accounts of our intervention and outreach work in school and community contexts. They can analyze and draw on these scenarios as they prepare to work with the multivariate student population that occupies schools today.

Concluding Perspective:

At the End of the Day, Adult Education Has a Place

My knowledge of critical adult education, critical pedagogy, and their applications in developing ethical and inclusive pedagogical and cultural practices informs my educational and community work at iSMSS. What I have learned about the history of adult education as social education via folk schools, women's institutes, kitchen-table learning in the Antigonish Movement, and an array of other social-learning ventures in Canada and beyond informs and infuses iSMSS programming. My engagement in lifelong learning as critical action is deeply influenced by the idea of adult education as social education. My pedagogy is invigorated by principles and practices shaped by this idea as I prepare schoolteachers, adult educators, college instructors, other educators, and other caring professionals. These principles and practices also energize my cultural work in the spirit of Henry Marshall Tory, the first president of the University of Alberta, who believed the larger community is included within the university's boundaries. In this sense, iSMSS programming constitutes a form of university extension informed by adult education and other constituents of lifelong learning. As I have engaged in the field of study and practice in the university-community context over the years, theories, principles, research, and practices marking adult education have permeated my work in academic adult education and teacher education. Perhaps more importantly they have guided my work as a community educator, social activist, and cultural worker who wants SGM and other vulnerable youth to enter adulthood with abilities and capacities honed so they can successfully navigate life, learning, and work. Adult education has presence and place in my community outreach work. And it has presence and place in my teaching, whether the students want to be adult educators, schoolteachers, community workers, or other caring professionals. Just ask my students: They will tell you that adult

education matters. It sits at the learning table with public and higher education. At the end of the day, it is an important constituent of lifelong learning for all and for all of life.

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