

## Editorial

### Transitions in Learning

While some aspects of moving a journal from print to online format are relatively easy, other things are more challenging. The delayed publication of this issue (normally published in October/November) resulted from a temporary drop in submissions to the CJSAE/RCÉÉA that followed our switch to online. Thankfully, in the past few months, submissions have picked up dramatically leaving us with the happy prospect of having a number of exciting articles reviewed and scheduled for publication in our spring issue and a number of other manuscripts in the process of being reviewed. Moreover, we are in the final stages of editing and formatting a “special issue” of the journal, due for publication mid-March. Guest edited by Colleen Kawalilak and Janet Groen of the University of Calgary, this issue will explore the place of adult education in Faculties of Education in Canada. We anticipate that this special issue will attract a global readership of academic adult educators concerned about the place of adult education studies in the contemporary university. With our journal collection since its inception now accessible online, we are sure that authors and readers will discover/rediscover the *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education/La Revue Canadienne Pour L'étude de l'éducation des adultes (CJSAE/RCÉÉA)* as a premier publication in the field of adult education.

The current issue may have been slow in coming, but I think you will find it typifies the substantial scholarship that has always been the hallmark of the CJSAE/RCÉÉA. The issue begins with a fine exploration by Tanya Brann-Barrett of the ways prevailing conceptions of civil engagement (very often deeply rooted in local histories) shape the ways young adults perceive possibilities for social action. She argues that becoming critical of received historical conceptions of civil engagement can enable young adults to imagine new and productive conceptions that are better suited to addressing the challenges faced by youth in their locality. Brann-Barrett tunes our understanding of how historical discourses frame the perceptions of young adults and how critical adult education can play a productive role in helping people imagine new possibilities for civil action to promote local social change.

In the second article, Laurie Vermeylen and Scott McLean describe an extensive empirical investigation into the different ways adults of different ages learn from self-help books. They report the rather counter-intuitive finding that, although there are some differences in the learning of young adults and older adults, significant similarities exist in the approaches to learning used by adults of all ages. Any minor differences, they argue, are due more to age than any generational differences between adults. These findings are significant, I think, for adult education teachers and planners as they run against the long-standing trend in adult education of emphasizing the differences amongst learners and not similarities. Perhaps room exists for social science research that seeks out usable and generalizable knowledge about human learning that can help us escape the relativistic particularism that runs so strongly in our field.

I am especially happy with the inclusion of the third article in this issue by Hélène Fournier and Rita Kop. For the past several years, the CJSAE/RCÉÉA has not published

an article in French. Actually, relations between French and English adult education academics have been all too distant in the past decade or so. Originally, the CJSAE/RCÉÉA was conceived as a journal that could support research in both French and English. In practice, however, almost all of its articles have been published in English. In an effort to change this, our associate editor, Robert McGray from Concordia University approached a few French colleagues to inquire into their interest in publishing in our journal. Fournier and Kop, it turned out, were very interested in publishing an article they had previously published in English but that many of their French colleagues could not access. I thought it was a worthwhile venture for our journal to republish this interesting piece in our journal.

In their article, Fournier and Kop explore the shifting locus of control required by learners in increasingly technologized learning environments. Whereas, in traditional contexts, learners often receive direct guidance from adult educators (in the flesh), in many technologically mediated contexts, especially internet-based ventures like Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), learners are left much more to their own resources. Notions like “self-directed learning” take on new urgency in an age of technologically mediated interaction.

In a fascinating exploration of the place of popular culture in the learning of adults, Kaela Jubas, Dawn Johnston and Angie Chiang approach the television program, *Grey’s Anatomy*, as an adult education context within which its viewers learn about a range of health care issues, including the equity of health care systems. According to these researchers, it is helpful on occasion to think of adult learning out of its usual adult education context to understand more deeply the pervasiveness of learning in everyday life. It is important, as well, to understand the deliberate pedagogical intentions that animate popular cultural productions like *Grey’s Anatomy*. Seeing popular culture and adult education as both part of a broader hegemonic practice, and understanding adult learning as a process that is part of all life’s transitions supports a far richer view of adult education than one that restricts it to the deliberate actions of educators in formal learning contexts.

Jubas, Johnston, and Chiang propose the word “transition” as a way to describe the significant learning that adults engage in throughout their lives. Learning deep things enables us to span the gaps in understand that confront us in the various stages of our lives. In important ways, all of the articles in this issue focus on transitions -- on the ways our local histories constrain our ability to transition to new forms of civil engagement; on how learning can be drawn upon as we seek solutions to life’s problems; as the unsettling transition that confronts us as we enter new technologically mediated learning environments; and on the ways we draw on popular culture in our daily lives to make sense of pressing concerns. Adult education is deeply implicated in transitions and the articles provide interesting insights into what this might mean for our theories and practices.

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