cjsae

the canadian journal for the study of adult education

la revue canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes

rcééa

Wounded Learners: Symbolic Violence, Educational Justice, and Re-Engagement of Low-Income Adults

Elizabeth A. Lange, Donna M. Chovanec, Trudy Cardinal, Tania Kajner and Nicole Smith Acuna

WOUNDED LEARNERS: SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE, EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE, AND RE-ENGAGEMENT OF LOW-INCOME ADULTS[1]

Elizabeth A. Lange
St. Francis Xavier University

Donna M. Chovanec
University of Alberta

Trudy Cardinal
University of Alberta

Tania Kajner
University of Alberta

Nicole Smith Acuña
University of Alberta

Abstract

In a Canadian study on the learning needs and educational participation of low-income populations in adult education, a key finding was that the majority are wounded learners from their experiences in the schooling system. Compounded by various social and economic factors, these wounds represent various forms of violence, particularly symbolic violence, that continually reproduces their marginality as they avoid further formal education. Community adult educators have the opportunity to extend recognition of wounding by helping learners re-story positive learning identities, rebuild learning capacities as well as social and intellectual capital, and transform a limiting habitus. Through a dialectic of indignation and "dreamkeeping," educators and learners can challenge meritocratic systems that require woundedness and failure rather than capability. Educational justice creates spaces for hope among learners who still dream of serving others and contributing to their communities.

Résumé

Dans une étude canadienne sur les besoins d'apprentissage et la participation à l'éducation des individus à revenus modestes, une constatation majeure est que la plupart d'entre eux sont des apprenants blessés à cause de leurs expériences dans le système scolaire. Aggravées par divers facteurs sociaux et économiques, ces blessures représentent diverses formes de violence, notamment de la violence symbolique qui reproduit sans cesse leur marginalité car ils évitent toute nouvelle éducation formelle. Les andragogues communautaires peuvent reconnaître ces blessures en aidant les apprenants à restaurer leurs identités d'apprentissage positives, à reconstruire leurs capacités d'apprentissage ainsi que leur capital social et intellectuel, et à transformer leur habitus limitant. Par une dialectique de l'indignation et du « maintien du rêve », les éducateurs et les apprenants peuvent remettre en question les systèmes méritocratiques qui imposent la blessure et l'échec au lieu de développer les capacités. La justice éducative crée des espaces d'espoir pour les apprenants qui rêvent toujours de servir les autres et de contribuer à leurs communautés.

Introduction

In a Canadian study on the learning needs and educational participation of low-income populations in adult education, a key finding revealed that adults who are socially and economically marginalized are highly likely to be *wounded learners*. School experiences of failure have left many low-income adults scarred and afraid of returning to any form of formal or non-formal education. Such adults have been wounded—physically, psychologically, intellectually, and spiritually. Generated or compounded by racism, ageism, sexism, and other interlocking systems of oppression, this reality becomes an identity embodied as being an incompetent and incapable learner.

Primary and secondary educational systems have failed these learners. However, a meritocratic system requires failure. A meritocracy uses the bureaucratic values of efficiency, uniformity, discipline, and regulation as criteria for success and failure, and teachers and peer learners use various instruments to judge and sort. Given their negative experiences within institutionalized education, the adults in this study reported discouragement, shame, depression, and despondency, making it difficult to generate the desire and energy for restarting an educational journey. Consistent with classic studies by Bourdieu and Passeron (1970/1990) and Willis (1978), not returning for further education reproduces their socio-economic position, a form of symbolic violence in which they are unknowingly complicit in the reproduction of their own marginality.

In this article, we will first describe the socio-economic context, research design, and theoretical framework of this study. Second, we will detail the kinds of educational wounds that learners describe, as well as their learning desires and preferences. Third, we analyze the recognition and pedagogies that community-based organizations have used successfully to re-engage these learners. Through a dialectic of indignation and "dreamkeeping," community adult educators can assist in two ways. First, they can help learners in challenging meritocratic systems that require woundedness and failure rather than capability. Second, along with Ladson-Billings (2009), we believe that educators who create a context for working through woundedness—re-storying learning identities, breathing alive lost dreams, widening

pedagogical approaches to knowing—are dreamkeepers. Finally, we argue that community-based adult education organizations are best positioned to play the role of dreamkeepers, in that they offer the additional emotional, social, and intellectual supports needed for healing from educational injury and for restarting a learning journey. In this way, socio-economic marginality can be slowly transformed, not only providing for short-term social mobility in a meritocratic system, but also fostering a critical consciousness of social location and a long-term commitment to building educational and social justice.

The Aftermath of the Klein Revolution: Socio-Economic Context of the Study

Known as the Klein Revolution, Alberta was the first province in Canada to implement New Right ideology, returning to laissez-faire economics and reducing social welfare provision. Starting in 1993, populist Conservative premier Ralph Klein dramatically reduced government provision of public services, reducing program budgets overall by a minimum of 20% (Harrison & Laxer, 1995). Efforts to recalibrate Alberta's economy had a devastating impact on Alberta's low-income population, doubling the ranks of the poor to almost 20% of the population. This resulted in a heavy increase in food bank usage, child poverty, and homelessness. Studies indicated that Alberta families living below the poverty line tended to experience more intense poverty than their counterparts elsewhere in Canada (Gibson, 2007; Kolkman, 2007). The most vulnerable groups, particularly by income, continue to be aboriginal groups, newcomer immigrant groups, the working poor, young adults, and women (Kolkman), as well as intersections between these groups. The boom and bust nature of the oil economy and continued austerity programs were accelerating economic instability and social inequality in the province at the time of this study.

In terms of education, Klein attempted to craft market solutions to public services, restricting government programs to core services and privatizing so-called non-essential services, in effect establishing two-tier access to public services based on wealth. During this period, there was a substantial reduction in the funding of adult education, especially programs that increased access for minority groups, including English as a second language, adult basic education, women's centres, and adult literacy programs. Despite a rise in the policy rhetoric of preparing workers for the economy, low-income Albertans simply had neither the basic food, job, or housing security nor the social services to enable them to participate in learning opportunities (Kolkman, 2007). Other studies in Canada have detailed this shrinking access for low-income adults alongside an expansion of learning opportunities for the middle class (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005; Rubenson & Walker, 2006).

Almost 15 years after the initial restructuring of the private, public, and civil sectors, the provincial government has recognized that adult learning systems are seriously fragmented and that the vital role of community-based organizations in the provision of adult education has been neglected (Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, 2007, 2009). It was within this context that a funder of community adult education and a community college commissioned our academic research team to conduct a study.

Research Design

The overall aim of the research was to inform the range of adult education providers within the publicly funded advanced education system about populations they may not

be reaching, the nature of learning needs, barriers to accessing learning, strategies for reaching these populations, ways of better meeting needs, and policy changes that could enhance accessibility and flexibility. The study cohered with the provincial rhetoric of creating a lifelong learning culture wherein all Albertans have the knowledge and skills to reach employment goals, enjoy a high quality of life, and participate as responsible citizens (Alberta Learning, 2002).

Low-income adults often struggle with multiple and complex barriers that make it difficult to obtain meaningful research information. To study the educational needs of low-income adults in a large Alberta city, we used an exploratory case study. According to Yin (2009), exploratory case study research is suitable for questions that are descriptive (*what* kinds of learning experiences, barriers to learning, and learning goals that low-income adults experience) and explanatory (*how* these experiences interact and intersect to explain the reality of these adults in terms of pursuing learning opportunities).

Yin (2009) advised that the "case study method favors the collection of data in natural settings" (p. 5). Accordingly, our research team contacted our extensive networks in community-based, grassroots agencies to reach people who are not often reached in research. We relied heavily on the assistance of trusted workers in the agencies that work with various populations.

Although we identified the low income cut-off (LICO)[2] guide for selecting participants, we recognized that other forms of discrimination and life circumstances contribute to marginalization. To understand the socio-economic context of marginalization, the team conducted a series of literature reviews, including academic literature, policy documents, government statistics, and local, national, and international research reports. These literature reviews were triangulated with the three data sets, resulting in an extensive technical report (Chovanec et al., 2009) for funders and a summary report for policy makers, institutional providers, and community-based agencies (Chovanec & Lange, 2010). We relied on agency workers, our key informants, to confirm income status and direct us to potential interviewees. After verbal consent, we collected basic demographic information by gender, race/ethnicity, language, birthplace, and age.

To gain insightful and in-depth information from low-income populations, we conducted open-ended interviews and supplemented this information with a small number of surveys. Surveys typically pose significant challenges for adults who are transient, are not accessible by phone, have low literacy levels, or lack proficiency in English. As we attempted to privilege the voices of hard-to-reach learners, we set the following targets for reaching specific populations categorized as low income: 65% women, 25% aboriginal persons, and 25% non-English-as-a-first-language speakers. We were highly successful in recruiting adults living and using services in the inner city and the northeast and in urban aboriginal communities. These are frequently under-reached populations, and this is therefore an important strength of this study. Overall, we largely met or exceeded our targets for reaching specific groups, recruiting 62% women, 51% aboriginal persons, and 28% whose first language was an aboriginal language or other non-English language. We were pleased with the high participation of aboriginal adults but disappointed in our minimal reach

---

2   Statistics Canada established this measure in 1968 to identify the number of persons who were less well off than the majority. At the time of this study, for a family of three living in Edmonton, the LICO was $26,095 per year.

into newcomer immigrant communities and into agencies that work with persons with disabilities, likely due to the timing of the research.

We conducted 39 interviews in accessible real-world locations such as drop-in centres, social housing units, newcomer centres, food banks, centres for women survivors of abuse, and adult literacy programs. This was supplemented with 105 surveys using convenience sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). These were 15-minute written or oral surveys in six locations where low-income people might be located over the summer. Careful piloting ensured clear language and non-intrusive questions. We offered various kinds of honoraria such as bus tickets, coffee gift certificates, and specifically tobacco for indigenous participants. Finally, we invited agency and organization representatives to participate in focus groups. Thirty-nine people representing 28 agencies attended one of six focus groups.

Recorded data were transcribed and entered into the qualitative research software Atlas.ti for coding and thematic analysis. Initial codes were both pre-selected and emergent and then reduced to larger, more encompassing themes. Intercoder reliability was checked across team members assigning the codes, and team subgroups interpreted emerging themes by cross-referencing the literature with the three data collection methods. Survey data were entered into SPSS, with frequencies and cross-tabulations run on questions by specific categories. The quantitative information generated was consistent with the qualitative data. The whole team as well as subgroups met to discuss the interpretation of the data and do a comparative analysis with the literature.

Theoretical Framework

Needs assessments assume the identification of a discrepancy or gap in the learner's present state compared to some desired state. The discourse of needs is part of expertism that assumes some have knowledge that others are lacking and that it is unidirectionally transferred from one to the other. Applied to education, Freire (1970) called this banking education. Further, Illich (1992) suggested that *needs* can convey stigma, inferiority, dependence, and loss of autonomy. Needs discourse assumes that people with needs require help, often hiding a paternalistic relationship (Gronemeyer, 1992). When helping is institutionalized, it can become an instrument of social control—for example, in the assimilation of First Nations students through a colonial/neo-colonial education system. Davidson (1995) asserted that needs are neither self-evident nor discovered, but constructed within a particular historical and political context.

To characterize learners who do not fit easily within the adult learning system, terms such as *barriered*, *disadvantaged*, *underprivileged*, or *vulnerable* are used. Such terms often carry two problematic assumptions: first, learners are entirely responsible for their social class position and thus the barriers they face; and second, that it is their responsibility to overcome them. Too often such a psychological approach discounts larger forces that constrain individuals.

In contrast, we assumed all people are simultaneously learners and holders of knowledge, and we were more attentive to participants' goals, interests, and capacities than their needs. We attempted to recognize the interconnectedness, complexity, and nuances of their goals and capacities as they interacted with life circumstances within a social class position. We adopted the term *marginalized adults* to convey that, through little fault of their own, such

learners have been placed on the margins of society with access to few social and economic benefits. Socio-economic class, gender, race/ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, and other forms of social discrimination are intersecting factors in marginalization that we tried to understand alongside their lived realities and learning histories. We turned to Bourdieusian theory to explain social stratification dynamics and intersectionality.

Pierre Bourdieu's work formed the theoretical backbone of our analysis. Deeply concerned about what he called the neo-liberal scourge, with its market solutions, Bourdieu explored education as one cultural field in which power relations can operate somewhat independently from the economic field (Wallace & Wolf, 2006). Bourdieu's primary contention was that the upper and upper middle classes not only have substantial economic power but that they use their social power and pass on cultural attributes to assist their children in succeeding and reproducing their socio-economic position across generations. Bourdieu (2001) explained this phenomenon through the following concepts:

- *Economic capital* as the command over financial and material wealth, generally held in a family or extended family

- *Social capital* as the networks of influence, connections, and information sharing among families that are tapped by virtue of social position; social capital can be operationalized through extended family, professional relationships, neighbourhoods, recreational associations, clubs, religious organizations, political parties, or friendships

- *Cultural capital* as the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours that make middle-class and upper-class families comfortable in the schooling environment, constituting the internal logic of the schooling system

- *Habitus* as the sum total of our socialization in a given culture, unconscious and seemingly natural, where there is interplay between the forms of capitals which collectively orchestrate social location; an inner-city neighbourhood would be one habitus

- *Symbolic violence*, an uncoercive form of violence perpetuated through cultural mechanisms, like education systems, to legitimate the power of dominant groups so that the least advantaged comply with the socio-economic rules.

Economic, social, and cultural capitals interact within a field to entrench systems of privilege and marginalization. In particular, Bourdieu (2001) asserted lower-income classes lack the cultural capital required to be successful in school. Cultural capital is embodied daily in one's body carriage, thinking frameworks, and conversational habits carried from the classroom out to job interviews and workplaces. Marginalized adults lack access to many of these capitals to support their own or their children's learning aspirations. Thus, the social selection implicit in the meritocratic system is not related to merit but to the criteria of the dominant class.

Our submission to the social system is not a matter of consciousness but of *habitus*, which includes deeply embedded perceptions and appreciations inaccessible to consciousness (Burawoy, 2012). What Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) called "dispositions" make up the habitus, including perceptions, emotional reactions, cultural tastes, language, bodily habits, and mannerisms that visibly distinguish one social position from another, as part of the

internalized "collective unconscious" of society. In sum, "habitus is socialized subjectivity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, p. 126).

Symbolic violence is at work when specific discourses, behaviours, and beliefs have authority and others are discounted as vulgar or uneducated. It is at work in systems of merit that favour those with the desired capital, labelling and streaming students on this basis. When learners fail, they see it as evidence of individual failing rather than as the result of a struggle for class position, because the system of legitimation is obscured or misrecognized by those within it. Not accessible to everyday consciousness, it is a "violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity when those with less capital accept the social conditions as legitimate and the evaluation standards as fair and objective" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167). In other words, symbolic violence "succeeds in making people accomplices in their own fates" (Bourdieu, 1989/1996, p. 69).

Our findings on wounded adult learners cohered strongly with Olsen's (2009) book, *Wounded by School*. She discusses the wounds of creativity, compliance, rebelliousness, numbness, underestimation, perfectionism, and being average, and thus our analysis incorporates some of these categories. We also combined our findings, below, on healing from school wounds with the concept of dreamkeeping among racialized groups in school from Gloria Ladsen-Billings (2009), refracted through a Bourdieusian analysis.

Findings

> Their journey as adults was about, in part, "recovering" what they had lost in school, so that they could express themselves more fully as professionals and in their personal lives. This was a journey that required courage. (Olsen, 2009, p. 4)

This study focused on the voices of potential adult learners as they described their learning approaches, their educational aspirations, the types of barriers they experience, and how these barriers interact in complex ways to undermine their learning pursuits.

Basic Education Goals

Rather than being needs-oriented, we found that marginalized adults are best described as goal-directed, with multi-faceted and multi-dimensional goals. Despite difficult schooling experiences, these learners still manifested a high level of curiosity and desire to learn. They expressed a wide range of academic, recreational, cultural, and relationship goals that are not necessarily unique to their income status but might be found in any cross-section of the population. A sentiment shared was wishing to learn "just about everything" in order to "deal with things in my past."

That said, the majority of participants were either already involved in or wanting to take courses to learn educational basics such as reading, writing, and numeracy; secondary math, science, English, and social studies; general equivalency diploma (GED); and English-language learning (ESL/EAL[3]). They desired basic life skills that would help them be better at "dealing with crisis," including "life management skills, surviving skills, and learning about how to build my future." They were also interested in other basic skills, including

---

3   English as a second language or English as an additional language

navigating city streets by reading street signs, reading a map, driving a car, cooking, and various hobbies and sports. They were interested in discovering how they learn, building on what they know already, and acquiring practical skills such as asking for information, completing applications, answering questions, and reducing stress, all skills that relate to relearning how to learn. One woman from a pre-employment support program for women leaving abusive relationships was far-reaching in her definition of life skills: "Just day-to-day things, you know, problems that come to your forefront, you know, like having to improvise, find information, networking. But just basically do one thing at a time, [learning to] deal with it as it comes."

Participants were also interested in enhancing their relationships, often expressing an interest in improving communication with family members, being a better parent, and learning about other cultures. An aboriginal woman provided a very poignant example of how learning to write using a computer led to a family reunion. Another woman described learning how to *disconnect* from unhealthy family relationships as important, and a man talked about interpersonal skills—"how to get on with people…how you come across… [and] how to work with people." One man wanted to learn patience, self-control, and anger management in preparation for parenthood. As an agency worker said, "They have hopes and dreams for their kids…They want their kids to be happy…[and] healthy."

Broader Educational Aspirations

While marginalized adults certainly have career development and employment goals, importantly we found much broader interests that transcend immediate circumstances, such as interests in history, sociology, geography, forensics, cultural roots, public speaking, and leadership skills. In addition to managing money better, some mentioned the importance of understanding the financial system, such as world markets and trade. This finding challenges the belief that marginalized learners who face homelessness, joblessness, and other signifiers of poverty are not capable of or interested in learning beyond their basic needs and should not have access to broader education until such basic needs are met. While non-competency-oriented adult education is more available for middle and upper classes, it is clear that it is just as relevant and important for lower-income groups (Rubenson, 1989).

Numerous participants expressed a desire to make the world a better place, including career goals in the helping professions, political learning, citizenship skills, and "standing up for your rights." "That's why I wanted to get into social working, so I can help people that are pretty much going through what I've gone through," said one participant. Several aboriginal participants were interested in learning about their own Inuit, Métis, or First Nations history and culture as well as "government issues," law, and politics to understand "the way things work around me." Another participant mentioned taking workshops in recent years, "from gender workshops to political organizing."

Desire to Learn Is Still Alive

In sum, we found that marginalized adults still have a wide range of educational aspirations and a high desire to learn across an array of interests. Despite multiple challenges and negative learning histories, these adults are motivated to learn and do so continuously. This was contrary to Olsen's (2009) findings that the eagerness to learn is often destroyed

by schooling, leaving a numbness that results in a loss of interest in and ambitions for learning. We found they still reach toward learning goals, but *non-formally*, where learning is structured in more accessible and welcoming ways, or, if they have a negative disposition to any structured education, they are learning *informally* as they seek out assistance in their daily lives.

Another significant finding is that they require building blocks, or rather capacities, for additional learning. They may not know how to go about achieving their educational goals, and they struggle with weak avenues of access and accommodation for their particular needs. Yet as one participant said, "we need to give people a sense of empowerment first" in experiencing learning success. Broader learning success can lead people toward employment goals or can translate into an employment situation, while at the same time enhancing quality of life and social relationships. One agency worker summarized, "I look at education as a solution, [but] if we don't look at what the person needs to put in place for the person to access the education, then it becomes a Band-Aid."

Social networks and support systems are needed to experience success, what one agency worker called the manifesting of a "wider concept of community-raising." Finding a support network, learning communication skills, successfully dealing with diverse people and situations, and learning how to address interpersonal situations, from children's disabilities and destructive relationships to crafting supportive relationships, all build *social capital*. Most who had experienced dark moments and difficult situations and, with courage, were able to make a change wanted to assist others, in turn enacting their social capital. This also contributed to building their *cultural capital*, with the confidence, skills, and embodied identities as successful learners.

Educational Wounding

As Olsen (2009) suggested, "Pleasure in learning is one of the transcendent experiences of human life, one that offers meaning and a sense of connection in ways that few other activities can" (pp. 30–31). Many of these learners experienced a range of educational wounding within the context of school that overshadowed the pleasure and meaning of learning.

Physical wounding. For many participants, previous school experiences included physical violence and abuse. One 65-year-old woman remembered school teachers who would "stand you in the corner and strap you." In sharing their stories of not "fitting in" or "belonging," many learners gave examples of race as one marker of difference. As one man explained, "In junior high…I was always bullied, always pushed around, because I was the long-haired native kid. So I never liked school. I ended up dropping out in Grade 8." One woman said, "It's just that over the years, I've let my fear get to me," reflecting how learners felt excluded and disengaged. Sexism and violence were additional factors. An aboriginal woman, sexually abused by her math teacher, struggled to learn math for years. Women in abusive relationships are kept homebound and away from learning opportunities. One woman explained, "If I didn't finish that list [of chores] by the end of the day, I was getting hit…so I was trapped in my own home." These are physical wounds in relation to education that have been administered to ensure compliance in some form. As Olsen (2009) suggested, school is organized on the factory-like authority principle. Thus, compliance not only is embodied through physical force, but fosters fear and an overreliance on external rewards, becoming

"the enemy of creativity and higher level thinking" (p. 40). Horsman (2000) confirmed this in her study of violence, education, and women, finding that the power of physical violence shames, silences, and excludes.

Psychological wounding. Often, educational violence is psychological, considering certain learners incapable of learning due to markers of difference and personal characteristics. One woman described that the psychological violence at school was reinforced at home: "When you are at home and you are told so many times that you are no good and you're stupid, you just get to the point where you just don't want to do anything." Similarly, another participant reported a constantly reinforced sense of incompetence: "I didn't think I could do anything…and everybody is like, no, you can't do it…" One agency worker summarized, "The first time you went through the educational system, as a young student, you weren't successful and it didn't feel good for you. So, for you, you look at the box that's wrapped [up], and it's not a gift, it's a root canal." Gatto (2009) asserted "that school [i]s a malignant, toxic institution for children, especially for children of color' (in Olsen, 2009, p. 46). This constitutes a denial of access to learning and constructs an individual's psychology of shame and self-loathing. In internalizing the wound, they continually look for confirmation of this negative assessment.

Racism and the interlocking of other forms of discrimination can create a depressing and isolating experience. One woman attributed her mental illness to her residential school experience. Another described that "being left out for me was very hard…I started like giving up on things slowly." Students then disengage: "I was just in gym and she was just calling me a dumb native and everything and I was like, I can't take it, I'm out. I'm going home. So I didn't go back to school for a week…" At times it can result in self-wounding; a 47-year-old male attributed the 30 years of alcohol abuse that almost killed him to "the stigma" of being aboriginal and the grief of numerous traumatic family deaths. "I just wanted the pain to stop…and drown myself in alcohol. I escaped…I just wanted to forget who I was." One respondent described "a wall" that now separates her from educational engagement. To surmount this wall, participants described the extra emotional, social, and intellectual supports that are needed but generally not available in institutionalized education.

Intellectual wounding. Learners become wounded when they internalize the verbal and physical messages from their academic failures, a form of intellectual violence. One woman was constantly teased and called "stupid," so she just learned to lower her standards for herself, giving up dreams of becoming a nurse or a daycare provider. A 32-year-old aboriginal woman who dropped out of school rather than repeat Grade 7 felt humiliated and "left behind," developing an identity as a "failure." Olsen (2009) considered this the most common wound, the "wound of underestimation." Schools have narrow views of intelligence and do not respond to difference well. Monikers such as "lazy" and "stupid" are common, and many learners are told that they are not "college material." Too often, streaming of students is actually based on social class identifiers (Wotherspoon, 2004), yet it still fosters an internal belief in one's inadequacy and incompetence as a learner. As Illich (1971) said, the primary function of school is to "instruct us on our own inferiority" (p. 29).

Spiritual wounding. Many learners had experiences of overwhelming personal grief, loss, and trauma**,** causing them to leave schooling when no other flexible options were available

and sometimes losing the will to live. Respondents described numerous losses from murder, disease, drug overdoses, suicide, and drunk driving, with the same result: "It was really tough, so I left. I quit school." One man explained, "My father was murdered in 1970 because of alcohol and you know my mom died naturally and my sister got hit by a drunk driver and my other sister died from a heroin overdose." In Grade 12, one man said he "just gave up on life" for a time. A woman from a small rural community quit school in Grade 10 in part because her stepfather committed suicide. Despite help, another participant dealing with a family death had a "nervous breakdown" and quit school, and her grief "just got worse and worse over the years." She poignantly described the effect on her education, career, and life:

> What happened was my mom passed away, right after my grandma passed away, like within a day apart of each other. I was there in Vancouver [for the course] and mom was sick for a while and I really had no idea. All of a sudden, I get a phone call, "you better come home." And my [aboriginal] band fixed me up with an airplane ticket and a return ticket, so I can prepare for the funeral. And while I was still kind of in a daze, bang, I'm back in Vancouver in class again and my whole life is like "what's going on here?" I did finish that course but I lost total focus on everything I was doing up until then. In fact, I found myself still kind of trying to recover from that. Then it was up to me to try to find work in Vancouver and that was really tough. In fact, nearly impossible…I was going through a deep funk and yeah, I guess I did turn onto booze again because I was so depressed…Drinking and not eating and not caring about anything. Eventually, like, I had no money for rent and I had to move back [on reserve].

Wounding by institutional policies and practices. We found that when learners tried to re-engage in formal education, reluctantly, to reach their aspirations, they often faced institutional inflexibility. In his first year of university, a male participant was discouraged by the competitive atmosphere. "Large classes make it hard for everyone to really get their needs met…people monopolize the space…while other people are sitting passively by." Without confidence to speak up, many students experience the wound "of the average" who feels unseen and unknown (Olsen, 2009). One woman explained that her low marks made her feel "almost…like quitting." Yet another participant wanted to stay in a program, but "the biggest thing was the $250 deposit…it might as well have been a thousand because I just don't have it." A woman in a pre-employment program for survivors of abuse explained:

> Say they have a student that's constantly missing class, there could be something underlying. [Don't] pass judgment because you never know what somebody else is dealing with…If people don't make it to class or anything happens in their lives, they're booted out and you know they can't reapply. What if there's a mother out there, she's in school and something bad happens with one of her kids? She has to stop her schooling to take care of her child and she gets kicked out and she has to pay for all that money. She can't reapply for four years. There goes her dreams, right? They [should] want to empower people, not to hold them back. You can't help what happens at home.

Typically, low-income adults working service jobs or as unskilled labour have little power to negotiate flexible work schedules around educational programs. Participants described quitting with the intention to return, but years passed by. One young woman reported:

> I worked mornings. I didn't have enough money because I also had to help out with money for our household, so I didn't have enough money to pay for my studies. So I studied for a year and a half and I [stopped] with the intention of being able to come back one day and finish the course, which was three years long. I never had enough money to be able to go back and finish my studies.

In sum, marginalized adults are highly likely to be wounded learners. School experiences have left many Albertans scarred and afraid of returning to any kind of formal education. These learners have been failed by a system that operates on bureaucratic values of merit, efficiency, uniformity, discipline, and regulation, squeezing them out and keeping them out. Given a history of failing or otherwise being injured in the system, learners still desire to learn and choose less vulnerable learning sites, which we call formal education "work-arounds."

Working around Formal Education

In avoiding formal education or being shut out of institutional education, we found that learners engage in work-arounds by seeking out learning in a myriad of informal or non-formal sites that offer accessibility, welcoming environments, and support for life realities. Their repeated attempts at self-improvement and their ability to juggle complex life situations attest to the innovativeness, creativity, and resilience of marginalized learners. Their learning is often part of either an "interest-seeking, problem-solving, or issue-understanding process that is richly embedded in other activities" (Chovanec et al., 2009, p. 32). Moreover, consistent with previous studies, participants did not necessarily view themselves as engaged in learning but addressing "work-related issues…raising kids, renovating basements, and all kinds of things" that are routine, daily tasks (Tough, 2002, p. 4). Yet, as Livingstone (2001) has pointed out, it is these very moments when important learning is occurring. These adults "engage in multiple types of learning on an ongoing basis," but because these learning activities "have tended to be ignored or devalued by dominant authorities and researchers, either because they are more difficult to measure and certify, or because they are grounded in experiential knowledge which is more relevant to subordinate social groups" (p. 4), they are not acknowledged. There was, however, evidence that learners recognized that using the Internet, accessing libraries, and even volunteering for children's field trips were forms of learning.

When participants did seek out a learning environment, they were drawn to community organizations as safe places. Often friends may have already attended and recommended a program, enacting the power of social capital. They sought out choice and flexibility for the complexities of their lives and their multi-layered interests, such as learning about aboriginal history while improving literacy skills. These learning experiences were necessary precursors to building their identities as successful learners. Flexibility includes "smaller learning spaces, variable pacing of instruction, variable expectations for assignments, individual attention and, most importantly, accommodating their complex and precarious life circumstances" (Chovanec & Lange, 2010, p. 33). One of the focus group participants

likened the traditional schooling model to "trying to fit round pegs into square holes," adding that this "negates the different life experiences, cultures, beliefs that will affect the way they learn" (p. 33). The need to learn at their own pace and the need for understanding, compassion, and a bit of leniency for when "things happened at home" were deemed absolutely essential for success in a learning environment, formal or non-formal.

Learning Preferences and the Role of Community Adult Education

With internalized feelings of doubt and fear regarding one's ability to learn, the idea of returning to formal schooling is "not pleasant." From verbal bullying, to physical and sexual abuse, to residential school horrors for aboriginal learners, to stories of accumulated failure and shame, it is retraumatizing to be faced with "inflexible postsecondary educational environments that do not take their needs into account" (Chovanec & Lange, 2010, p. 14). They are survivors of schooling.

We found that marginalized adults sought out learning programs offered by community-based organizations instead, whether inner-city drop-in centres, social service agencies, newcomer and refugee-serving agencies, literacy organizations, women's centres, or seniors' centres. Participants highlighted the importance of welcoming, safe environments and trusting, respectful relationships. "The first thing…is relationship, relationship, relationship," said a focus group participant. Agency staff talked about "creating that safe environment where they're not going to be judged about the different kinds of learning that they would like to do," but rather where "you're looking at ways of engaging people, at having people explore their strengths, [and] developing stronger capacities."

Schooling survivors valued support for their whole person and their complicated realities, not just support for learning the course content. Interview participants reported that they did not enjoy previous learning experiences in which they felt like "just another student." They identified the importance of being known, feeling valued, and receiving support from peers as well as constant encouragement from educators. Building social support systems is key for learning success. One formerly abused woman reported, "I could tell just the minute I walked in the door that it was the support system that I didn't have for the last four years." Two people in their 40s explained that being around supportive people in their programs kept them from using alcohol or drugs: "People do so much better when they're nurtured and cared about." For some, the teacher is central: "Sometimes you don't have the support system that you need besides the teacher." Learners talked about the importance of teachers who "make you feel comfortable," restore confidence in the capacity to learn, and validate learners' ability to handle life issues: "[They] make you feel like you were somebody and that you did have a brain and you could use it." Their teachers were "understanding, approachable" and willing to provide the space to "talk to them about basically, your problems." They wanted teachers to recognize "you're human, you count and you matter," someone who "believes in you," a "cheerleader" to repeatedly remind them, "you can do it, you can do it."

Most of these learners had already failed in formal educational settings. Yet in the desire to learn, they turned to smaller, supportive community-based agencies. It is clear that community-based adult education is essential to a system of learning opportunities that can rebuild a positive disposition to education. Research participants reported that these community organizations are already using pedagogical practices that enabled them

to restart their learning journeys and build learning capacities and identities of learning success. These agencies are adept at community building, use experiential and holistic learning approaches, and are accommodating through maximum flexibility.

Discussion and Recommendations

In our analysis of these findings, it became clear that the concept of a *low-income learner* did not capture the full reality of persons with low income. Rather, the learners targeted in this study are people who have experienced the compounding effects of the economic and social trends over the past 20 years, but more specifically the boom and bust cycles in the five years preceding the study. Income was not the sole source of their marginalization; rather, it included the intersection of discrimination by race/ethnicity, gender, age, sex, religious, literacy, rurality, and citizenship status. These populations not only have less economic power, but also have less social status, cultural acceptance, and political power. Thus, we shifted to the term *marginalized learners* as those who have been excluded from the full social, economic, and political benefits of citizenship in Alberta and Canada by the larger structural realities over which they have no control. They are the individuals who have been left behind by a meritocratic society.

Policy and Marginalized Learners

Since the neo-liberal turn, funding and educational programming for marginalized adults has significantly decreased, despite the rhetoric that all Albertans will achieve the foundational skills and levels of education necessary for labour market participation. They are increasingly unable to find available and affordable programs that have the flexibility, visibility, approachability, and human qualities needed. Even though employment-related learning has expanded, this group of learners often cannot take advantage of the opportunities. For instance, they may be employed, but in low-wage jobs or sectors that are unsupportive or inflexible, or they may have few financial resources and other resources such as child/elder care, transportation, and access to learning materials and technology. They often lack the social supports to call upon when difficulties arise.[4]

Therefore, in our report, we recommended to policy makers that cross-ministry collaboration, including social services, children's services, justice, education, advanced education, health addictions, and mental health, is required to tackle issues of marginalization and learning. We also recommended that government policies and programs work diligently to improve the social support structures required for marginalized adults to be successful and continuing learners. It is important to broaden the learning opportunities as entry points for marginalized learners as goals unto themselves but also as a bridge to more institutionalized learning. Most important, government policy is required to strengthen and expand long-term operational funding for community-based agencies offering adult education programs. Rather than inter-organizational competition for limited funding, institutional providers and community-based organizations need to work in partnership to develop a continuum of educational services. Community-based adult education must be recognized as essential in the network of educational service provision. Finally, it is also

---

4   For further discussion of barriers and reproduction of social class, please see Chovanec et al. (2010).

vital to initiate a pan-Canadian discussion for developing a comprehensive lifelong learning policy that is holistic and broader than employment concerns.[5]

Recognizing Wounded Learners

While Olsen (2009) found learners wounded by school across a wide spectrum of adults, many in her study went on to become professionally successful, despite hidden educational injuries. However, they may have had access to more economic, social, or cultural capital, a frame of analysis not used in her study, in contrast to the participants in this study. The learners in this study exhibited the inherent human need to learn and the ability of the human spirit to heal from wounding. Assisted by adult educators in community-based adult education programs, wounded learners can restimulate the capacity for learning and restore belief in their abilities.

With experience, adult educators intuitively recognize a wounded learner by their fear, anxiety, reluctance or resistance, neediness, sense of fraudulence, regular absences, or early withdrawal. Wounded learners are in every adult learning situation, although they may not necessarily be socially and economically marginalized. From our findings, adults who *are* socially and economically marginalized are more likely to be wounded learners, with an inculcated identity of failure. Of the 39 interview participants, *all* spoke of educational wounding from institutional education. Of the 105 survey participants, one-quarter reported negative school experiences, but deep shame may have resulted in underreporting (Brann-Barrett, 2009; Hyland-Russell & Groen, 2011; Olsen, 2009).

In vocational education, Wojecki (2007) also found individuals affected by wounding learning practices. These learners are not "lacking in their capacity for learning, but… [their] relationship to learning [has been] wounded" (p. 171), resulting in fragile learning identities (Gallacher, Crossan, Field, & Merrill, 2002).

> Regardless of how this injurious story or experience has been sustained, whether by peers, educators, the institution, the workplace, or the curriculum, it leaves an indelible mark upon the learner's identity because these experiences are inherently linked with and attached to the individual's stories and 'knowing' learning. These negative and emotive experiences therefore continue to shape how the individual knows what learning is, therefore framing how she or he engages with formal learning in the future. These injurious experiences shape the motivations and personal justifications for their avoidance, resistance, emotional responses, and non-engagement in the affordances offered by formal learning. (Wojecki, 2007, p. 171)

Educators need to understand the seeds of student recalcitrance, acknowledge their emotional responses, and help overcome resistance to, or anxieties about, participating in learning. As West (2014) explained, through autobiographical narrative, marginalized learners can renegotiate their selves and their histories, leading to new qualities of relationship, learner resources, and disposition to learning. The ambiguity or defiance, which Olsen termed the "wound of rebellion," typically resides in a low self-image or poor, unfulfilling relationships with formal learning.

---

5   These recommendations will be further expanded in a forthcoming article.

Yet a new sense of selfhood can be generated by receiving recognition (West, 2014). Recognition of the wound and respect for the learner in conjunction with creating a sense of excitement in learning and exploring their socio-cultural location can assist learners in recovering their will for learning and their capacities for participation.

Identity and Wounding

Wojecki (2007) declined to use the term *wounded learner*, suggesting it implies an individualistic and deficit perspective. He preferred to identify learners with internalized feelings of failure and negative dispositions to education as those who have experienced "wounding learning practices." However, we are using the term deliberately in several ways. First, it expresses the structural dynamics that create learning conditions in which some are deliberately wounded within a system where failure is necessary. In particular, the neo-liberal approach to education no longer attempts to provide programs to ameliorate injustice, and inequality is accepted as natural. Yet this significantly wastes human potential and can create a perpetual underclass (Chovanec et al., 2010).

Second, we are using it to convey an identity of individual failing that has been accepted by the learner. Wounded learners internalize the verbal and physical messages from others, developing a defeating sense of self that prohibits them from overcoming educational barriers. Symbolic violence occurs when they see failure as evidence of individual failing rather than as the result of a struggle for class position. They come to believe they are losers who do not deserve better, do not have any academic abilities, and are solely to blame for their own failures. Yet this response is an outcome of the cultural ideology: "They are taught to believe that everyone can be successful if they just try hard enough and show enough initiative and competitive drive" (Olsen, 2009, p. 69). This hegemonic labelling lodges in learner psyches and identities as incompetent learners. This failure can be reproduced by continual acts of negative evaluation within educational systems and, later, in workplaces.

Third, wounded learners have formed identities that have been impacted by systemic conditions of discrimination and traumatic experiences of loss. Seeing oneself in a positive light and being supported in that self-perception are crucial aspects of culturally relevant or gender-relevant programs (Sealey-Ruiz, 2007), as it makes visible the socio-cultural environment of wounding. Given that half of the participants in this study were aboriginal, this speaks to the history of residential schools, which have been part of the colonial/neo-colonial history of aboriginal education in Canada. Naming social inequality, economic injustice, and attempted cultural genocide, including the meritocratic structures that require failure, can help wounded learners move beyond fragile identities. The wounds, or the internalized negative experiences of learning, become storied threads that weave the fabric of self-identity. Often these stories become the binding themes for individuals, limiting self-actualization. New, more engaging and positive experiences with learning must take place for the learner to begin to tell a different kind of story, to narrate a different sense of identity.

When schools ignore the family and community realities or habitus in which adult students are embedded, particularly impoverished or abusive families and violent communities, they often criminalize, pathologize, or victimize the students as authors of these realities, another form of symbolic violence (Goldstein, 2005). This targeting and the lack of academic success coincide with social class origin. As adults, they become fearful of

re-engaging in educational institutions that have failed and abused them, and this effectively maintains their marginal status and reinforces inequality. Referencing Willis's classic study, Lakomski (1984) asserted that "by choosing to withhold their learning power, the lads turn their backs on the essential intellectual tools which would enable them to acquire skills and concepts necessary to develop a self-conscious and theoretical account of their social position and oppression" (p. 158).

Re-engaging Wounded Learners

This is likely one of the most profound tasks of adult educators —acknowledging and addressing the woundedness of learners failed by schooling. Learner-centred education, attentive to "the student's life worlds, communities, aspirations, and experiences" (Wojecki, 2007, p. 170), is important to address woundedness but requires a process of relearning how to learn, receiving recognition and affirmation, and resurfacing individual passions. Breaking with the teacher-directed/passive-student mode of learning can enable the wounded learner to be excited about learning once again. Critical reflection on learning autobiographies and problem-posing about social location uses a narrative and structural understanding of identity. Wojecki (2007) advised that, "from a narrative perspective, it becomes crucial for adult educators to become curious and interested in learners' stories, in particular the previous stories which shape their current self-making and identity construction" (p. 171). Retelling past stories with new interpretations can reconstruct a positive learner identity—from incapable learners to learners with expanding capacities—with significant ramifications for their working and living trajectories. In particular, learners need to gain distance from identities that have been assigned to them, gaining a measure of freedom and a degree of agency (Wojecki, 2007).

> The so-called reforms of today are in reality a thin slice of rigid standardization, a one-size-fits-all curriculum, and a classic Procrustean bed of methods and procedures that are deeply alienating to some groups of students, many of whom drop out or are forced out of schools because they don't fit in. (English & Bolton, 2016, p. 109)

Particularly for aboriginal learners within the legacy of residential schools, culturally relevant approaches include appropriate grieving and healing rituals as well as opportunities for introspection and analyzing the impacts on daily life (Sealey-Ruiz, 2007). In this extreme situation of educational wounding with multi-generational effects, it is clear that the Western intellectual tradition was complicit in real and symbolic violence throughout the colonizing project. Too often it is assumed that children of cultural minorities "are exactly like white children but just need a little extra help," rather than attending to cultural forms of knowing and systemic racism (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 9). Indigenous scholars like Battiste (2013) suggest that learners require a nourishing educational system and direct experience with a spiritual road to unfold ancient wisdom and teaching. Learners are able to validate self and group identity using cultural knowledge, experiential learning, enjoyment, holistic learning, and problematizing the dominant culture and its forms of knowledge.

Transforming Habitus

Habitus is embodied thinking frameworks, including emotional reactions, cultural tastes, bodily habits, and mannerisms that visibly distinguish one social position from another, inculcated as young as seven or eight (Connolly & Healy, 2004). Given that education is the single most important factor in changing one's social class and socio-economic power (Macionis & Gerber, 2005), opportunities for wounded learners to improvise identities, name their social context, take up educational action as a form of justice, and engage as active citizens are vital to shift these powerful mental structures that restrict learning success and reproduce woundedness. Our study participants consistently emphasized the value of community where they felt like part of a "team," where they had a "support system" or their "own little group," and where they could assist and rely on each other. "It's got to be community based and I mean, truly community based," said one participant. This mitigates the sense of social exclusion, and they begin to "learn how to appreciate somebody for who they are" and "to be with people and learn from them," as other participants said. Group dialogue, peer learning, encouragement, and hope are first steps to transforming habitus, but not as middle-class mimicry.

In another example, members of our research team facilitate the Humanities 101 program, a community-based outreach program that aims to empower adult learners in critical thinking and a passion for lifelong learning while pursuing learning in disciplines usually offered at the university or college level. The learner is given the opportunity to explore systemic and societal influences on their educational lives, which removes the onus of their educational history from their shoulders alone, generating a sense of agency and voice.

The participants identified these kinds of adult learning programs in community organizations as vital for creating success-enabling communities, given their flexibility and personal attention. However, the need to widen pedagogical practices to include ways of *knowing*, ways of *learning*, and ways of *being* expressed by these vulnerable groups was also clear. Incorporating non-Western perspectives and using pedagogical approaches like storytelling, arts-based activities, and sacred ceremonies are some examples. Experiential and participatory learning were identified as most effective for scaffolding learning from the concrete to abstract. Leveraging learning through peer learning, field experiences, and job shadowing was also identified as important. The community of peers, teachers, friends, and agency workers is essential in its ability to simultaneously reduce isolation, mentor success, transform educational injuries, and, most importantly, build social capital upon which to scaffold new learning capacities.

While Battiste (2002, 2013) emphasized that there are many pathways to healing, principles specific to aboriginal culture seem to hold potential for the healing of *all* wounded learners. Meseyton (2005) outlined a four-stage process for a healing journey: identifying the areas of desired change; telling one's personal story with space for a new cultural [and/or learner] identity to emerge; analyzing the trauma and links to unhealthy behaviour; and creating a new vision of self that is informed by a transforming consciousness. This new consciousness transcends an individualist view, translating healing as part of larger community healing and turning to the community for role models and mentors of strength and resilience (Meseyton, p. 22). Learners are encouraged to maintain a balance between the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual. The paradigm of the Medicine Wheel "challenges

us to shift from the linear, mechanistic cause-effect models of thinking dominant in the Western industrial world, and to embrace the circular, ever evolving dynamic captured in a single phrase: all life is a circle" (Graveline, 1998, p. 75) . Because the wounding was inflicted within a "mechanistic model," it is appropriate that the healing should come from an educational approach that is holistic epistemologically, helping to transform habitus.

Conclusion: Dialectic of Indignation and Dreamkeeping for Educational Justice

> Educators, teachers, and school leaders should begin to see the larger socioeconomic political world with new eyes. Reformers advance their positions for change, often hiding their own self-interests or stakes embedded in the changes they advocate. A useful tactic is to ask, "Who benefits and who doesn't benefit from what is being proposed?" (English & Bolton, 2015, p. 98)

As Freire (2004) asserted in *Pedagogy of Indignation*, we should feel indignant about a system predicated on the failure of some and the waste of human ability. "Changing the world implies a dialectical dynamic between denunciation of the dehumanizing situation and the announcing of its being overcome, indeed, of our dream" (p. 62). This calls for a constant exercise of "reading the world as a book to be read and rewritten" (p. 17) and questioning the ethical legitimacy of such a system.

Further, Ladson-Billings (2009) called "dreamkeeping" the educational role of keeping hope alive and providing education as a pathway to opportunity and community service. Adult educators need to be dreamkeepers among adults marginalized by educational and other intersecting societal wounds. Bly (1992) suggested that the infinite promise and golden dreams that radiate from children often begin to fade at around age eight. He asserted that many adults spend 30 to 40 years recovering what has been lost—if they are able to do so at all. Adult educators can help identify the losses and dig for the dreams. Study participants emphasized that it was these dreams that most animated re-engagement and persistence in educational healing. Community education agencies that provide such vital non-formal educational opportunities need to be recognized and resourced as part of the continuum of services for hard-to-reach adults. For low-income adults to restart an educational journey, we need to meet them where they are—from shopping malls to inner-city centres to food banks to libraries—and recognize their humanity and innate need to learn as part of educational justice.

Nicole Smith Acuna, and Ruby Smith Díaz. These findings were first presented in Lange Chovanec, Cardinal, Kajner, and Smith (2010).

References

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology. (2007). *Roles and mandates policy framework for Alberta's publicly funded advanced education system.* Edmonton: Author. Retrieved from http://eae.alberta.ca/media/133783/rmpf.pdf

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology. (2009). *Living literacy: A literacy framework for Alberta's next generation economy.* Edmonton: Author. Retrieved from http://eae.alberta.ca/media/219400/living%20literacy.pdf

Alberta Learning (2002). *Final report of the MLA committee on lifelong learning.* Edmonton: Author.

Battiste, M. (2002). *Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy in First Nations education: A literature review with recommendations.* Retrieved from http://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/education/24._2002_oct_marie_battiste_indigenousknowledgeandpedagogy_lit_review_for_min_working_group.pdf

Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit.* Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Limited.

Bly, R. (1992). *Iron John: A book about men.* New York: Vintage Books.

Bourdieu, P. (1996). *The state nobility: Elite schools in the field of power.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2001). The forms of capital. In M. Granovetter & R. Swedberg, *The sociology of economic life* (pp. 96–111). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1970/1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture.* London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brann-Barrett, T. (2009). We're here, you just don't know how to reach us: A reflexive examination of research with citizens on the socio-economic margins. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, 29*(2), 53–66.

Burawoy, M. (2012). The roots of domination: Beyond Bourdieu and Gramsci. *Sociology, 46*(2), 187–206.

Chovanec, D., & Lange, E. (2010). *Learning needs assessment for low-income populations.* Unpublished summary report. Edmonton: University of Alberta.

Chovanec, D., Lange, E., Cardinal, T., Jamal, Z., Kajner, T., Hamdon, E., Piquette, C., Servage, L., Smith Acuna, N., & Smith-Diaz, R. (2009). *Beyond barriers: Maximizing access to learning for marginalized adults in the City of Edmonton.* Unpublished research report. Edmonton: University of Alberta.

Chovanec, D., Lange, E., Cardinal, T., Jamal, Z., Kajner, T., Hamdon, E., Piquette, C., Servage, L., Smith Acuna, N., & Smith-Diaz, R. (2010). The underclass of 2010: Barriers to adult education and the reproduction of social class. In S. Brigham & D. Plumb (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 28th National Conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE)* (pp. 35–40). Montreal: Concordia University.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education.* London: Routledge.

Connolly, P., & Healy, J. (2004). Symbolic violence and the neighbourhood. *British Journal of Sociology*, *55*(4), 511–529.

Davidson, H. (1995). Making needs: Toward a historical sociology of needs in adult and continuing education. *Adult Education Quarterly, 45*(4), 183–196.

English, F., & Bolton, C. (2015). *Bourdieu for educators*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.

Freire, P. (2004). *Pedagogy of indignation*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Gallacher, J., Crossan, B., Field, J., & Merrill, B. (2002). Learning careers and the social space: Exploring the fragile identities of adult returners in the new further education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *21*(6), 493–509.

Gibson, D. (2007). *The spoils of the boom.* Edmonton: Parkland Institute.

Goldstein, R. (2005). Symbolic and institutional violence and critical educational spaces. *Journal of Peace Education, 2*(1), 33–52.

Graveline, F. J. (1998). *Circle works: Transforming Eurocentric consciousness*. Halifax: Fernwood.

Gronemeyer, M. (1992). Helping. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *The development dictionary* (pp 53–69. London: Zed Books.

Harrison, T., & Laxer, G. (1995). *The Trojan horse: Alberta and the future of Canada*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.

Horsman, J. (2000). *Too scared to learn*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hyland-Russell, T., & Groen, J. (2011). Marginalized non-traditional adult learners: Beyond economics. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, 24*(1), 61–79.

Illich, I. (1992). Needs. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *The development dictionary* (pp 88–101. London: Zed Books.

Illich, I. (1971). *Deschooling society*. New York: Harper & Row.

Kolkman, J. (2007). *Standing still in a booming economy. Edmonton: Vibrant Communities Edmonton and the Edmonton Social Planning Council.* Retrieved from http://www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca/index.php/resources/digital-resources/h-labour/h06-wage-issues/20-standing-still-in-a-booming-economy

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lakomski, G. (1984). On agency and structure: Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron's theory of symbolic violence. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *14*(2), 151–163.

Lange, E., Chovanec, D., Cardinal, T., Kajner, T., & Smith, N. (2010). Wounded learners: Symbolic violence and dreamkeeping among marginalized adults. In S. Brigham & D. Plumb (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 28th National Conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE)* (pp. 208–213). Montreal: Concordia University.

Livingstone, D. (2001). *Adults' informal learning: Definitions, findings, gaps, and future research* (NALL Working Paper No. 21). Toronto: University of Toronto. Retrieved from http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/depts/sese/csew/nall/res/21adult sifnormallearning.htm

Macionis, J., & Gerber, L. (2005). *Sociology*. Toronto: Pearson Educational Publishing.

Meseyton, H. R. (2005). *Daughters of Indian residential school survivors: Healing stories* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

Olsen, K. (2009). *Wounded by school*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2005). *Promoting adult learning*. Paris: Author. Retrieved from http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/promoting-adult-learning_9789264010932-en

Rubenson, K. (1989). Sociology of adult education. In S. Merriam & P. Cunningham (Eds.), *Handbook of adult and continuing education* (pp. 51–69). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rubenson, K., & Walker, J. (2006). The political economy of adult learning in Canada. In T. Fenwick, T. Nesbit, & B. Spencer (Eds.), *Contexts of adult education* (pp 173–186. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.

Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2007). Wrapping the curriculum around their lives: Using a culturally relevant curriculum with African American adult women. *Adult Education Quarterly, 58*(1), 44.

Tough, A. (2002). *The iceberg of informal adult learning* (NALL Working Paper No. 49). Toronto: Ontario Institute for the Study of Education, University of Toronto.

Wallace, R., & Wolf, A. (2006). *Contemporary sociological theory.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

West, L. (2014). Transformative learning and the form that transforms. *Journal of Transformative Education, 12*(2), 164–179. doi:10.1177/1541344614536054

Willis, P. (1978) *Learning to labour*. London: Saxon House.

Wojecki, A. (2007). 'What's identity got to do with it, anyway?' Constructing adult learner identities in the workplace. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 39*(2), 168–182.

Wotherspoon, T. (2004). *The sociology of education in Canada.* Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press Canada.

Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research*. Los Angeles: Sage.