

### **Editorial: Expanding our Horizons**

I am very pleased to take up the role of editor-in-chief of *The Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education (CJSAE)*. It is indeed an exciting time for this publication. Over the past few years, my predecessor, Tom Nesbit, has worked hard to establish this journal as Canada's most important adult education and lifelong learning publication. Under his able tutorship, the journal has published an array of articles and reviews of the upmost quality. I am very grateful for the hard work Nesbit and his colleagues have done over recent years. They have left the journal in excellent condition.

A significant change Nesbit made to the journal during his tenure was to begin each issue with a brief editorial. I have greatly enjoyed reading his musings on various aspects of Canadian adult education. In his final editorial before stepping down as journal editor (Vol. 23, No. 2), Nesbit reflects on the ways *CJSAE* contributes to adult education in Canada. "As the only academic adult education journal in Canada," he observes, *CJSAE* "must act as an important resource for Canadian adult educators in providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and a vehicle for encouraging diverse groups to feel united in common interest" (p. iii). Like most academic journals, he writes, *CJSAE* "not only represent[s] the knowledge base of a given discipline, but also reflect[s] its history, trends, research norms and social structure of communication between scholars and others with professional expertise" (p. ii).

It is true, I think, that *CJSAE* has reflected important trends and research norms among Canadian scholars in adult education. By the early 1980s when the journal was launched, many in the field began to question the ways adult education was being constituted as an individualized, professional practice. *CJSAE* quickly became a context where a growing contingent of critical adult educators began to contest the ways a professionalized practice of adult education might actually reproduce dominant social relations. As postmodernist sentiments grew in the field, the journal increasingly became a context where scholars shared their research into the ways adult education intersects with the lives of people in diverse groups. Eventually, the vast majority of articles published in *CJSAE* reported on small-scale, qualitative studies that documented the experiences, perceptions, and understandings of people affected by the practices of adult education.

The four articles published in this issue exemplify this research trend. Jennifer Kelly and Lorin Yochim explore the ways the learning of university community members is shaped by a student instructor evaluation questionnaire. In ways broadly reflective of the critical approach that prevails in the journal, Kelly and Yochim argue that questionnaires like these engage people in "forms of learning that are political rather than neutral and that can dovetail seamlessly with neo-liberal ideology if accepted without challenge" (p. 2). Atlanta Sloan-Seale reports on a small-scale, qualitative research study that explored factors shaping the participation of adults in a university continuing education (UCE) program. Her 14 in-depth interviews yielded detailed stories that help deepen our understanding of people's experience participating in a UCE program. Contributions like Sloan-Seale's add fresh detail to our understanding of adult education practices. Yan Guo does the same. Using a methodological approach similar to Sloan-Seale's, Guo reports on the informal learning of recent immigrant parents striving to support their children's education. Like

Kelly and Yochim, she adopts a broadly critical view and points out how important it is not to impose culturally dominant assumptions about how parents should participate on this diverse group. In an interesting study of the barriers affecting the participation of non-traditional learners in higher education, Tara Hyland-Russell and Janet Groen extend our understanding. Similar to many articles that appear in *CJSAE* (and to much of the adult education research in Canada), Hyland-Russell and Groen based their findings on small-scale, qualitative research on a sub-population. Again, the value of their contribution rests in the nuanced stories offered by participants that serve to deepen our understanding of their experiences in higher education.

The collective value of these articles and so many others published in *CJSAE* over the years is that they provide a vivid picture of the multiple ways people experience adult education and lifelong learning. They provide a basis for resisting culturally dominant perspectives on adult education that all too often fail to account for the unique positionalities of diverse cultural groups. The adult education research trends and norms so richly exemplified by the articles in this issue have resulted in a wonderfully nuanced body of critical literature of which we should all be proud.

I think, at this point, as the incoming editor I should comment on my own particular vision of the journal's future. I must admit that for some years I have had the feeling that the research practices in our field are a bit narrow. It would be tough, for example, to argue that our field is very interdisciplinary. Even fairly cognate fields like cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, cultural anthropology, archeology, linguistics, neuropsychology, and so on have had little appreciable influence on our field in recent years. Articles drawing on these disciplines are rare in *CJSAE*.

Why is this an issue? The difficulty, I think, lies in the restrictive scale of analysis that we fall into when we adopt a relatively narrow range of approaches like we have in adult education. Although I can appreciate the importance of cultural studies, this approach alone cannot hope to provide all we need to know to appreciate the full potential (or the limitations) of contemporary adult education practices.

It is my hope that, during my tenure as editor, we might work to expand the parameters of what we publish in our journal to include articles drawing from a broader pool of research methods, disciplinary perspectives, and critical sources. It is difficult from where we sit within the frame of research norms that currently prevail in our field to understand how this might work. It is my belief, however, that if we try to think outside our customary frame, if we approach colleagues in other disciplines with questions about how their work might contribute to our understanding of lifelong learning and adult education, and if we begin to read a bit more widely in areas outside our comfort zones for insight, we will gradually discover ways to expand the intellectual underpinnings of our field. So, adding to Tom Nesbit's vision of *CJSAE* as a vehicle that reflects the intellectual norms of our discipline, I would also like it to become a context where we challenge our research trends and norms and consider the contribution of other methodological and disciplinary approaches.

In addition to this rather broad statement of what I have in mind for *CJSAE* during my editorship, I would like to talk briefly about another anticipated change. Until

now, *CJSAE* has been offered only in print form. Despite the wonderful qualities of print publications, academic journals are rapidly moving online. One of my most important steps as the new editor-in-chief has been to offer *CJSAE* in an online format. For the next year, the journal will be published both in print and online. Then, starting in the fall of 2012, *CJSAE* will be published as an online journal only.

The big advantage of moving the journal online is that it dramatically improves accessibility. To date, people can access articles in *CJSAE* only if they receive a paper copy by subscription or if they can find a copy in the library or from some other holding. Luckily, many libraries in Canada and elsewhere subscribe to our print journal. Even so, for people who do not subscribe or who do not have access to a library, getting *CJSAE* articles may be difficult. Moreover, despite the healthy distribution of the journal, it is not as accessible in international contexts as it should be. To make matters even more challenging, to date our journal has not been indexed on any major scholarly database. This means that researchers have the double difficulty of searching for relevant articles in our journal and then getting their hands on them. Moving *CJSAE* online will greatly expand our potential readership.

Authors desiring a broad audience for their work are much more inclined to seek publication in the journal if it has a large readership. Using forms on our website ([www.cjsae-rceea.ca](http://www.cjsae-rceea.ca)), authors should find it easy to submit papers for publication. Once an article is submitted, the software makes reviewing, editing, and publishing it relatively straightforward and efficient.

This is a small taste of the changes the journal will undergo in the next year or so. As tumultuous as the transition period might be, the changes should result in an improved journal that is accessed by adult education theorists and practitioners around the globe.

Once again, I would like to say how pleased I am to be editor of *CJSAE*. I deeply appreciate the willingness of Tanya Brann-Barrett, Susan Brigham, Jennifer Kelly, Elizabeth Lange, and Robert McGray to serve as associate editors. I especially appreciate the willingness of Nancy Taber to serve as the journal's book review editor. Also, I am very pleased that Erin Careless and Scott MacPhail have agreed to serve as student representatives for the journal. I hope they will play a strong hand in helping me shape the journal website in a way that enables students to develop and display their scholarship.

Altogether, I anticipate an excellent future for *CJSAE*. Whenever you can, please let others know about our journal. Get them to read some of its articles or, even better, ask them to consider submitting an article for publication in *CJSAE*. I encourage you to consider publishing with us, too. Help us continue to expand our understanding of adult education and lifelong learning. Share the findings of research you are doing. Offer us interesting commentaries or critical analyses on something of relevance to the field. Submit an account of an interesting experience you might have had as a practicing adult educator that you think others might benefit from hearing about. Contact our book review editor (Nancy Taber) with any ideas you might have for a book review.

Please, if there is anything you think I might do to improve *CJSAE* further, feel free to contact me.

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