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Brendan Derby
B. A., University of Victoria, 1993

Literacy Upgrading: Issues of Transition for Adult Males in British Columbia

Master of Education
Honours

James Cook University

March 2002

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education Honours in the Faculty of Education and Indigenous Studies,
James Cook University.

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Statement on Ethics

This research was conducted within the guidelines of “The National Health and Medical Research Council Statement on Human Experimentation and Supplementary Notes.”
The research received ethical clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (Approval Number H890).

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Abstract

This study sets out to explore the realities and dilemmas of several adult males experiencing transition from a rural setting to an urban and academic setting. Efforts to explain the origin, significance and complexities of this experience reveal much about transitions in adult education. As there is a marked absence of theoretical literature on transitions in adult education, this study integrates various theoretical conceptions. The case study approach used in this study is largely exploratory and aimed at stimulating further discussion.

This study integrates theory drawn from a diverse range of literatures such as sociology, rurality, education and culture. Discussion of these theoretical contributions in combination with data drawn from the narratives of the participants reveals that transitions in adult education are not autonomous experiences. On the contrary, transitions are tied to an integrated pattern of social, cultural, political and economic institutions, structures and processes. The participants' interactions with these institutions, structures and processes over the course of their lives reveals much about the intimate relationship between culture, power and ideology in affecting rural social and cultural conditions as well as their transitions to the urban and academic setting.

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Abstract

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This study integrates theory drawn from a diverse range of literatures such as sociology, rurality, education and culture. Discussion of these theoretical contributions in combination with data drawn from the narratives of the participants reveals that transitions in adult education are not autonomous experiences. On the contrary, transitions are tied to an integrated pattern of social, cultural, political and economic institutions, structures and processes. The participants' interactions with these institutions, structures and processes over the course of their lives reveals much about the intimate relationship between culture, power and ideology in affecting rural social and cultural conditions as well as their transitions to the urban and academic setting.

Chapter I

Introduction

<u>Nature of the Study</u>

This study will conduct exploratory research to discover the perceptions and attitudes, difficulties and obstacles, faced by adult males, displaced from the workforce, and making the transition from a rural to an urban setting in British Columbia, Canada. The study will focus on past experiences of these *literacy learners* and their experiences of making the shift to an urban culture, their perceptions of literacy needs in the urban setting and how these needs can best be met. The study will explore how their perceptions and experiences affect the transitional process.

<u>General Aim of the Study</u>

The aim of this study is to explore the realities and dilemmas of transition for a group of adult males making the shift from a rural to an urban, academic setting. This study is based on the assumption that adult literacy learners, in transition from rural to urban settings are *shifting* between cultures. Some important social and cultural issues concerning adult literacy learners making this transition can be addressed by the following questions:

1. What factors influenced the decision to undertake literacy upgrading programs?
2. Were there issues of access to literacy upgrading in the rural setting?
3. What are the issues of accessing services when moving to an urban setting?

4. How do individuals see their transition from rural to urban settings affecting their literacy practices?
5. How does life change in terms of social and cultural shifts, literacy demands, and adult learner feelings and perceptions?
6. What are the implications for literacy programs in British Columbia, Canada?

By addressing these questions we can better meet the needs of adult literacy learners, thereby ameliorating social and cultural tensions.

Subject Relevance

Previous course work in the James Cook University (JCU) Master of Education program has evolved into the focus of this study. The course entitled, "Rural Education: Myths and Realities", provided an opportunity to explore a broad range of definitional and socio-cultural issues relevant to a rural context. While many themes were apparent in the literature undertaken in course work, certain themes in particular emerged repeatedly. The themes often observed were related to issues of urban-rural transients and their emic perspectives. Many of the perspectives presented included issues of attitude and isolation. While geographic factors were often observed in feelings of marginality they were certainly not the sole factors. Non-geographic factors of isolation, or socio-cultural reasons, were actually significant factors cited for feelings of isolation (Clark, 1992; Higgins, 1994; McSwan, 1994; Squires & Sinclair, 1990). Hence, attitudinal factors of social and cultural bias most often emerged as defining factors in successfully making the transition from an urban to a rural setting. Much of the literature in rural education deals with issues of transition from the

perspective of individuals from the dominant group, usually urban-based teachers, transitioning from an urban to a rural setting. Therefore, there is an established precedent for exploring transitional issues in a cross-cultural context in the existing body of literature in rural research. However, this study will explore issues of transition from the point of view of individuals from subordinate groups making the shift from a rural to an urban and academic setting. This study will make a contribution to the existing body of rural research on social and cultural transitional issues by providing a unique focus on rural literacy issues relative to adult learner perceptions and attitudes, difficulties and obstacles within a British Columbia context.

Rationale

Recognizing the plurality of social, cultural, political and economic issues in a Canadian context is an important step to our comprehension of the best means of actualizing the potential of the rural community in all its diversity and richness. Canada is a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic nation. Within the Canadian context, we must think of education in terms of the local and regional realities. The community as well as the learner must become partners in the learning process (Freire, 1970). The co-operation and collaboration of rural communities in an educational partnership is an important means of addressing rural issues. These issues can be addressed by seeking answers to three important questions. Firstly, why is rural literacy an issue in British Columbia? Secondly, how significant is the need for literacy and upgrading programs for rural people? Thirdly, how can we better comprehend and address the literacy and upgrading needs of the rural

community? The answers will in some ways, contribute to an easier transition process from rural to urban or from urban to rural communities.

Rural literacy is becoming an increasingly important issue in British Columbia since many rural people have begun to feel the effects of a decline in primary resource-based industries and major technological changes. Major changes in cultural representation, social formation and economic development have led to displaced workers ill prepared or insufficiently literate to find new employment. These processes have a profound effect on the lives of rural people as they are often forced to migrate to urban settings in search of educational and economic opportunities. Some rural people experiencing this forced migration are not prepared for the social reality and lack the basic literacy and educational qualifications to access training programs, advanced education or available jobs. In the educational context, opportunities may also elude some rural people making the transition to urban settings given feelings of isolation owing to differing social and cultural perceptions. These factors may result in a reluctance to engage fully in the challenge of expanding their educational and technical competence.

Study Format

Following this introduction, Chapter II begins with some theoretical perspective on issues in qualitative research and design. This section discusses the benefits inherent in adopting a dialectical approach to social theories informing qualitative research and design. The section entitled "Research Design" provides a justification for framing the research in a case study

format. It incorporates a discussion of the case study approach as well as the phenomenological dimensions included in the research design. This section also discusses aspects of data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with a section that delineates the methodology used in this study beginning with the participant selection process. This section discusses in depth the interview process and data collection. It contains a sub-section titled "First Interview" and "Second Interview" that discusses the rationale for each of the interviews. Data analysis is discussed in terms of how the data from interviews and other sources were collected, qualified and analyzed.

Chapter III is a review of the literature concerning problems in defining rurality, literacy, and the transitional process. Given the rural-urban transitional context of the study and its focus on literacy issues, the chapter is framed around a discussion of important definitional issues. The literature review begins by discussing conceptual problems relating to the rural paradigm. These issues are discussed in the context of a much larger pattern of integrated social, cultural, political, and ideological processes. As well, issues for defining literacy are discussed in similar terms. The discussion of literacy is sub-sectioned "Traditional Literacy," "Functional Literacy," "Cultural Literacy," and "Critical Pedagogy." Each sub-section includes discussion of the main and competing discourses on the subject.

In Chapter IV the participants reflect on their rural experiences with literacy, their working lives, and their experiences in making the transition from a rural to an urban and academic setting. Transcribed interviews were colour coded, and their individual narratives indicate

common themes of lived experience that are organized and classified into categories that revealed patterns of related experience.

Chapter V focuses on further analysis and interpretation of the participants' narratives. This chapter explains the origin, significance and complexities of the participants' transition from a rural to an urban and academic setting. It begins by exploring the background conditions in the lived experiences of the participants' as their transition to the urban and academic settings are not free from historical ties with the past. The next section examines their transition to the urban setting and academic programs and reveals how transitions are tied to an integrated pattern of social, cultural, political and economic institutions, structures and processes. Here we see that the participants' interactions with institutions, structures and processes reveals much about the intimate relationship between culture, power and ideology. The following section reveals how institutionalized or structured inequalities give rise to resistance on the part of those who are disadvantaged by the operation of the system. It includes discussion on how this resistance is an integral component of the transitional process regarding issues of cultural identity, norms, beliefs and values.

Chapter VI presents the conclusions and findings derived from the study as well as some recommendations for further research in the area of transition as it relates to adult education. The conclusions drawn from the study are presented with specific findings and proceeds with a discussion of their implications. In conclusion, the researcher focuses on

suggestions for further research in the context of transition and adult education and the central role values play in rural education and community development.

Chapter II

Theory, Design, and Methodology

Theoretical Perspective on Current Issues in Qualitative Research and Design

Qualitative research is an evolving literature that constitutes a field in its own right. The issues are complex as Denzin and Lincoln (1994) make clear; qualitative research incorporates a wide range of social, cultural and ideological perspectives. They begin by linking the many "phases" or discourses within qualitative research (traditional, modernist, feminist, post-modernist, etc.) to dynamic historical processes wherein each generation of researchers has challenged and redefined the field. As well, they note along with Nelson (1992) that qualitative research is interdisciplinary and cuts across the humanities, the social, and physical sciences. It is sensitive to the value of multiple perspectives (race, ethnicity, gender, culture and class) as well as a multi-method approach. Denzin and Lincoln proceed by providing a good overview of the issues and challenges past and present regarding differing theoretical perspectives in qualitative research. That is, they reveal problems such as the limitations of traditional conceptions of qualitative theory regarding claims of autonomy, neutrality, and objectivity. They clarify this in illuminating issues of legitimacy in research design regarding changing perspectives on the purposes and methodologies of research, problems of researcher bias, and problems in adapting universal paradigms to the analysis of particular contexts. They end by noting that in the present historical conjuncture issues of legitimacy in qualitative research are marked by tensions that work back and forth between current sensibilities and more traditional conceptions of representing social reality. That is, they ultimately

end off where they began by alluding to the benefits inherent in adopting a dialectical approach to theoretical conceptions in constructing social representation in qualitative research.

A dialectical approach to theoretical conceptions in constructing social representations possesses several benefits. A dialectical approach reinforces the importance of *context* in the deployment of theoretical concepts and methodologies. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) emphasize the importance of context in discussing the historical evolution of qualitative theoretical concepts and methodologies and the controversies this process has engendered. They note that by the 1960's and through the 1970's research in the humanities as well as the social and physical sciences became much more political and concerned with questions of ideology and social power. In the process researchers began to focus on issues of equity regarding race, ethnicity and gender as well as social class. The development of new theoretical conceptualizations and methodologies reflected these concerns. However, the authors allude to the idea that problems of representation and legitimacy surfaced as researchers, often despite the best of intentions, were sometimes ethnocentric in their perspectives and too one-sided in their explanations.

Denzin and Lincoln note that Geertz (1973) argued from a more pluralistic perspective. Clearly, Geertz's works marked a departure from prevailing functionalist and macro-theoretical approaches to a more relational, micro-theoretical approach by making an important analytical distinction between cultural representation and social representation. The central task was to ground qualitative theory in the lived realities of local situations.

This new perspective focused on describing the dialectic between cultural representation at a micro or local level, and its relationship to social representation at the macro level.

The advantages of adopting Geertz's (1983) dialectical approach in the *context* of rural-urban transitions in adult education cannot be under-estimated. This approach makes for *thick description*, because it allows the researcher to explore the relationship that exists between power, culture and ideology in specific situations and social contexts. In doing so, the researcher is able to describe how representations of power, culture, and ideology at the local level are related to and representative of the organization and structuring of society in a much broader context. Such an approach also leads in the direction of an activist, action-oriented approach for addressing the needs of the participants and their communities.

Nonetheless, issues of representation and legitimacy in qualitative research have remained problematic. Theorists now debate how anyone in a pluralistic, multi-cultural context can legitimately represent and interpret the voice of the "other." So intense is the debate that some theorists have actually advocated scrapping existing theories, values and perspectives (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 7). It is apparent that this ironic stance derives from assuming a dichotomous approach to social theories as well as a lack of historical perspective and sense of purpose.

Firstly, existing qualitative theories are not dichotomous intellectual systems. They provide not only a theoretical foundation but a conceptual framework for the construction

of new knowledge and meanings as well. In assuming a dichotomous approach to multiple theoretical frameworks, values and perspectives, the researcher eclipses the potential inherent in employing a more integrative approach. When used in complimentary ways, existing theoretical concepts can lead in the direction of a more comprehensive theory that is sensitive to the interpretation of multiple perspectives and meanings.

Secondly, it is apparent that some post-modernist theorists lack a sense of historical perspective and purpose. They find themselves in an ironic stance wherein they experience profound protagonist sentiments on the one hand and a debilitating sense of isolation, alienation, and cynicism on the other. This may lead to a state of inertia because the researcher lacks a sense of direction or purpose, which ultimately hinders the construction of new knowledge and meanings that make social change possible. This thinking, I would argue, parallels the political shifts that have occurred since the 1970's wherein it seems there has been a profound shift from collective interests to a focus on individualistic interests. This focus on the empowerment of individuals as opposed to the empowerment of people through institutions that provide for collective interests, may disengage people from their social and political life. What post-modernist thought does provide for, however, is respect for approaching research from multiple perspectives.

It is interesting to note that Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 9) refer to the "golden age" of qualitative research that flourished throughout much of the 1960's and 1970's. Clearly, researchers and theorists of the day were inspired and infused with a sense of historical

purpose by the collective energy that characterized the counter-cultural movements of the period. However, as Martinez (1999) has noted, we now find ourselves in a period wherein "the utopian energy – the social force that looks to the future and constructs history" (p. 1) seems sadly lacking. Researchers need to appreciate the fact that social conditions are the product of dynamic historical processes that give shape not only to the past but the present and future as well. Researchers require a sense of historical perspective and purposefulness for any meaningful interpretation and comprehensive construction of social and cultural subjectivity. A sense of historical perspective and purpose is especially imperative in the current historical conjuncture wherein individuals and communities are so very vulnerable before the accelerating processes of social, cultural, political and economic globalization.

In summary, as Schermerhorn (1970) and Mallea (1989) point out, the adoption of a dialectical approach to theoretical conceptions in constructing social representation possesses several advantages. Firstly, it allows the researcher to remain grounded in the concrete realities of social situations, and it emphasizes the ever-changing nature and complexities of lived experience. Secondly, it serves as an important corrective to biased explanations inherent in adopting too narrow a perspective. For example, a dialectical approach to theoretical concepts does not favour a particular set of values or ideological perspectives; dialectical analysis is a method of empirical inquiry that can expose the dualities that may exist in our assumptions and explanations. More specifically, such an approach may confirm or disconfirm a particular ideological assumption or conclusion. Thirdly, a dialectical approach does not assume a dichotomous approach to theoretical

conceptions in the humanities and social sciences; it underscores the importance of employing multiple theoretical concepts, values, and perspectives in qualitative research. Clearly, different theoretical conceptions and perspectives will have greater or lesser significance at different points of analysis and interpretation in a given research project. Therefore, the researcher need not assume an either/or choice is required for the purposes of analysis and interpretation or for building theory.

Research Design

This research is designed to accommodate the purposes of this study, as it integrates multiple theories, perspectives and methodologies, but is framed as a set of related case studies. The case study approach was chosen, because it best fit the context of the study and the questions that were posed. The nature and context of this study required a significant degree of flexibility regarding methodology; therefore, aspects of phenomenology are also incorporated into the processes of data collection and analysis. The research is designed as a set of four related case studies. Participants in this study are adult males involved in one-to-one tutoring at Literacy Nanaimo in the city centre. Despite the fact that informants are currently urban based, all are drawn from rural areas of British Columbia. Literacy Nanaimo is a non-profit community organization that utilizes volunteer tutors from the community to meet the literacy needs of adult learners. Literacy Nanaimo works in partnership with Malaspina University-College to meet the literacy needs of the community as well as the literacy needs of students involved in adult basic education and literacy programs at the University-College. The volunteer tutor

program provides learning opportunities, including initial and on-going support, for adult learners' participating in, or attempting to access formal adult education programs.

Case study.

Case study is a type of qualitative research in which the researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon (case) bounded by time and activity (social/cultural group). That is, case study involves the study of a single case, a bounded system of some sort. Understanding of a single case is framed from interest in what is common and particular about the case (Merriam, 1988). The purpose of this study is to examine and describe the perceptions and experiences of a group of men involved in adult literacy and upgrading programs. They have been displaced from the workforce, and have emigrated from a rural to an urban setting mainly to upgrade their literacy skills in the hope of improving their chances for future employability. A case study approach is particularly well suited to the context and purposes of this study.

The case study approach possesses particular advantages in the context of this project, because it is so flexible and adaptable. This makes possible a detailed description of the processes inherent in transition from a rural to an urban and academic setting. It allows the researcher to incorporate anthropological notions of *thick description* wherein interpretation of the data focuses on aspects such as cultural norms, community values and deep-seated attitudes (Merriam, 1988, p. 11). This approach also makes for thick description because it enables the researcher to explore the dialectic between the macro

and the micro, the universal and the particular, as discussed in the preceding section of this chapter.

The incorporation of a case study approach in this research project also addressed some pragmatic concerns in this regard. This approach does not require large numbers of participants in order to establish the connection between specific instances and general theoretical statements regarding social structure and process (Merriam, 1988, p. 11). The case study approach is also very flexible regarding methodologies for the gathering of data. Merriam (1988) notes, "case study does not claim any particular methods of data collection...Any and all methods of gathering data from testing to interviewing can be used in a case study " (Merriam, p. 10). Given the context of this study, it was not always possible to observe the participants in certain situations. For example, it was not possible to observe the participants in their rural cultures and settings. Therefore, for pragmatic reasons, I relied primarily on interviewing as a means of data collection.

In designing the interview questions for the project, I have sought to include as many variables as possible and to portray their interaction across time and space. Hence, the interview questions seek to uncover significant background data regarding the life experiences of the participants. Interview questions are both general and particularistic and are designed to solicit information about educational background, work experience as well as their experience of transition from a rural to an urban and academic setting. In incorporating a longitudinal approach in the design of the study, I have sought a holistic view of the situation.

The benefits of such an approach reside in the heuristic quality this lends to a study. For example, I wanted to inquire about factors in the backgrounds of the participants that led to them to make the transition from a rural to an urban and academic setting. This, in turn, allowed for the exploration of issues and concerns related to the processes informing the transitional experience they are currently experiencing. A case study approach allows for detailed descriptions of a phenomenon, and this approach possesses flexibility in the development of possible explanations that incorporate other theoretical approaches. This was an important consideration in the design of the study given my desire to understand the social, cultural, and psychological complexities inherent in the processes of transition.

Phenomenological dimensions.

The data collection process for this study involves both semi-structured and informal conversational interviews. To the extent that this study uses interviews to examine the feelings, perceptions, and attitudes of individuals, aspects of a phenomenological approach are incorporated into the case study framework. This process allows the researcher to present, analyze and interpret descriptions and experiences based on the perceptions of the participants. That is, this approach allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how external social interactions are internalized by the participants. Therefore, a phenomenological approach is incorporated into the design of the study in order to better understand and present the participants' perceptions and views of social reality.

Aspects of hermeneutic phenomenology are incorporated into the study, because this is a form of qualitative enquiry in the human sciences that is concerned with people's perceptions and experiences. What, for example, has the experience of rural-urban transition been like for the participants? How have their past experiences shaped and molded the experience? How has this affected their attitudes and behaviours in the urban and academic setting? It has been noted by Van Manen (1990) that phenomenology as a form of enquiry is not generally prescriptive, but it does have a critical orientation. However, hermeneutic phenomenology as human science is critically oriented action research. Since the stated objectives of this study are to explore ways to better understand and meet the needs of individuals in transition to adult education programs, I feel that some aspects of the hermeneutic approach are an important consideration in this study. I suspect, for example, that the participants' experiences with political and economic institutions, their structures and processes, are relevant issues that need to be addressed through an action-oriented research approach.

Data collection.

The data collection process for this study involves both semi-structured and conversational interviews, as well as the collection of data for comparative purposes with related literature in the field. These data collection activities are typical of the case study approach. The case study approach encompasses these data collection activities in ways important to this study. Firstly, the interview process, both semi-structured and conversational, allows the researcher to understand the phenomenon from the participants' (emic) perspective based on their experiences. Secondly, because the data

collection process for this study involves a second interview, the process allows the researcher to simultaneously analyze and cross-check the data from the first interview in order to ascertain relevant directions for exploration in the next. Merriman (1998) argues that analysis is essential during the data collection process in qualitative case study design because "without ongoing analysis, one runs the risk of ending up with data that are unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating." This is important, because analyzing the data while still in the collection phase can be used to determine subsequent data collection from other sources.

Data analysis.

Interpretive analysis has an important function within a case study approach. Interpretive analysis refers to examining the data for constructs, themes, and patterns that can used to simultaneously describe and explain the phenomenon that is being studied (Gall et al., 1996). More significantly, this search can include illuminating common themes and patterns across participant experiences much like the phenomenological approach. Because the process of rural-urban transition is event oriented and requires comparison with social theories, this study incorporates multiple approaches at different points of analysis and interpretation.

Methodology

This study is an exploratory enquiry examining how individuals' experience their transition from a rural to an urban and academic setting. The methodological approach

consisted of identifying a clearly delineated set of case studies. The study incorporates qualitative research methods that focus on issues of transition in terms of social and cultural shifts, literacy and upgrading needs as well as adult learner feelings and perspectives.

This study identified a clearly delineated group of individuals experiencing transition from a rural setting to an urban and academic setting. The study focuses on only four individuals. The study did not propose to contact a wider group of adult literacy learners and compare them with the identified group, because this would have widened the study to unmanageable proportions. The study focus was narrowed yet further. It was decided that the study participants would consist only of adult males, displaced from the workforce, and involved in adult literacy and upgrading programs in Nanaimo. The coordinator of Literacy Nanaimo and I identified a list of potential candidates involved in transition from a rural to an urban setting. All identified candidates are adult males involved in the tutor help program. In total, five potential candidates were identified. Of the five candidates, four agreed to participate in the study. The other potential candidate did not respond to attempts at contacting him.

I contacted each of the participants to set up individual appointments for the initial interview. I met each of the participants separately at a mutually agreed upon location. Most agreed to meet at the main campus of Malaspina University-College, because they were attending classes on site and this was usually the most convenient location for the participants.

Participant selection.

The four adult males involved in the literacy help program at Literacy Nanaimo were interviewed individually. All participants migrated from a rural to urban and academic setting. The participants range in age from 18 to 41 years, and all were non-high school graduates. The participants all currently define themselves as single males. Their profiles can be found in Appendix A.

The participants represented a diverse range of employment and life experiences. All had lived and worked in rural and remote regions of British Columbia, and all had been employed in the primary resource sector. Two were formerly employed in the forest industry in British Columbia. One was formerly involved with the West Coast fishery in British Columbia, but was also employed in other aspects of the primary resource sector in rural and remote coastal areas of Vancouver Island. One of the participants is an Aboriginal originally from a remote community in Northern Manitoba. He was formerly employed as a carpenter.

All of the participants are involved in the tutor help program according to their specific literacy needs. The participants represented a broad range of literacy skill levels. One was a non-reader involved in literacy programs, another had specific writing problems, and two were studying in advanced level adult basic education courses.

Interview process and data collection.

The first interview was designed to address some of the major research questions. What were the participants' experiences of literacy and upgrading programs in the rural setting, as perceived by the adults identified as making the transition from a rural to an urban setting? What were their perceptions of literacy and upgrading programs in the urban setting? What were their experiences in making the shift? The latter question included providing reasons for their transition as well as perceived problems and benefits.

The first interview was semi-structured and consisted of eleven principal questions with supplementary sub-questions for each of the principal questions. The initial interview ranged from half an hour to approximately one hour and a half. The length of the interview varied for several reasons. The length of the interview largely depended on how comfortable the respondent felt, and the amount of information he was interested in sharing. As the participants shared some intimate details of their past and present lives, including their educational experiences, pseudonyms were used to protect their identities.

The interview began by inquiring into the participant's educational and training background. The first question inquired into their early educational experiences and focused on where they had gone to school. For example, the researcher was interested in whether individuals had moved much in their formative years. Interviewees were also asked about their levels of grade completion. The researcher was also interested in whether or not additional education or training had been attempted in the past.

The interview also focused on more recent events concerning job and related skill levels in the rural setting. These questions were related to researcher interest in establishing whether or not *economic*, *cultural* or *social* change were factors in their decision to migrate to an urban setting. These questions were asked in order to ascertain any common themes and patterns that fundamentally characterize the rural experience and the impact migration to an urban and academic setting has on literacy issues for these adults. The researcher is interested in when and how adult rural immigrants decided to start upgrading or to seek literacy help. The interview also attempted to establish whether access to upgrading or literacy programs was available in the rural setting. Finally, the researcher asked participants to describe their experiences in making the shift from a rural to an urban and academic setting. The first interview questions can be found in <u>Appendix B</u>.

The interview questions were used in interviewing each of the participants. In this way, all questions were covered in each of the initial interviews. However, as each participant related his past experiences, it was sometimes necessary to ask supplementary questions to clarify experiences or to encourage further discussion. In any case, participants covered the questions in the course of sharing their experiences.

Each of the first interviews was audio taped and fully transcribed. The transcriptions of each interview were literal and included laughter, pauses, etc., because this seemed important for capturing more fully the tone (the mood) of the interview. At the end of the transcription process, and after the gathering together of brief "listening" notes, the data

from the first interview was analyzed. The analysis of the data, at this stage, focused on identification and categorization of some of the primary patterns in the data collected. The analysis process focused primarily on data that would be useful in maintaining the focus and direction of the second interview. This involved identifying frequently used words and phrases that clustered around specific kinds of experiences. For example, some of the words and phrases related specifically to experiences in childhood or to rural experiences. Issues that required further clarification were also identified. The data analysis process is discussed in the following section sub-titled “Data Analysis”.

The second interview followed up on some of the themes and patterns that emerged in the first interview. In the second interview, questions were more open-ended than those used in the first interview. As a result, this interview was more conversational. The interview used guiding questions to solicit a more informal and friendly discussion. Nonetheless, direct questions from the guide sheet tended to be used in most interviews. Sometimes, however, the participant covered specific questions in the course of relating his story, so the researcher moved to the next question.

The second interview began with some general discussion and a review of the transcripts from the first interview. At this stage, issues that required further clarification were raised. The interview started by asking how individuals were *coping* in their daily lives. The researcher was interested in learning, in general, whether or not participants’ felt they were coping adequately. What courses were they studying? What happened on a typical day? The intent was, in part, to establish whether or not the shift from a rural to

an urban setting was a factor in coping in the academic setting. The second question focused more specifically on life changes in terms of literacy demands. This question included a sub-set of prompts to draw out individuals' self-perceptions concerning literacy practices and the urban experience. The intent was to encourage participants to talk freely about what the transitional experience has been for them. Did they view the experience as positive or negative? Did they feel their views had changed since leaving a rural community? The next three questions examined what they felt were the most important changes they perceived in themselves as result of their experience. That is, these questions encouraged participants to recognize and to talk about important life changes, self-confidence, goals, feelings of loss, and so on. It was then possible to proceed within this framework and with a list of illustrative quotes to select the most powerful quotes for relevant sections of the findings.

Finally, the researcher was interested in inquiring about participants' feelings concerning the long-term meaning of their experience. Where would they like to see themselves in the future in terms of their interests or jobs? The second interview questions are located in <u>Appendix C</u>.

Each of the second interviews was audio taped and transcribed. Once again, at the end of the transcription process and after the gathering together of brief "listening" notes, the data from interviews was analyzed. Transcripts of interview data were provided to informants as a means of checking and cross-checking accuracy and as a means of ensuring that their perspectives were accurately reflected.

Secondary data were also gathered from recent literature on rurality and literacy in British Columbia, Canada and abroad. This was done for two reasons. First, it provided a framework for the study as well as some theoretical guidelines. Second, the literature also provided materials for comparative analysis. The data collection process in this phase is related to one of the major questions: How do these adult learners' perceptions interface with current data on rural and urban transitions in adult education, especially in British Columbia?

Data analysis.

Qualitative data from the interviews was analyzed for the purpose of establishing common themes and patterns. The approach used in analyzing the interview data was based on the assumption that there would be a pattern of experiences that would be recognizable. It was also assumed that the data would lend itself to categorization through the active interaction between the researcher and the informants. It was also assumed that given the issue of rural-urban transition, and given the orientation of some of the questions posed, some common experiences, attitudes and behavioural patterns would emerge. For example, in reading the first interview transcripts, words and phrases relating to past literacy experience were bracketed and categorized. Words and phrases related to rural schooling or rural work experience were also bracketed and categorized. Words or phrases relating to experiences of coping in various contexts were also bracketed and categorized, as they reflected the psychological aspects of the lived experiences of the participants.

The bracketed categories were then synthesized into lists. The list had six major categories linked to life changes in terms of psychological, economic, social, cultural, educational, and community issues. It was then possible to proceed within this framework and with a list of illustrative quotes to select the most meaningful quotes for relevant sections of the findings. This in turn led to the deeper meaning or the essences of the phenomenon. The findings based on this set of case studies could then be compared with the literature on rural and urban literacies in British Columbia

Communicating findings.

Given the multiple approach used in the design of this study, it is important to note how the context was described and how the participant's perspectives were conveyed. This study is framed as case study approach, is grounded in a critically oriented hermeneutic phenomenology, and has some significant ethnographic dimensions. The researcher believes in the primacy of allowing participants to present their case experiences in their own words. Hence, the communicating of findings will focus primarily on using key quotes that illustrate the themes, patterns and essences of their individual and collective experiences. Given the critical orientation of this approach their experiences are communicated in the form of a thematic narrative that describes their experiences. To the extent that this study is a set of related case studies aspects of interpretive analysis will be used in the communicating of the research findings. This study will make use of social theory to build theory about transitions in adult education and to enrich communication of the findings.

Chapter III

Literature Review

A review of literature is essential for determining the parameters of this study. The aim of this chapter is to examine existing literature on issues of rurality, literacy, and transition in connection to a number of theoretical concepts. This chapter highlights some aspects of social and cultural theory that provide a theoretical context in which to locate the participants experiences of *transition* from rural settings to an urban and academic setting.

The problem with analyzing issues of rurality and education in general is that the relevant theoretical literature frequently suffers from several conceptual limitations. Paramount among these is the fact that very little comprehensive theory of rurality or transitions to formalized adult education programs in North America exists. Another conceptual limitation exists concerning prevailing social, cultural and ideological perspectives and the assumptions that inform them. Ideological and cultural perspectives regarding the nature of rural social relations and the role of educational institutions, along with the assumptions that inform them, sometimes go unquestioned. Therefore, prevailing philosophical, ideological and cultural perspectives informing social theory require critical analysis and assessment. A third limitation is that researchers sometimes ignore the fact that rural social institutions and their structures form part of a much broader, integrated pattern of social, cultural, political and economic institutions, structures, and

processes. Conceptual limitations such as these sometimes severely restrict our ability to assess and respond to issues in rural education and community development.

Conceptual Issues and the Rural Paradigm

If we are to understand the nature of rural social relations, or importantly the nature and role of educational institutions, then we need to examine the basis upon which the social order resides. Mallea (1989) drawing on the work of Schermerhorn (1970) notes that the two major theoretical perspectives have historically been advanced in studies of social relations – structural-functionalist (consensus) theory and conflict or class theory. As its name implies, consensus theory stresses that social *stability* and *cohesion* are best achieved through a sharing of common values (1989, p. 9). This theory posits that social order, stability, and cohesion can only be established and maintained through the mechanism of formalized social institutions and their structures. Conflict or class theory, on the other hand, posits that contest and struggle, not consensus, are the primary conditions in the establishment and reproduction of the dominant social order (p. 9). Recent debate suggests these theories in their traditional guise have limited explanatory value in the critical examination of complex, contemporary societies. Therefore, as some theorists have pointed out (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Mallea, 1989; Schermerhorn, 1970) uncritically adopting these theories and viewing them in dichotomous as opposed to integrative ways frequently leads to serious conceptual problems. This sometimes results in some curious forms of reductionism as well as problems in resolving the dialectic between the macro and the micro, the general and the specific, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

For example, conceptualizing *rurality* as a cohesive social entity embodying a common set of values opposite those of *urban* values is problematic. Rurality, especially in advanced capitalist nations such as Canada, Australia, and the United States, constitutes a plurality of social groupings. Conceptualizations of rurality must take into account the existence of rural social hierarchies and the corresponding differences in wealth, power, and prestige possessed by different social groups. Rural socio-economic structures are not homogeneous. There are significant differences within and between rural settings, especially politically and economically. Tensions exist and many individuals and groups increasingly resist pressures both *internal* and *external* to the rural setting that alienate them on the basis of ethnicity, gender, culture, and class. For example, not all ethno-cultural groups such as aboriginal groups are accorded equal recognition or status, and, for many, the *status quo* is simply no longer acceptable.

Contemporary rurality in many Western nations is characterized by the existence of a plurality of social groupings that do not share common cultural norms or ideological traditions; that is, rurality constitutes a complex of contradictory cultures and ideologies. It is a gross over-simplification to conceptualize rural social conditions and problems in the context of traditional rural-urban dichotomies (Kapferer, 1990). Conceptualizing rurality as a cohesive social entity embodying universal core values opposite those in urban settings leads in a direction of *binary-polarities* that possess extremely limited explanatory value. Conceptualizations such as this ultimately confuse social myth for reality and overlook the structures that shape social relations and conditions in

contemporary society *regardless* of setting (Bessant, 1978). Rurality must be conceptualized more realistically in relation to a much broader and more complex pattern of social, cultural, political and economic relations.

Conceptualizations of rurality that ignore this larger and more complex pattern of relations are frequently too limited and particularistic. Those interested in particular regions may be more impressed by their distinctive character and circumstances than by the social, cultural, political or economic features they share in common with other settings. For example, Halfacre (1993) provides a cogent comparison in this context in noting the features the working class culture of East London possess in common with the non-dominant groups in rural cultures. Clearly, while micro-sociological research must be undertaken in terms of lived experience in concrete settings, the social, cultural, political and economic conditions in contemporary rurality cannot be arbitrarily and unrealistically isolated from a larger pattern of influences. The social conditions in contemporary rurality need to be located within a much broader historical pattern of dynamic social and cultural relations, especially with reference to a system of interconnected social, cultural, political and economic institutions, structures and processes.

This historical pattern is extremely important because these interconnected institutional and structural formations have a pervasive influence in shaping rural social conditions. Social conditions in stratified societies such as those in Canada, Australia and the United States are characterized by institutionalized inequalities (Griffith, 1992, pp. 51-65;

Haviland, 2000, pp. 634-35). Recognition must be accorded the fact that rural social conditions are part of a larger pattern of institutionalized political and economic relations that are historically, culturally and ideologically located. Contemporary society is characterized by a system of institutionalized social, cultural, political and economic hierarchies. The status of particular social or cultural groups, their access to social privileges, rewards and basic resources, is in large measure determined by the degree of institutional support accorded them (Haviland, 2000, pp. 634-635). Social and cultural institutions and structures reflect the differing degrees of *power* and *authority* possessed by dominant and subordinate groups in promoting and legitimizing their needs.

The document entitled "The Task Force on Priority Country Area Program Boundaries" (1994) in Australia is an example of the processes involved for defining the political and economic terms through which institutional support is provided. The evidence in this document suggests that the way in which rural social problems and conditions in Australia are identified, understood, and defined can conveniently disguise a policy founded on promoting and maintaining the interests of the dominant political and economic elite. Evidence from Canadian sources suggests that this underlying policy prevails even when decision-makers do not attempt to define the terms through which institutional support is provided (Storey, 1992). In such cases, the lack of defining terms and conditions can justify inaction at the policy level thereby maintaining the *status quo*.

This is an important recognition if we are to understand the processes currently shaping rural social conditions. We need to recognize that the crisis in rurality is a result of

dynamic, *historical* processes that have isolated rural communities from the centres of hegemonic power and placed them in subordinate positions of dependency. That is, as the previous discussion indicates, rural schools and communities have become vulnerable to social, cultural, political and economic decision-making processes over which they not only have no control, but are, in fact, actual victims.

This is true in general of the rural experience in Western nations to the extent that rural people have lost the ability to make choices and are subjected to the choices of others (Freire, 1974). It is true to the extent that their decisions are no longer theirs because they result from external prescriptions (p. 4); they are no longer integrated, but are isolated and disenfranchised from social, cultural, political and economic policy decisions. Consequently, they are adapted to the ideological agenda of the dominant culture (Freire, 1974; Giroux, 1988; Luke and Gilbert, 1993).

Giroux (1988) notes that cultural hegemony is neither fixed nor unchanging. Dominant groups need continually to renew their hegemony, authority, and control. This has created tensions as rural people struggle to overcome social, political and economic policies that force them to accommodate, or adapt, while struggling against constraints that threaten their social, cultural and economic survival. Rural society is not a static entity (Freire, 1974, pp. 4-5). On the contrary, rural societies constitute a diversity of social and cultural groupings possessing unique and dynamic social, cultural and ideological traditions. Therefore, the nature of the rural struggle is characterized by social aspirations, concerns, and values; that is, as noted by Freire (1970), Giroux (1988),

Higgins (1994) and others, by generalized attitudes. These aspirations, concerns and values, as well as the obstacles to their realization constitute the themes related to rural social and cultural tensions.

In recent years, social, cultural and ideological tensions have been exacerbated as decision-making processes affecting rural and urban communities alike have taken place not at a regional or even a national level but at the global level. In short, national and local politics is increasingly constrained by the culture of global capitalism.

More recently, this process has given rise to a sense of urgency regarding issues of culture, power and ideology. That is, the accelerating processes of g*lobalization* have given rise to concerns regarding the homogenizing effects of mass culture, coercive political and corporate power, and the imposition of a dominant and controlling value system that frequently overrides regional as well as national social, cultural, political and economic policies. These issues are particularly acute for people residing in rural and remote regions of British Columbia, as this is where social, cultural, and economic shifts are currently having the greatest impact on the people of the Province. For the purposes of this study, *rurality* is *defined* as *a political struggle for the preservation, maintenance and enhancement of alternative cultures, ideologies and social forms.* This definition involves taking account of the central role the education system and related structures and processes play in producing, reproducing and legitimizing the norms and values of the dominant culture. The central role of the education system and related structures and processes in this regard becomes very obvious when examining historical processes for defining literacy pedagogy, policy and practice.

Literacy

The purpose of the following discussion of historical definitions of literacy is to reveal the social and cultural dimensions of literacy as it relates to issues of social and cultural transitions in adult education. While the following has obvious implications for literacy pedagogy and practice, this discussion of literacy definitions does not focus on these aspects.

Existing research in adult literacy reveals an interesting historical progression for defining literacy. Over time, theoretical discussions of literacy have moved back and forth between a conservative focus on reading and the acquisition of technical skills to the work of critical theorists in what is known as the new sociology of education. The theories of the latter contribute to a *critical-pedagogical model* of literacy defined by purposeful economic, social, cultural, and political action. However, this position is not universally supported, and other educational theorists have argued that the promotion of differing sectional values is a source of instability not only within the education system but in a broader social context as well. In contrast to those who espouse a reform approach to literacy pedagogy, policy, and practice is the conservative approach typified by the works of Hirsch (1987), Bloom (1987), and D'Souza (1992) who define literacy in more traditional terms. They argue that affirmative social and cultural action has undermined literacy and educational standards. Clearly, accepted definitions of literacy are not static. Given this fluidity, defining literacy is an increasingly complex and difficult task. The purpose of this section is to review briefly the literature, especially the

various sociological approaches used in defining literacy, to arrive at an operational definition of literacy.

The notion that literacy is the ability to read and to write using prescribed methods of syllabication, phonics, and main idea identification looms large within traditional Western mainstream education. That is, literacy is viewed as the successful mastery of a general set of competencies and core-skills. The *mantra* of the traditionalist approach suggests that literacy is a set of technical skills that enhance learners' capacities both through learning and practice. However, if statistics are relevant, then traditional approaches to education have not always succeeded. In fact, those learners who prosper are those with the ability to compete successfully within a framework of abstract, theoretical measures at an arbitrary level. Those able to operate effectively within the *bound* system of mainstream education are deemed successful while those who fail to operate to a minimum standard within the educational mainstream are considered deficient. To define literacy in these simplistic terms reflects attitudes firmly rooted in our Western educational paradigm. For example, the UNESCO (1951) definition states: "A person is literate who can with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on his everyday life" (B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, 1987, p. 1). By way of further illustration, the U.S. Bureau of the Census still defines illiteracy as the inability to read and write a simple message in English or any other language (p. 1). Clearly, the notion that literacy is defined by the ability to read and write to a minimum standard is still commonplace.

Many educators still assume that a minimum level of school completion means that an individual has attained a minimum standard of competency and is definably literate. However, using minimum school completion as a criterion for defining literacy is fraught with problems. In the Canadian context, many studies suggest the need for literacy programs is significant and cite rather startling statistics from a variety of sources. For example, a recent study indicates that two of every five adult British Columbians lack a high school education and of these nearly one third have less than a Grade 9 level of completion (Thomas, 1990). While the need for adult upgrading is considered significant, it is estimated that only one to six percent enroll in Adult Basic Education (ABE) or literacy programs (Calamai, 1989; Hautecoeur, 1989; Thomas, 1990). What do these statistics really suggest? Does minimum school completion accurately reflect literacy proficiency levels? Generally, it is clear that the number of years a person spends in school does not determine literacy proficiency levels. Some literacy advocates believe that many people with a limited formal education are literate, while many people with high school and even postsecondary education have problems with everyday reading and writing (National Anti-Poverty Association, 1992). Clearly, many individuals with little or no formal schooling will learn and practice reading skills and become accomplished readers and writers, while still others who spend twelve years, or more, in school may emerge with only limited reading skills (B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, 1987).

Defining literacy solely in terms of minimum standards measured by school completion simply does not accurately reflect literacy proficiency levels. Thomas (1990) tried, with

minimal success, to account for factors of what she refers to as learner non-participation and drop-out rates in adult literacy and upgrading programs in British Columbia. That is, she attempted to account for low retention rates and levels of achievement. Nonetheless, her study is important, because it raises important questions about what kinds of knowledge literacy and upgrading programs, both formal and informal, embrace. If we wish to increase participation in literacy and upgrading programs, especially in British Columbia, perhaps we need to extend our definition of literacy in ways that recognize and value different ways of actualizing the potential of learners. Literacy programs, both formal and informal, need to take into consideration that literacy, in all its complexities, is inextricably linked to communities and the knowledge that they value; that is, literacy must be understood in terms of cultural norms and values.

Many sources in the literature on literacy practices point out that standardized measures of literacy skills have been questioned with the verification of cultural and social biases (B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, 1987). Definitions of literacy that use abstract, theoretical measures to label individuals as literate or illiterate raise not only important definitional questions, but significant social and cultural concerns as well. These definitional concerns evolve into important ideological dimensions concerning the purposes and goals of literacy pedagogy, philosophy, policy, and practice.

Traditional literacy.

Traditional literacy is typically defined as the ability to master the technical skills of reading and writing and to perform basic numerical computations. Given this definition,

individuals mastering these skills are labeled *literate* while those lacking in these skills are considered by degrees either *semi-literate* or *illiterate*. This conception of literacy tends to view literacy as the mastery of a set of common skills. Most people in British Columbia would agree, for pragmatic reasons, that many common everyday tasks require minimal reading, writing, and other communication skills to function effectively in society. One problem with this definition is that language is not contextual to social and cultural norms and values, and learning is not tied to functioning in situational contexts. Some theorists suggest that educators who subscribe to this *autonomous* view of literacy assume that individuals acquire and practice language in a social and cultural vacuum. Reading and writing viewed as neutral skills also suggests that defining literacy in these simplistic terms is somehow ideologically neutral. Clearly, proponents of this approach attempt to legitimize their definition of literacy by investing it with qualities of objectivity, neutrality, and even universality.

The idea that literacy is merely the acquisition of a neutral system of language symbols that express thought and that reflect an objective reality is simplistic and naive. Transactional theorists have long argued that language as a symbol system is far from being neutral in the process of perceiving or in the process of evaluating perceptions. They argue that the process of knowing is inseparable from language and that language, which encompasses all forms of symbolic codification, is the mediator of human perception. It is clear that literacy is language as process, and it is fully implicated in any and all attempts to assess reality. That is, humans do not get meaning from things, we ascribe meaning to them, and the meanings we assign are neither objective nor neutral,

but are socially, culturally, and ideologically located. The meaning that is assigned is a function of the socio-cultural system of symbols incorporating norms, values, and beliefs through which individuals and groups in a given time and space order and relate their subjective understanding of the world.

Yet. it is also clear that it is clear that such assumptions concerning legitimacy cannot be taken for granted. For example, the labeling of individuals as *literate*, *semi-literate*, or *illiterate* not only reproduces the hierarchical ordering of society resulting in conditions of inequality, it also performs an important ideological function. The practice of labeling shows how narrowly conceived notions of social and cultural ultimately result in blaming the victim, rather than blaming the system that generates conditions of failure (Mallea, 1989). Classing people as literate, semi-literate and illiterate positions individuals and groups in a state of powerlessness; that is, they are made to believe that they are deficient. Therefore, they are less inclined to question or challenge systemic problems that result in social inequalities. Wickert notes, “All constructions of literacy serve a gatekeeping function and those constructions shift to maintain that function” (1989, p. 37).

Fingeret (1997) argues that viewing literacy as skills, or literacy as tasks, separates adults from their innate knowledge of the social world, and in doing so defines literacy as a process of getting meaning from texts rather than constructing meaning through the integration of texts and the social world. Clearly, this denies the individual the ability to negotiate meaning, thereby mitigating against their *emic* perspectives. Fingeret further argues that this conceptualization falls short because it fails to address literacy in

situational contexts (specific times, places, and persons) and this approach fails to understand interdependence as the underlying nature of social life (p. 62).

These arguments are very compelling when applied to the rural-urban transitional context. The literature on issues in rural education provides many examples of the predicaments of teachers, theorists, politicians, and others applying social and cultural norms inappropriately across situations. Defining literacy simply as reading, writing, and the mastering of skills has important implications for people, especially literacy learners, making the transition from rural to urban and academic settings. The assumption that a particular set of technical skills can adequately equip people experiencing social and cultural dislocation, experiencing loss of independence, and experiencing feelings of isolation in new environments and situations, needs to be questioned. Can procurement of the technical skills of reading and writing, without consideration of the social and cultural contexts that gives meaning to words, adequately prepare people for the reality of functioning in differing social and cultural environments? How does this definition of literacy, or the teaching of these skills, encompass an awareness of the conflicts faced by people transitioning between differing social and cultural environments? The answers to these questions within this study will in some ways contribute to our understanding of transitional issues.

Functional literacy.

Most educational theorists agree that defining literacy merely as reading or writing and the mastering of these skills is insufficient. This is so because literacy is something we

acquire and practice in many different social and cultural settings and situations. Consequently, this gave rise to the definitional distinction between traditional conceptions of literacy and what has been termed the functional literacy model.

The functional model defines literacy in somewhat broader terms. Those who subscribe to the functionalist definition tend to characterize literacy in social and relativistic terms; that is, functional literacy is viewed as an adaptive social strategy. At the policy level, functional literacy is often defined as ensuring that individuals can read and write sufficiently to participate effectively in the political process and in the economic system. At the practical level, functional literacy is viewed as a set of skills that vary according to the needs and circumstances of the individual. Therefore, functional literacy also stresses its pragmatic value for functioning in particular contexts. However, as a concept, functional literacy has proven to be controversial.

Implicit in this definition, as defined at the policy level, are the assumptions that literacy education can liberate individuals by reducing poverty, and importantly, that literacy can ensure political freedom by enhancing participation in the political and economic process. Research, however, has demonstrated that literacy can do neither. The assumption that literacy acquisition is a panacea for social ills has come under attack. Wickert (1989)has argued, “The elevation of literacy as a panacea for adults lacking basic skills is an ideologically constructed myth and largely serves to displace critical analysis of class, race, gender and power, particularly of the social function of the possession of schooled literacy as a means of access” (p. 37). Giroux (1988) has insisted that illiteracy cannot be

held accountable for social ills of unemployment, or bureaucracy, or racism in the U.S., South Africa, or any place else. He concludes that there is no evidence to suggest literacy can guarantee social, political, or economic freedom. The more pragmatic focus of the functional model, the development of skills necessary for individuals to meet *self-determined* objectives in their social context, has also proven controversial.

The Adult Performance Level (APL) research conducted in the United States during the 1970's concluded that our understanding of literacy changes as the social context changes (BC. Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, 1987, p. 3). However, the study also attempted to define functional literacy in terms of skills deemed necessary to function effectively in American society. The APL project defined 65 specific skills felt to be requirements for successful adult functioning in American society and identified three levels of attainment (p. 3). The fact that functional literacy was defined in terms of fixed skills and successful functioning engendered heated debate (p. 3). Questions were raised about who determines what skills are necessary. Critics charged that the criteria reflected the social and cultural biases of the researchers (p. 3). It was also pointed out that *success* was too narrowly defined. Questions were asked regarding how one determines a universally acceptable definition for success.

Rottenberg, (1997) points out that there is an inherent dualism in any definition of success, because notions of success vary not only among social groups but also among individuals within a social group. Some critics of the functionalist approach point out that literacy competency, relative to social functioning, is determined by *individuals*

within particular social settings and not by a fixed inventory of skills. However, the focus of some these critiques, *individual* self-determined goals, is itself problematic. These critical discussions of the functional model, while revealing questions of fact, value, and purpose fail to emphasize an important point. The focus on developing core value characteristics such as individualism, independence, and self-reliance (Haviland 2000, chap. 16) in the functional literacy model is problematic. Many of these critiques are themselves founded on the principle of an individualistic doctrine as well as social and cultural adaptation to a particular normative ideology.

The assumptions underlying this definition have important implications regarding educational policy, especially in the context of pluralistic, multi-cultural societies. The functional model focuses on social and cultural adaptation and assumes that individuals can or want to adapt to a common set of standards. The functionalist definition of literacy remains popular despite the fact that studies indicate adult learners are sometimes resistant to social conformity and that different socio-cultural groups are speaking out against cultural uniformity. Attempting to convert individuals, focuses on adaptive strategies rather than on culturally integrative strategies. Therefore, the cultures, norms and values of subordinate groups are largely excluded. In a culturally heterogeneous society - such as Canada - literacy is not a characteristic inherent solely in the individual. Literacy is a process of negotiation within communities and between extended communities. The functional definitional model that serves as a panacea for social ills and focuses on social and cultural adaptation to mainstream cultural norms and values is

inappropriate for shaping literacy policy and educational practice in a pluralistic, multi-cultural context.

Nonetheless, given their pragmatic appeal, both the traditionalist and functionalist literacy models tend to retain popular support. This is very apparent in *the back to basics movement* that is popular among many British Columbians. However, in terms of educational policy and practice both definitions possess limited potential for resolving conditions of educational and social inequality. Defining literacy requires that we recognize that different literacy practices exist and develop within many different social and cultural contexts; that is, there are qualitatively different literacies. The role that the technical skills of reading and writing assume is dependent on their social and cultural context and the way dominant and minority groups acquire, value, and practice them. Moreover, defining literacy as the acquisition of skills related to text mistakenly assumes that literacy is solely about knowledge and skills related to reading and writing. However, it is clear that there are different ways of being literate that involve forms of cultural knowledge, values, and skills not related to schooled literacy such as time and geographic space. Clearly, the defining issue is not *what* literacy skills are transmitted and reinforced within the education system and in the broader society, but *whose* knowledge, values, and skills predominate. We need to examine ideological considerations regarding the purposes and goals inherent in definitions of literacy. Constructions of literacy definition and policy incorporate cultural and ideological theories and thus have important social and moral consequences. This is evident in the context of defining literacy in terms of culture, power, and ideology.

Literacy as culture, power, and ideology.

Definitions of culture traditionally fall into two categories that consist of material and non-material components. Material culture constitutes a group's visible characteristics such as food, dress, and folk-arts. Non-material culture constitutes a group's norms, values, beliefs, and importantly language. The non-material aspects of culture, its language, values, and norms of behaviour, are what give real human meaning to the people socialized into a particular culture. Therefore, the non-material aspects of culture such as language are important symbols of heritage and self-identity and groups attempt to transmit this component from one generation to the next. This has significant implications regarding literacy definition and educational practice.

These implications are significant in the Canadian context, because there exists a widespread assumption that because Canada possesses an official policy on multiculturalism that the country is therefore a cultural mosaic. Canada as cultural mosaic implies that all cultural groups have been able to preserve, maintain, and enhance their cultures while simultaneously integrating fully into the social, cultural, political, and economic domains of Canadian life. This is not a valid assumption. Not all cultural groups participate equally in the various educational and occupational levels or in the economic and political elites. Moreover, many cultural groups in Canada, particularly ethnic groups, have been forced to evolve culturally adaptive strategies resulting in ghettoization patterns that further preclude full participation.

Canada is a multicultural society, a fact recognized in official legislation, but conflicting political, economic, and ideological considerations mean minority cultures are ultimately denied the equality, justice, and freedom required for full participation in society. This is very apparent as many Canadians are discriminated against on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, and class. Thus, non-dominant groups are socialized into a culture of poverty typified by attitudes of powerlessness, helplessness, and futility. Lewis (1966) notes, “the existence in the dominant class of a set of values that stress the accumulation of wealth and property, the possibility of upward mobility, and thrift that explains low economic status as the result of personal inadequacy or inferiority” (p. 5) are factors in the creation of a culture of poverty. What can be done to reduce inequalities and foster increased acceptance of cultural diversity in plural societies such as Canada?

Many members of society believe that education is the answer to this question. However, the assumption that literacy policy and educational practices can provide a panacea for reducing inequalities and acceptance of cultural diversity underscores philosophical and theoretical concerns at the heart of the debate concerning literacy definition, policy, and practice. These questions are best answered by examining some of the criticisms of conceptions of multicultural literacy and practice. Although the following is drawn from an American perspective, the questions it raises apply equally to the Canadian context.

According to Hirsch (1987), who uses the term “cultural literacy,” being literate entails the mastering of knowledge embodied in the shared meanings of society. Literacy is defined in terms of a *national culture* that includes standardized English, and a commonly

held interpretation of history. In his conception, the only set of shared values that should be taught are traditional teachings of history and English. Hirsch believes that education should be deeply rooted in the traditions of the country that include the symbols of the melting pot. He protests that cultural pluralism as educational theory lacks real roots; it lacks attachment to history, tradition, and common experience. He further argues for a return to standardized English and the days when educational standards were not fragmented by pluralistic doctrine. He laments that the doctrine of cultural pluralism poses a great threat to education, and he also fears cultural pluralism has grave potential social and political consequences. How is multiculturalism a *threat* to education? What are the potentially grave social and political consequences? The answers to these questions seem to relate directly to Hirsch's alleged concerns not only of language but also to what he alleges is the *conspiracy* of cultural pluralism. Explicit in Hirsch's argument is what he perceives as the conspiracy of cultural pluralism given its commitment to curriculum content that has attachments to ideological values that he claims are excessive and unsustainable.

Clearly, Hirsch (1987) believes that the only values that should be shared are those of the dominant culture. He defines literacy as the shared meanings of a national culture. These shared meanings include traditions, history, common experience, and language inherent in U.S. immigration policy and symbolized by the melting pot metaphor. Clearly, in his opinion, the only shared values that should be taught are traditional Anglo-American beliefs, culture, language, and ways of life. He believes these values supply a suitable framework for defining literacy and articulating educational policy, because they have

deep roots in the nation's heritage. He espouses claims that to abandon these roots means education is subject to left-wing conspiracy. Hirsch's argument is ideologically prejudiced. His arguments and concerns are neither about allegedly declining educational standards or skill levels; nor are his arguments grounded in critical pedagogical concerns regarding the best approaches to literacy (Luke & Gilbert, 1993). Hirsch argues in favour of the one-way flow of mono-cultural educational values from the dominant social and cultural group. This definition of *cultural literacy* as *national culture* lacks any rational appreciation of the concept of shared values, and its worth can be measured by its crude appeal to majoritarianism and its very unsubtle dismissal of cultural pluralism as a left-wing conspiracy.

In response to Hirsch (1987), we need to consider some underlying theoretical and philosophical concerns. We need to consider that a primary good is inherently something that rational people want and should have a right to. Halstead (1988) argues that a primary good includes the following: opportunities and powers, rights and freedoms, income and security, and self-respect. It is based upon this list of shared values that the articulation and practice of literacy should be built, and not upon Hirsch's narrow conception of "cultural literacy" that ultimately denies members of minority groups social, personal, and moral freedoms. Clearly, educators, whether of the dominant or minority groups, cannot escape criticism in presenting either ethnocentric or narrow, myopic values and beliefs as the only way of perceiving the world.

Hirsch's articulation of *cultural literacy* can only serve to produce arrogance and insensitivity among dominant groups and produce profound self-alienation and a distorted self-image among learners from minority groups (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977). Inherent in his thesis is not only an ideological bias, but a profoundly class-based one. The resultant educational practices simply reproduce historically entrenched patterns of exclusion on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, and class (Luke & Gilbert, 1993). Multicultural theory, or pluralistic doctrine, is not an attempt to undermine or fragment educational standards, nor is it a conspiracy to inculcate a left-wing ideology. It is an attempt to avoid either dominant class hegemony or cultural domination which deny minority groups access to institutions such as education, in turn, leaving whole communities of people socially, culturally, politically, and economically disenfranchised. Multicultural education is not a "conspiracy", but it is an attempt to relate the principles of equality, justice, and freedom to social realities. Theorists of the new sociology of education conceptualize literacy in qualitatively different cultural terms and provide a cogent alternative to Hirsch's definition of literacy.

Educational theorists such as Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux, offer a more significant conception of literacy, that of *critical pedagogy*. As a theoretical model, critical pedagogy elicits a cogent critique of the purposes and goals of literacy; that is, literacy is redefined, shifting the focus from transforming individuals to social transformation as a means of eliminating dominant class hegemony and oppression.

Based on his personal experiences in pedagogical education in Brazil, Freire (1970) discusses how education has traditionally been used to both disenfranchise and co-opt people in a class society and thus perpetuate dominant class hegemony and oppression. He argues that educators can either work to liberate and humanize their students, or they can continue to work to dominate them. Freire refers to traditional education, especially academic literacy, as the theory of *banking education* (pp. 52-67). In the banking concept of education, educators enable the oppressors of society by making the oppressed believe that they are deficient. They reinforce historical inequalities via a banking concept of education that adapts and manages people in the interest of the oppressor. Learners are adapted to *banking the deposits* entrusted them. The process, naturally, inhibits the process of critical thinking, and hence critical consciousness. Banking education is used to dull or obliterate learners' creative powers and to stimulate the learners' naiveté, thus serving the interests of the oppressors (p. 60). Freire argues the oppressors use their "humanitarianism" to preserve a profitable situation by disempowering the oppressed and dulling their impulse to question or challenge social inequalities (p. 60).

Clearly, Freire argues, if learners are to make informed choices they must develop the power and the means to do so. For Freire, traditional education is a cultural process that perpetuates and maintains social inequalities through the suppression of critical consciousness. This raises important concerns about the purposes and goals of the functional literacy model mentioned earlier. The notion that functional literacy involves, "the development of skills necessary for individuals to meet their own self-determined objectives in their social context" (Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training,

1987, p. 2), is misleading. The notion of *choice* attached to this definition is illusory. Functional literacy, "functions" to reproduce the ideology of the dominant culture and provide the "necessary skills" needed to compete effectively within the social divisions of labour. Clearly, workers, particularly displaced workers, must be programmed and reprogrammed, tooled and retooled, to meet the rapidly changing technological needs of the workplace (Schumacher, 1973). The problematic of cultural dominance to these ends is evidenced in the literature on rural educational issues. For example, in many rural communities curriculum content does not differ greatly from that of urban communities. Gougeon (1997), adopting a Weberian perspective, argues that rural learners from non-dominant groups are often raised in the values of a less competitive culture, are used to fixed patterns of behaviour, and embody an ideological unity based on communal sharing. Learners in transition from a rural to an urban setting must contend with the imposition of a curriculum model that seeks to develop their "competitive" potential - their place in the social division of labour - in ways contrary to their acquired cultural values.

In summary, an important contribution of critical theorists on the subject of literacy is their insistence that conceptions of literacy are not as *autonomous* as some theorists would have us believe. Literacy has always been connected to social and cultural power. Literacy definition, policy, and educational practice must be understood in this context. Taken together they form part of a much larger pattern of integrated social, cultural, political, and economic institutions, structures, and processes (Luke & Gilbert, 1993; Mallea, 1989). These institutions, structures, and processes exercise influence and control over literacy policy and educational practice. It is clear that literacy policy and

practice is informed by a political and economic system that consciously acts in the interest of dominant groups and the result is differential social powers.

These same influences are exerted regarding a wide range of policies and implementation within communities and between extended communities; hence, rural and urban contexts are not characterized here as binary polarities. However, these social and cultural influences are certainly critical in an examination of issues concerning rural communities. The resulting differential powers bear the same asymmetrical characteristics discussed above regarding educational policy and implementation. These influences and processes have the effect of either legitimizing or denying the aspirations, concerns, and values of particular groups. Clearly, dominant groups exercise considerable control over the governance and administration of a wide range of social policy, and this is especially apparent regarding the defining of literacy and educational policy in general. However, it is also apparent in the works discussed earlier in this chapter that it is in the context of literacy and education that the greatest possibility for change exists.

Transition

The issue of differing cultural values is particularly acute for adult learners in transition from rural to urban settings. Not only must these learners contend with learning and knowing the printed text (literate culture), but they must also contend with differing social, cultural, and ideological traditions in a completely strange environment. They must also become attuned, more literate, and sensitive to a different scale and layout of physical space and how it is used. For example, shopping in the local store at home - in

rural areas - where everyone knows everyone else, involves different social and cultural norms and mores than shopping at a large impersonal supermarket (Fingeret, 1997). They must also contend with a dominant ideology and culture that is often latently hostile to their social and cultural values. Given these issues in cultural transition, the work of Freire and other critical theorists is especially beneficial. When adults, in transition, have a critical perspective on the political and social nature of transition, they can engage in action that makes the transition purposeful (Freire, 1970). Critical reflection and action can empower learners and enable them to cope with new environments and situations.

Those involved in adult education programs are frequently undergoing many changes that were forced upon them. Social, cultural, technological, and economic shifts are factors of change with which they must come to terms. The process of developing appropriate social and cultural practices tends to be complex for learners in transition from rural to urban settings. They must contend with significantly different social situations and environments for which they often have no social or cultural frame of reference. They are involved in a process that is constantly redefined and renegotiated as they encounter and interact with new social and cultural environments. Consequently, transitions in adult education are much more than a matter of definitional semantics, they also involve the *recognition* and *validation* of different forms of social and cultural knowledge, values, and skills. Learners in transition face issues of access and equity, gaps in policy, and the complex psychological dimensions of social and cultural transition. Transitions to adult learning environments involve issues of equality of educational opportunity. Luke and Gilbert (1993) suggest that we need to examine our assumptions about educational access

and equity. They note, "Shared here is a sense that…shifts in cultural representation, social formation, and economic relations needn't lead to more of the same patterns of inequality" (p. 3).

Transition to literacy and upgrading programs entails four important dimensions:

- *Access and equity*. Access to literacy and upgrading programs is linked to important dimensions of culture, power, and ideology as well as social institutions, structures, and processes.
- *Recognition and validation of different kinds of knowledge*. There are conflicting forms of knowledge, values, and skills inherent in the transitional process.
- *Social and cultural processes*. Transition entails social and cultural conflicts and involves the ability to negotiate different social and cultural situations and environments.
- *Psychological*. Transitions are psychologically complex and include important dimensions such as self-identity and resistance.

Summary

An important contribution of theorists regarding adult literacy policy and practice, whether in a community, workplace, or educational setting, is their insistence that conceptions of literacy are not as *autonomous* as many would have us believe. Literacy has always been connected to social and cultural power. Literacy and the educational system must be understood in this context. They are part of a much larger pattern of

integrated institutions, structures, and processes (Luke & Gilbert, 1993; Mallea, 1989). These institutions and processes exercise influence and control over literacy policy and practice. It is clear that literacy policy and practice is informed by a political and economic system that consciously acts in the interest of dominant social and economic groups and the result is differential social powers.

These same dominant group influences are exerted regarding a wide range of definitional policies and practices within communities and between extended communities; hence, rural and urban are not characterized here as binary polarities. However, these social and cultural influences are certainly evidenced in an examination of issues concerning rural communities. The resulting differential powers bear the same asymmetrical characteristics discussed above regarding literacy definition and practice in particular and education policy in general. These influences and processes have the effect of either legitimizing or denying the aspirations, concerns, and values of certain groups. Clearly, dominant groups exercise considerable control over the governance and administration of a wide range of social policy, and this is especially apparent regarding literacy and educational policy. However, it is also very obvious in the works of critics such as Fingeret (1997), Freire (1970), Giroux (1988), Luke and Gilbert (1993), and Mallea (1989) that it is in the context of literacy and education that the greatest possibility for change exists.

Chapter IV

Data Collected: Participant Responses

In this chapter, the participants reflect on their rural experiences with literacy, their experiences in making the change from a rural to an urban setting, and the effects the transition has on their urban literacy experience. These personal comments reveal how the processes of change are inextricably linked to issues of personal identity and feelings of success and personal well-being. These are narratives of individual progress that reflect their situational change and the impacts of transition.

While each participant's comments reflect a unique personal history, it is clear that the individual stories share certain themes and patterns. Transcribed interviews of the participants were colour coded according to relevant themes concerning the experience of transition. On re-examination of the data, the themes were organized and classified into categories that are patterns of related experience. These categories were then organized according to the participants' insights concerning various aspects of the transitional process. The following are the responses of the participants with a brief introduction to each category.

Background Conditions

The participants cite several factors as compelling them to make the transition from a rural to an urban setting. Most of the participants have experienced first hand the disruptions in rural communities wrought by economic conditions both local and global, as well as technological change. The participants connect these factors with their

decision to explore educational options as a means of improving their life chances. According to Jay:

> Well, the town went "belly up" [bankrupt]…the whole economy's like that. It used to be that I could get any number of jobs that paid good money, but that kind of disappeared in the last couple of years, and to do anything you need Grade 12.

According to Garry:

> There is just not work in the woods [forestry] anymore. The whole logging industry has changed… you know, different standards of logging and stuff … economic change.

Several of the participants were also motivated by issues of personal well-being. The participants note that in the process of coming to terms with issues of personal well - being, they cleared the way to self-renewal by establishing educational and occupational goals. Rick says:

> I moved here when I quit drinking and everything. Sobriety! It got to the point where I was a messed up kid, and I didn't know any way out, right? So, … I got fed up and recovered life in Nanaimo. I decided to stay and stick with it…get an education.

According to Larry:

> When I sobered up, I knew there was something I had to achieve. The most important thing that happened to me was regaining my sobriety and trying to get more education.

Garry's personal transition to educational upgrading began with an accident that ended his career as a logger. This situation led to sporadic involvement with community based literacy programs. According to Garry:

> After I got hurt – my accident - I moved to Maple Ridge [metropolitan Vancouver] and I started taking reading and writing… then I got work and just chartered boats [moved back to a rural setting].

The participants note that there were few educational options available to them in rural areas. That is, access to educational programs was limited, and conditions were often not conducive to learning. According to Garry:

> Going to school! There was no access to that kind of thing up there – not when I was up there.

Rick notes that despite being motivated, he faced geographical and employment barriers to acquiring educational accreditation:

> I thought of it and trying to do some correspondence [courses] or to try and do something. But, with the hours that you work, and by candlelight or flashlight in the tent, you know, I didn't really see a whole lot of opportunity for success. And, you are tired at the end of the day.

Jay cites similar problems regarding access to formal educational upgrading in his rural community:

> A drive on a logging road - driving an hour there, going to school and driving an hour back- I didn't feel like driving either way [after a full day of physical labour].

Transition to Education Programs

According to some of the participants, making the change from a rural community to an urban setting, and accessing formalized educational programs was initially relatively easy. Sometimes access is easier with the support of people from the rural community who have already made the change. Jay believes his access to formal educational programs was greatly facilitated in this way:

> Well, it was actually easy, ‘cause I had two sisters, older sisters, and a brother that were going to Malaspina University-College and I didn’t basically have to go through the process. My sister set me up with [named advisor], and she sent me to see [Named Instructor: literacy programs]. And, she accepted me into the program and that was it… so the part of getting into the College was no problem, and then getting [laddering] into ABE courses.

Sometimes, access to formalized educational programs was possible by bridging from community service agencies such as Literacy Nanaimo. According to Garry, his involvement in community based literacy programs eventually lead to his participation in formalized educational programs:

> It wasn’t very hard, I just actually phoned Literacy Nanaimo through the Yellow Pages…I just kinda phoned and made an appointment to go and see them. That’s how I got into the literacy class [formal upgrading program].

For others, accessing formal educational programs was much more stressful. For these participants' the transition process to the urban academic setting was more complex given that they tended to be dealing with bureaucracies other than that of the University-College. More specifically, in order to access formal educational programs, they were forced to interact with other systems, structures and processes closely linked to the educational institution.

The Run Around

One of the most daunting aspects of making the transition from a rural to an urban setting for educational purposes involved navigating the tangle of bureaucracy associated with financial sponsorship programs. For individuals who are already dealing with the process of change, some of the *limitations* and *expectations* imposed by funding agencies create barriers to educational access. The participants sometimes feel that they have been deliberately dissuaded in their educational pursuits in being given "the run-around" by government agencies such as Employment Insurance, Social Services, or retraining programs such as Forest Renewal B.C. According to Larry:

> I was on assistance. I went to the worker, my social worker, and they said 'no we don't do that' [fund education up-grading]…Then I got frustrated with the worker…It was difficult… and you're alone, you can't talk to somebody. I had a feeling to move back to where I was before…

According to Rick:

> It was pretty hard. I was working with [name of social worker]…but she wouldn't do anything. All she would do, and getting paid as well, was, I

> would have my plan and she would come in and say, 'Well, I don't know, it might get approved,' and take it in. These plans shouldn't go past her without her knowing if it was going to be approved. I flipped out [got angry] on Forestry about her, I think she lost her job because of me, and I am not dealing with [name of agency] any longer. I am doing it in person, right, and I don't even use the phone, I do everything in person; no more run around. And, you know, it is the only way you can get it done.

Pressure to Maintain Funding

Some individuals feel that they are put under constant pressure by funding agencies. This constant pressure, coupled with situational change, and a hectic school term, increases their stress levels. The perception that there is not enough funding to go around – the perception of a scarce resource – only intensifies their feelings of anxiety. The participants often believe that they are under constant scrutiny by a large and impersonal bureaucracy. That is, they feel that they must always be accountable to their social worker or funding agency. Such on-going pressure has significant consequences for the psychological well-being of these individuals, and this in turn affects the transition process and ultimately individual literacy progress. The participants feel alienated from their own educational decision-making, and they find the experience is worrisome, frustrating and demoralizing. For example, some worry constantly about the funding consequences should they fail a course. According to Rick:

> My only fear is losing my funding. I don't know… if I flunk…right, Forestry is going to stop my funding because of that…if I flunk I can't take the program and then I won't have that job.

Even those who have a more intimate connection with their funding source feel overwhelmed by the dual pressures of close scrutiny and continuous accountability. According to Larry, having Band funding [First Nation's student] entails problems:

> It makes a difference [having Band funding]… There are drawbacks to it, like I'm trying to get funding for a computer, but like my Band won't fund it. And, they always want to know if – some there they know - I'm like attending and stuff. Sometimes, I just have a feeling to move back to where I was before [the Reservation].

The participants are sometimes obliged to go to extraordinary lengths in order to satisfy funding agency requirements in order to maintain their funding. Rick is attempting to up-grade to his Grade 12 equivalency, because it is an entry requirement for a particular training program. In addition to taking a computer studies course as well as ABE English composition, science and math, he is also taking two additional college level courses. He explained his reason for doing this was that his funding agency does not pay for basic up-grading [high school equivalency]. According to Rick, they will not fund an individual for this requirement, "unless there's a job at the end of it, and you can prove it to them." However, this policy creates a dilemma, because he requires the Grade 12 equivalency in order to access the desired training program. Therefore, to meet the funding criteria, and

in order to maintain his funding, he is forced into studying courses that he feels he does not need. Rick further states:

> My general plan is to keep my funding going, and take English composition, also commercial law and economics for the next two semesters. Continue with the upgrading - science, biology, one more grade of math…then, hopefully, off to [named College] for the Enviro-Technology [program].

Rick feels that being forced into courses he does not need because he is financially strapped is unjust, and he believes that these demands have added unnecessary stress in his transition to adult education programs. He believes that this policy is wasteful and does little to enhance access or the fulfillment of realizable, concrete goals. He is angry and questions the efficacy of this policy in connection with some of the courses he is studying:

> Yeah, right. Waste of time right. Nobody just says here's a computer and here's a gig like Excel. How are you supposed to remember all that shit, you know. Access - give me a break! Like, when are you gonna use this? Like, I'm not gonna have a job where I need all this stuff. You know, I guess you gotta know – you gotta be familiar with the screens, with some of the functions, but you know 'Word' [computer program].

Conflicts of this sort generate such intense feelings that the participants are often unable to recognize the potential benefits inherent in the situation. Nonetheless, despite feelings

of anger, uncertainty, frustration and confusion he is committed to acquiring an education and is pressing ahead. According to Rick:

> Well, I have to take the Economics and Law for funding issues, … but the Biology is for me…so I can get into the Enviro-Tech Program for September. So, now I've got one semester to go – after that I don't have any funding, but [if] Employment Insurance approve my back to work action plan, then once Forestry (funding) is done…they might continue my funding. Now, I have to write them up a budget, right.

Us and Them

Dealings with bureaucracy seem to foster or reinforce a suspicion of "the system" and an "us" and "them" attitude in this group of males. However, it seems that this social dichotomy is a "cultural universal". The participants are generally suspicious of the system, which they view as working to consolidate and perpetuate its own interests or those of elite groups. Bureaucratic entanglements - such as the ones mentioned above - seemed to reinforce and legitimize sometimes long-held perceptions of incompatibility between the interests of ordinary people and people in positions of authority and power. Issues of power and conflict were manifest in interview discussions on a variety of topics. The participants often regard "suits" or "higher ups" as gatekeepers regulating access to social power as well as economic position. According to the participants, those who ignore or take a stand against and resist systemic rules, and ironically, those who take a stand for the maintenance of systemic rules can be labelled as *antagonistic* and

disruptive. For example, when asked to comment on his rural community, Jay responded with the following comments:

> A company town is more like a …dictatorship than a logging camp because there is no mayor or anything like that [the absence of a local democratic structure]. There is one head guy and he is called the camp manager, and what he and the "suits" say goes, or people just get booted out of town.

Another participant noted that past conflicts of interest with "higher-ups" resulted in punitive social and economic sanctions. Rick illustrated his point in the following discussion concerning major changes in the workplace and in the rural community:

> Well, safety is a big one…with Government regulations and stuff like that. The *power* that is given to the First Aid attendant and the WCB (Workers Compensation Board) is a *conflict*…with the employer. One time it was too windy – the tool that fixes to the smaller helicopter couldn't do an evac [evacuation] off the hill – it was too windy. He didn't know if he could do an evac, right. So, being the First Aid, we [the First Aid attendants] couldn't let the crew work – the "higher-ups" still wanted to fly the crews into the hills, right, with the "hookers", and we wouldn't let them do it. And, I didn't get called back to work the next year (his emphasis).

Their "us" and "them" perception is often evident in the participants' educational transitions as well. Individuals react to the system, and issues of power, in a variety of

ways. Sometimes, individuals passively accept the system as a "given", because they assume they have no choice and because previous interaction with the education system resulted in negative judgements that they have, in varying degrees, internalized and legitimized. Their previous interactions with the educational system made them outcasts. Some participants still experience feelings of shame and self-blame that sometimes leave them feeling worthless and unmotivated. According to Garry:

> I've got mild dyslexia or whatever … it took them a long time to figure it out. I was put in a 'special class'. I just thought I was stupid.

According to Larry:

> When I was a kid, I was just put there [the Residential School]. Like, it was just that when I was a kid I didn't really want to learn anything … I know I have to work on myself … like get the frustrations out and all that. Then, the anger ... Sometimes, I like just wonder if it's worth it.

The participants often struggle with feelings of powerlessness when dealing with the system, that is, the participants struggle with attempts by the system to mould them to fit its expectations and demands. This struggle is apparent in Rick's attempts to come to terms with his educational funding dilemma. In order to survive the process he sometimes adopts an adaptive survival strategy in his dealings with the bureaucracy. According to Rick:

> I have to keep 'em happy … to keep my funding going. I need it [the financial support], but I don't like it …because of the lack of education,

> I've had to work hard, and I've - I don't want to fight that hard anymore. I'm too beat up.

At other times, a contrary impulse motivates the participants in their interactions with the system. That is, individuals resist "the system", and what they perceive as social conditioning or social conformity. For example, Rick states:

> Oh yeah, I'm planning on going back again [back to the rural community], right, whenever the opportunity presents itself … I know what I don't want to do. I don't want to be sittin' in an office all day, you know, maybe thirty percent of the time, but you know, I wanna be outside. I wanna travel, wanna see different places, I hate routine. I can't stand routine, doing the same thing week after week, day after day. I just can't do it. Even as far as going to school, I'll do things to make it different. Maybe sleep in, skip out of my English class or something like that or go do something else. Or, um, you know, I don't like watching the same [television] program. I'm not that faithful to any particular program or any particular beer or pop brand. You know, even with smoking – I smoke a different brand every day kinda thing.

It is also apparent that the participants' perception of "us" and "them" derives from what they perceive as the lack of consideration and respect accorded them by people in positions of power and authority. Larry comments:

> It's just that people with authority…they don't want to listen, they don't want to hear a word. It's an abuse of authority.

This social dichotomy is further reflected in their personal histories of transition from rural to urban settings. Their comments on the transitional experience often reveal a personal history of social and cultural alienation. This pattern of alienation is apparent given that some of the participants have previously experienced the ordeal of forced migration from their rural communities. This was evident in Larry's case given his early life experience of forced migration to a native Residential School. Still others have made the change from rural to urban settings more than once. For example, when asked to describe his experience of making the change from his rural community to Nanaimo, Rick related an earlier experience of transition:

> Well, I can go back to Grade 5 let's say, and then make it to Nanaimo [the present]. When we moved from McConnell Creek to Burnaby, and we were – well, everything was always there in the rural community, like we played soccer all the time, right. But, it was – everybody played by the rules – and everybody had a good time, whether we won or lost, you know, when the bell rang you went back happy - pretty much. But, then we moved to Burnaby [metro Vancouver], it wasn't the same. I was a pretty good little soccer player, and some of the guys didn't like that, and they started getting [playing] dirty, and they swore all the time. I was a good kid. I didn't understand it [the intense competition].

When asked to update the experience of change and transition in the context of his present circumstances, he felt that things had not changed that much as regards social and cultural alienation. Rick reiterated and restated his point:

> That's when I learned how to fight for myself. Nothing has changed [regarding feelings of social and cultural alienation].

Another participant commented on the bewildering cultural differences between the rural and the urban setting. In the move from a rural to an urban setting, the participants' situational change often involves feelings of disorientation and social isolation. According to Larry:

> It was difficult ... and you're alone, you can't talk to somebody. I had a feeling to move back to where I was before. In the first place, you move to the city, and you don't know where to turn. I come from an isolated area, there you know what you want to do, and like you know who to talk to, and what you can do and all that. But, once you hit the city you're lost, completely lost.

Temporal Perceptions

Another significant conflict that the participants encountered within the transitional process was a different conceptualization of time in the urban academic setting. The majority of the participants are resource workers from rural and remote regions of the province. Most are used to *seasonal work* with working days ranging from eight to twelve-hour shifts with the usual breaks for meals and rest. According to Rick:

> With the hours you work… it takes a mental toughness, and a lot of people can't do it for a long time. You're out in camp, right [isolation].

The seasonal nature of his work allowed a greater degree of flexibility and freedom. Rick further states:

> I've got friends that have always envied me because I've been like the definition of freedom, right. You know, take off, work all over the place or even in off-seasons spend a week in Nanaimo and then a week in Vancouver and hopping all over the place. And, uh now I don't have that freedom.

According to Garry:

> Oh, when I was in McNeil I worked all day and I would leave at dark and get home at dark, except during shut-down [seasonal shut-down].

Having made the shift to an urban academic setting, the participants now have to contend with a much more precisely regulated time schedule. They find that there is less flexibility, because time is valued, and controlled differently in the urban academic setting. The participants' perception that there is not enough time – the perception of a scarce resource – increases their tensions in the academic setting. The scarcity of *time* is evident in discussions of their day to day experiences of coping with school. Some of the participants experience feelings of panic, frustration or incompetence when trying to cope with time pressures in their learning situation. According to Garry: "Going to school…I get kind of nervous trying to keep it all together." Time pressures associated with a hectic school schedule can prove to be overwhelming. According to Rick:

> I'm just so overloaded and I put the time towards everything, there's a balance you know, and I don't think there is enough time - you know? Twenty-four hours in a day and you can get a lot done if you really want

> to. But, you get to a burn out point, or I get to a point anyway, where I just have to sit on a log and do nothing.

Rick further states:

> It would be nice to have my own space…a place just to relax. You know, I used to have the ability to just pick up and take off, the ability to just whatever, if I didn't like something I could just pick up and go… Now, I have no freedom right, I'm rules and regulations, and gotta be here and gotta get that done and this done. I look forward to getting a job, I look forward to the break.

According to Larry:

> It's a challenge. You do nothing for years and then you have to get back to the basics of school and all that and life… Some days I feel like just turning the books in like because there is no time and like I am frustrated. What am I trying to prove and that?

Self-identity

One of the most significant transitions that these men faced in making the change from a rural setting to the urban academic setting concerned their sense of *social place* and *self-identity*. These men, most of whom worked in the primary resource sector, attained much of their self-identity by what they did. They were, for example, "chokermen", "hookers", "fallers", "chasers" or "deckhands". Some of these jobs were high paying but high risk, dangerous jobs. It is clear that these jobs were often a source of pride, and that they constituted a sub-culture with its own skills, language and social norms. Their identities

were important to them and the participants continue to foster and promote their social and cultural uniqueness. For example, Rick states:

> I worked…chasing chokers…the sky crane comes in with its load and drops – he's got the long line – and drops the logs and we work with a loader – there's two or three of us – and as soon as he drops, the "eyes" pop out and ya run in …unhook all the belts, and the loader comes in and this is the "nub" you stick the "eyes" of the "choker" into, and then you hook 'em all up and then you run like hell.

Garry voices similar pride when he describes his work culture:

> I started off as a chokerman. Then I went second loading or chasing. You've got to know what y'er doin' or you'll get hurt.

When asked to define their jobs as skilled or unskilled, the participants tended to be protective of cultural identity and reinforce pride in their work. For example, Garry further states:

> I would say it's a skilled job. Not in the way that you've got reading and writing, but you've got to be skilled to stay alive.

The participants' situational change - both in terms of wage and geographical location - involves a loss of income, a loss of independence, status and a loss of pride. That is, they experience loss of pride in their status as "workers" and as independent earners. Changes in employment circumstances involve more than a decrease in earnings. Their shift from independent earner to social dependency is socially and personally humiliating. In short, this latent imposed shift can be seen as a form of social devolution. Most are now reliant

on educational or other funding agencies of one sort or another. When asked if they felt they had lost anything in making the shift to an urban setting the participants' responses were as follows:

> Well, yeah a steady income. It's nice to have the money to do the things you like to do, and take care of your children and do things with them…It gets me down sometimes, but you can't let it. (Garry)

> Yes. Just not having the freedom and the money to pick up and take off. I've always had the ability to just – whatever. If I don't like something, I can just pick up and go. (Rick)

On the other hand, one individual felt that he had lost nothing in making the change from the rural community to the urban setting. Jay, in describing his rural experiences, alluded to the idea that there was little of substance left in his community to lose.

> When I dropped out of school I had some place to go … I could get any number of jobs … but that kind of disappeared a couple of years ago … [So], really, no. School is the most important thing that has happened. If I hadn't moved out of the small community, I would never have gone to school. (Jay)

Having made the transition from a rural community to the urban academic setting, the participants take on a new identity; that is, they assume the identity of "students". This new "persona" involves both positive and negative connotations regarding issues of self-identity. On the one hand, they all take some "face-saving" pride in being students, in

tackling a new challenge, or in realizing the tangible benefits that accrue in pursuing their goals. Rick states:

> I've got a challenge. Any student here that takes four classes on three different campuses - and not having a car. You see what you're made of.

Garry states:

> I'm reading more… It used to be hard just going around not knowing where you were half the time - I mean you know your area, you know where you are. But, not knowing the street names and stuff…At least I can see that I'm dong something constructive.

In some cases being a "student" means that individuals have an opportunity to focus on and improve familial relationships while at the same time pursuing their educational goals. Garry further states: "My son likes it. He actually helps me… He's a better sounder than me."

On the other hand, the "student" label sometimes creates conflict in familial and other relational interactions given its social and cultural implications. Some of the participants commented further on identity change and its effects on relationships with family and friends. In some cases, being a student means that individuals are more respected and even admired for their efforts. According to Rick:

> Well, the whole education process, I guess it has made a difference. My whole family is a little happier with me. This girl I'm kind of keen on is a lot happier with me.

However, even an improved image with family and other relations can lead to conflict regarding issues of self-identity. Some participants begin to question how they define themselves socially and culturally in their new roles and setting. That is, they question the degree to which the transitional process influences and reshapes their social and cultural identities. For example, Rick further states:

> But, I don't know, you know, sometimes I think she [his girlfriend] wants the old rebel back, you know, the bad ass. But, I think a lot of it is still working itself out, the pros and cons haven't really come to the fore.

For others, the "student" label has distinctly negative psychological, social, and educational consequences; the participants sometimes lack support from family and friends and are ridiculed for the effort. For example, Jay states:

> It is something that I have to do if I'm going to get anywhere. This is something I should have done by the time I was seventeen… Some family members are a bit cynical about it; my being a student … but you have to expect that from them. Negative! Negative, because you should have done this before instead of going to work when you were thirteen. You should have stayed in school, you should have thought about this when you were younger, that type of thing.

Coping with Transition

Not all participants make use of existing opportunities for coping with their educational transition; that is, they are not always self-directed or prepared to seize on educational and counselling opportunities. For example, these students tend not to participate in

workshops offering help with study or other sorts of coping skills. This is not because they do not recognize the merits but more owing to time constraints. Yet, despite their general mistrust of the system, many of the participants find that collaboration with others is beneficial. They do sometimes seek assistance from student services staff within the University-College or from community agencies. This particular group, as with most adult groups, tend to prefer a one-to-one rapport with instructors or student services staff as well as links with less formal networks such as the literacy help program. According to Larry:

> Learning's about sharing, right? The way, like our [native] reserve even, like we were working together and there were things that I didn't understand and this other guy would understand it. There are things that he couldn't understand and I would understand… like with my tutor… I'm not afraid to ask for help. You have to have a community of people that will work with you, you have people like [named student services staff member] and a few other people that help you with the coping stuff. Like getting a tutor and that. Not to come out [not seeking help] then it's my problem, if I don't do anything, right, then it's my problem.

Commenting on College instructors and student support staff, Rick says:

> Yeah, the people at the College were really helpful, right. You know, like [named staff members]. You know, both of them are really nice, and are more than willing, and even went out of their way a little bit, to try and make things a little easier [regarding his funding problems].

Jay states:

> I haven't really had any negativity from inside the College, whether it's students or the instructors, faculty or whatever … all the instructors have been quite encouraging.

Some participants find that collaboration with peers brings academic and social benefits. According to Garry:

> I've got a challenge. Everybody's different in the class. I think it's positive `cause everybody kinda helps everybody.

The participants are not only influenced by the classroom and teachers; they are influenced by the entire university community, academic and vocational alike. It is very obvious that such an influence will have an impact on their socio-personal lives either directly or indirectly.

The above comments suggest that the participants are more apt to collaborate or seek help with coping issues that they perceive as objective problems. More specifically, they collaborate or seek help with resolving issues such as institutional access, funding, and other seemingly objective problems. The participants are often willing to address these sorts of transitional issues, because they view the forces impelling conflict - economic, political, social, and cultural - as external to themselves. However, they are much less inclined to seek counsel for coping with issues of transition such as relationship and self-identity problems that they perceive as personal dilemmas. They are not always conscious of the fact that the forces driving these conflicts are often fundamentally the

same. The participants' historical relationship with educational and related systems is also a factor in shaping their attitudes and behavioural patterns in this regard. Hence, their relationship with people working in the system is sometimes reactionary, as they tend to respond to images of authority, coercion, oppression and alienation based on previous life experiences. This type of response was apparent, for example, in the incident mentioned earlier when Rick reacted to the comments from the person at his funding agency (see pp. 59-60).

Empowerment

Some of the participants believe that they have benefited from the transition process by overcoming some negative self-images and personal problems. Within this context, transition becomes a means of empowerment, the opportunity to revise one's story and to articulate it from a different perspective; that is, the participants' transitional experience is a process of *self-discovery* and is viewed by them as an opportunity to improve their future life chances.

According to Garry:

> I've got a mild dyslexia or whatever…now they know that kind of stuff…I just thought I was stupid. Knowing you're learning makes you feel better about yourself. If I want to make [cook] something, you know, looking at recipe books, reading recipes, or that, I feel I can… I feel better about myself. I'm coming along …What I've found is, I'm more relaxed when I'm doing work, when I'm signing papers or anything, I used to be really nervous. I've got a foundation to build on, that's what I feel.

Still others see their transition to as the key to realizing their hopes and aspirations. According to Jay:

> My goal is military or law enforcement and um, and now that I'm back in school again it's more realistic… Law enforcement before was not really a dream, but it was probably not going to happen … and the military thing is more realistic… and now that I'm in school and I know that I'm gonna finish school I can join.

For some of the participants, the transition to educational programs was the result of a two-fold conscious decision; (i) to change negative habits and behaviours, and (ii) to enhance social and economic opportunities. In cases of this sort, the transition process provides a reason to maintain the transformation. According to Larry:

> Like all of us individuals we are gifted, but it's just that we don't use that gift, we are gifted with power, but we don't use that gift ... we have to use it. We have the power to say no to alcohol and drugs… You know, I used to be a pretty good time liar. I would get people to buy me drinks all the time and everything. I was that kind of person.

Larry further states:

> When I sobered up, I knew there was something I had to achieve …The most important thing that happened to me was regaining my sobriety and trying to get an education.

In other cases, the transition to the urban academic setting was the catalyst for transforming negative habits and behaviours. That is, the system forces individuals to develop or adapt new coping strategies to meet their survival needs in the dominant or host culture. In these cases, the participants benefit from being flexible while gaining both strength and acceptance in their new setting. According to Rick:

> I moved here when I was twenty, and quit smoking and everything… yeah, my friends know me as the party animal. Doing whatever I want, throwing caution to the wind and now I'm kind of an old "fuddy-duddy". Now, I'm doin' everything by the rules and … A lot of 'em are still in shock.

The above comments indicate that some of the participants must overcome significantly negative habits and behaviours if they are to succeed in the transition to educational programs. In some ways, the "rural culture" can be seen as antithetical to the urban setting. New adaptive strategies are frequently demanded. However, it is clear that the participants voluntarily accept responsibility for overcoming these conflicts in order to improve their life chances. Recognizing its social and economic utility, the participants are committed to their educational pursuits, and they tend to be realistic about the role of personal agency in fulfilling their life goals.

The participants tend to view personal agency in fulfilling these goals as a matter of maturity, commitment, and integrity. Some articulate the concept of commitment and

integrity in broader terms; they believe that if they make the effort both they and society stand to benefit. According to Larry:

> The thing is, when you are going to school you're not a kid anymore. The thing is you are on the positive side of life, like you are trying to achieve…you've made a commitment here…I'm trying to achieve, it's sort of like going forward. If I can get to the program [become a student in the counselling program] … if I can achieve that then I can go back to the reserve and hope that one day I can work with the younger generation. I believe in myself, and if I can make them understand and believe in themselves - I can be a big help.

Larry further states that he wants to become a *role model* and influence others who will encounter the transition process:

> The reason I want to move back (to the reserve) is 'cause there's lots of young people out there, lots of young students, and they will be encountering what I encountered. So, it will be best to help them become aware of what they're going to be confronted with…instead of going all the way down [alcohol and drugs].

Rick was somewhat more philosophical:

> The environment is going to be a pretty demanding job. And, particularly if man is going to be continuously … screwing up the planet.

It is also apparent that some of the participants gain strength in the transitional process through increased resourcefulness and independence of mind. For example, as they begin

to perceive the social, cultural, political, and economic contradictions inherent in their situation, they begin to question and counter these discrepancies. Some are now better able to assert themselves appropriately in various situations, especially when arbitrary, authoritarian powers impede their progress. There are several examples in the preceding text that evidence the participants' resourcefulness and increased self-sufficiency in adapting strategies for dealing with these forces. The following comments illustrate that the participants gain from this aspect of the transitional process through increased self-awareness and self-confidence. According to Rick:

> A lot of it is doing stuff yourself, if you don't do it – try and help yourself – it won't get done.

Rick further states:

> I think it makes you appreciate and respect yourself a lot more. You don't take things for granted, you know, things you didn't realize, 'til they are gone.

According to Larry:

> I've changed… like when I was speaking to a person, the way I'm speaking with you, I didn't look at you – I'm more open – like, if something bothers me, I don't keep it in, I let it out. If I keep it inside it just gnaws at me.

Certainly, the level of confidence is not the same for everyone. Differences in levels of confidence in the academic setting are understandable given the fact that the participants represent a range of literacy levels and life experiences. Some require more time to

acquire the necessary skills. Others have already acquired the necessary accreditation or sufficiently upgraded their literacy skills in order to move on. The correlation of literacy levels to levels of confidence was apparent, for example, when the participants responded to questions about future educational or occupational goals. Garry responded with the following regarding his educational goals:

> Oh, I'm not sure yet. I'm still probably going to be in school for quite a while or whatever. I'm not sure what I'd like to get into. I like art, I like stuff like that, making things … just get my reading and writing up to par and then figure out what I want to do… Maybe I wouldn't mind taking an art course or something. I don't know what kind of courses a guy could get into… I don't know what grade you need to get into that kinda stuff.

He further stated regarding occupational goals:

> I'm not sure. Try to start a new business, whatever, I'd like to get into rock cutting, stuff like polishing rocks, and make furniture, lamp shades and stuff like that. You can make all kinds of cool stuff … I'd like to set my own hours. You know, work when you want to, as long as you want, long as you get so much done a day or something. Enough to keep the wolf from the door.

Rick states:

> I see myself being very successful and having lots of money. Well, not a lot of money, but enough. I see myself being successful. It's something I never really doubt, I just need to kinda kick myself in the ass to get things going. It's kinda like I have been delaying it.

According to Jay:

> It's something I have to do for me to get anywhere. Now that I'm in school, and know that I'm gonna finish school I can join [the military] with … better pay.

Some of these responses suggest that if people are to reach their goals, it is up to the individual to ensure that it does happen. However, as indicated throughout this chapter, we need to take into account that individuals also require a significant amount of sympathetic support from social and institutional agencies if they are to survive the transitional process and succeed in realizing their full potential. This is especially true for those in transition to strange, and sometimes seemingly hostile, environments.

In summary, this chapter depicts the realities of the rural-urban transition process from the perspective of the participants. Their points of view, while obviously articulated from various perspectives, share a number of common themes and patterns synthesized into categories. Over the course of their transition to the urban and academic setting, some of the participants begin to look critically at their experiences past and present. That is, they struggle to account for the tensions in their lives. In their encounters with educational system and related institutions, they begin to perceive their personal and social realities. The transitional experience is itself an educational process. In their struggles to survive this process, many of the participants come to a greater awareness of self; especially, concerning their social and cultural values. The participants reveal their willingness to face challenges, accept their responsibilities, and to commit to shared values where they

feel these are in the interest of a common good. However, their quest to improve their life chances by upgrading their literacy skills in an urban academic setting pits them against institutions, structures and processes – political, economic, social and cultural - that threaten their ability to realize their full potential.

Chapter V

Analysis and Interpretation

In the previous Chapter (Chapter IV) the participants' common experiences from interview data based on the set of case studies, were categorized and discussed. This Chapter focuses on further analysis and interpretation of the data.

Background Conditions

Canadian policy makers have always attempted to build consensus around core values that draw on a particular normative ideological position (Livingstone, 1987; Mallea, 1989). That is, policy makers draw upon the dominant values of mainstream society and culture. These values affect relationships at every level of Canadian society and they are embedded in its structures, institutions and processes. The education system, for example, has traditionally placed considerable emphasis on fostering in children a "competitive spirit" and the psychological capacities that enable them to develop core value characteristics such as individualism, independence, and self-reliance (Haviland, 2000). In this way, fundamental educational principles of competition have dovetailed quite nicely with the social, political, and economic ideology of the mainstream or dominant groups. However, social and cultural tensions have evolved, because many subordinate groups (e.g. First Nations Peoples) do not emphasize competitive values. Rather, they tend to stress communal or group values.

Early Educational Experiences

Social and cultural tensions related to transitions are not a new phenomenon in the life experiences of the participants in this study. Their early experiences of transition are very revealing of social and cultural tensions concerning the hegemony of the dominant social group and the reproduction of its core values. Larry's early educational experience, for example, dramatizes these tensions. His Residential School experience was a traumatic introduction to the dominant value system of mainstream society and culture. Supported by legal as well as social and moral sanctions, the dominant elite group forced First Nations children from their close kin-group ties and isolated them in Residential Schools run by a combination of the State and the clergy. Larry recalls, "they took me away to the residential school when I was like five - away from my Grandma … everyone, and they like put me in that place." Larry was not given an opportunity to learn the language of his aboriginal people or to practice the ways of his culture. In fact, the language of instruction in Residential Schools was the language of the dominant group, in this case English. Curriculum content included the learning of dominant group religious and moral values combined with reading, writing, and arithmetic. Independence and self-reliance were characteristics reinforced by permitting children only limited contact with extended family and friends. It seems obvious that the hidden agenda of the curriculum was deculturation. In short, education and the educational environment was an assimilative process.

The curriculum and the behavioural patterns that were encouraged reflected the dominant group's preferred content, values and traditions. Having been nurtured by extended

family and community there was little or no cultural frame of reference against which Larry could measure this experience. Certainly, the Residential School was not a suitable substitute for socialization or enculturation. Life confined to the Residential School was a very alienating and humiliating experience. Larry rebelled against the system and quit the Residential School at age eleven, but the six-year experience left him emotionally scarred. Unable to reconnect with the extended kin-group of his earliest years, he has struggled for years to reconstruct a sense of identity and belonging.

Rick recalls an experience early in his education that involved a move from a remote logging community to an urban setting and back again. His story illustrates tensions regarding attempts by both dominant and subordinate cultures to transmit their knowledge, values, and behavioural norms from one generation to the next. The major issue was competition at every level and in every aspect of the educational system - including competitive versus noncompetitive field sports. Rick first attended a two-room school in a remote setting. The curriculum content was the same as that in the urban setting, but specific values and beliefs concerning norms of behaviour differed significantly. Rick recalls that in the rural school he often played soccer and that "everybody played by the rules and everybody had a good time, whether you won or lost," and "when the bell rang, everyone went back happy – pretty much." He observes that in the urban setting the *rules* of the game were different. He notes, "I was a pretty good little soccer player, and some of the guys didn't like that and started getting dirty" and "I didn't understand it." Rick's experiences on the school playing field left a strong and lasting impression regarding issues of *competition* and *fair play*.

Clearly, the reason he could not relate to the competitiveness of his peers in the urban setting was that he simply had little social or cultural frame of reference for this in his more egalitarian, rural experience - where cooperation was the norm. Despite uniformity in curriculum content, there were significant differences between the rural school culture and the urban school culture regarding which, or rather whose, social and cultural norms of behaviour were more valued and reinforced. It is unclear whether or not these differences were owing to latent resistance to dominant group values in the rural community. However, in accounting for these different norms of behaviour, it is perhaps worth noting that rural and remote schools were both geographically isolated and somewhat socially and culturally insulated from the normative influences of the mainstream. Certainly, it seems there was a cultural time lag in the complete adoption of competitive principles in rural schools.

Taken together, these early educational experiences suggest a strong link between dominant group power and the reproduction of mainstream values regarding the types of knowledge and values transmitted within the education system (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). While it is apparent that the participants' rural cultures did not emphasize the same values, it is abundantly clear that the form and content of education was affected and even determined by the power and influence of the dominant group (Giroux, 1988). It is obvious that the participants struggled with whether or not to incorporate or resist mainstream educational practices and moral values.

Consequences of early educational experiences.

The participants' early educational experiences concerning these social and cultural tensions were critical in shaping their attitudes and their behavioural patterns in response to these tensions. The data clearly demonstrates that the participants did resist educational indoctrination to dominant group values and ultimately rebelled against the constraints of the dominant and controlling value system. All of the participants in this study dropped out of the school system at the earliest opportunity and went to work. They all worked in the primary resource sector, as that was where jobs were then available for unskilled, untrained workers. However, it is very obvious that they did incorporate certain mainstream values, and that they did internalize certain mainstream judgements concerning their structured learning environment. They tend to view their lack of success in school as a matter of "individual" responsibility; that is, they tend to blame themselves (Haviland, 2000). Most view their lack of success as a matter of poor or bad attitude or as a lack of ability for acquiring literacy skills. Garry's early interaction with the education system resulted in negative and mistaken judgements that he thoroughly internalized. He was made to believe that he was mentally deficient, "I just thought I was stupid." Others tend to blame character defects in their personalities. Larry believes he was just not serious enough, "I just wanted to play all the time" and "I'm just not a very serious guy." As well, Rick believes that he "became a bad seed," "just a party animal," and that he is "just not a very faithful person."

These negative self-perceptions stem from their internalization of mainstream value judgements that place blame for "failure" on individual and group characteristics as

opposed to the social conditions that create the problem. In fact, it is clear that in the process of internalizing these judgements, the participants ultimately negate the validity of their insights concerning the social condition and its role in affecting their educational experiences. Clearly, educational systems and processes are not objective, neutral, or autonomous (Apple, 1982; Giroux, 1988). The participants' experiences suggest that resistance to mainstream values is a larger factor regarding conflict and dropout than some educators and theorists such as Hirsch (1987) are sometimes willing to admit. These problems are indicative of a much larger pattern of conflicting social, cultural, and ideological traditions in the life experiences of the participants. This is apparent in analyzing the participants' experiences in their adult working lives in rural and remote settings.

Rural social and economic conditions.

Recent changes in social, cultural, economic, and employment conditions in rural and remote regions of the province tend to threaten the well being of individuals as well as communities. These changes have increased conflicts and tensions in the working lives of these men and in their communities. In fact, the participants' narratives stress failing economic conditions; declining social conditions; asymmetrical power relations; and the struggle with these constraints as factors undermining rural society and culture, and threatening individual and community well being.

Many of the participants' rural communities are single industry company towns, sometimes referred to as "enclave" economic operations, dependent on resource

extraction. These men are acutely aware that their personal economic survival, and that of their communities, is dependent upon the companies' ability to compete effectively in global markets. Rick notes that logging practices are "all about competition" and that failed economic conditions are creating ghost towns, "look at Gold River, a ghost town, right". Garry notes that the problem is "economic," and that economic considerations combined with technological changes mean, "the whole logging [forestry] industry has pretty well changed … different standards of logging." Similarly, Jay notes that competitive market conditions coupled with Federal and Provincial Government policies that do not accommodate the needs of resource-based communities are the root of the problem. He further notes that if a company cannot compete effectively, corporate interests simply turn elsewhere, the town goes "belly up," and the people in the community suffer the consequences.

The participants' descriptions of economic conditions reveal a disturbing pattern regarding the dominant value system and the consequences for rural and remote communities. Their descriptions indicate an expanding pattern of poverty, despair, and apathy in rural and remote regions of the Province. For many unskilled and semi-skilled workers such as Garry, "there just isn't any work left in the woods." Jay notes, "when I dropped out of school I had somewhere to go … I could get any number of jobs that paid good money, but that kind of disappeared a couple of years ago." He further states that in his community, "most are on unemployment [benefits]." Unable to access jobs or services such as education and training, "a lot of people just give up or leave." Primary resource-based communities thus face problems of increasing unemployment and a

growing pool of unemployed and potentially unemployable unskilled and semi-skilled labour. The lack of secondary and tertiary industries often results in repercussions throughout the community. Hence, service-related sectors such as small family-run shops, hotels, and other services suffer and frequently fail as well. These factors, combined with the flight of people from rural to urban settings, are reshaping the rural social and cultural landscape.

Failed economic conditions that offer bleak prospects for the future take a significant toll on individuals as well as communities. Economic and technological changes are producing *a culture of poverty and despair* in many rural and remote communities in the Province. However, this culture of poverty and despair is not news to Larry, as this problem has long existed in the First Nations community. Substance abuse and addiction problems as well as crime and violence are becoming more commonplace in many rural and remote communities. Some of the participants have suffered personally and struggled with drug and alcohol problems that are, in many ways, a result of the declining economic and social conditions in their communities. For example, Rick says, “It got to the point where I was a messed up kid, and I didn’t know any way out, right? So, I got fed up and recovered life in Nanaimo.” The participants clearly link the social conditions in their rural communities to the broader political and economic system, and it is clear that these conditions are owing to a pattern of asymmetrical power relations.

Asymmetrical power relations.

The fact is most of the participants' experiences in the rural setting relate to a pattern of asymmetrical power relations. The participants had to contend with dominant group values in their working lives, even those living quiet lives in the remotest regions. Most of these men obviously had limited direct contact with either elite groups or "the system" while working in rural and remote regions. However, even limited contact was sufficient to reinforce and legitimize some strong resistance to the dominant values of mainstream society and culture. Taken together, these and earlier educational experiences helped to mold the participants' attitudes and behavioural patterns, especially with reference to people in positions of power. Their experiences make clear the fact that the dominant group act as brokers, guardians, and sustainers of the dominant value system, and that they do so by allocating or denying subordinate groups society's major rewards.

Jay and Rick describe situations in the rural setting that demonstrated not only the power of the dominant social group for allocating or denying society's major rewards but the limited power of subordinate social groups as well. Faced with conditions of chronic unemployment and few economic alternatives, subordinate groups are much more vulnerable to oppression and exploitation by elite or dominant groups. Both Jay and Rick describe situations where members of the dominant group (senior supervisors and managers; "suits," and "higher ups" as Jay and Rick refer to them) use their privilege and power as "guardians" and "sustainers" to impose social and economic sanctions on those who challenge their claims to economic, moral, social, and cultural supremacy.

Jay, in describing his rural community, alludes to a surprisingly rigid social hierarchy and an oppressive use of power by the dominant elites. In his experience, the dominant groups' power of social and economic sanction was absolute. Real or perceived challenges to dominant group hegemony, authority, and control meant that people were simply severed from their community. He says, "A company town is more like a dictatorship than a logging town…there is a camp manager and what he and the suits say goes or people just get booted out of town." Jay's reference to "suits" symbolizes his belief that it is the economic elites that are the real source of conflict in his community. Moreover, he clearly takes bitter exception to their use of specialized personnel such as the camp manager in order to exercise their power and maintain their control over the people in the community.

Rick describes an incident in his working life in a remote logging camp wherein his power as a First Aid attendant was in conflict with the power of his employer. He recalls, "Being the First Aid, we couldn't let the crew work … the 'higher ups' still wanted to fly the crews into the hills … and we wouldn't let them do it. And, I didn't get called back the next year." This incident concerned more than issues of power; it was also about values. It highlights a genuine moral conflict concerning what Rick sees as *fair play* regarding following the rules of the Workers Compensation Board and his belief in the value of life versus values of *competition* and profit.

The participants' narratives reveal that in rural and remote regions of the Province, elite groups use specialized personnel in order to exercise and maintain authority. Their

descriptions reveal a pattern of direct and indirect application of power by dominant social groups, and this pattern is very obvious in the participants' early educational experiences and in their working lives. However, it is also clear that subordinate groups frequently resist the marginalization of their cultures, beliefs, and values and this *pattern of resistance* is a predominant feature in the narratives provided by the participants.

While these examples do not provide a complete picture of the social condition in the participants' rural and remote communities, they do describe a framework of constraints in their life experiences. Experiences such as these make it clear that the participants and their communities are embroiled in a struggle – latent as it may seem - fighting against constraints that threaten their livelihoods, freedoms, and identities. That is, they are struggling for their economic, social, and cultural survival. To a considerable extent, these tensions and conflicts account for the participants' involuntary migration to the urban and academic settings. This migration can be seen as their only viable option; that is, it is probably the only adaptive survival strategy left them.

Transition to the Urban Setting and Educational Programs

It would be too simplistic to suggest a neat cut-off between the participants' experiences in their rural setting and their experiences of coping with issues of transition in the urban and academic settings. For it seems obvious that the participants' attitudes and behavioural patterns in the urban and academic settings are informed and molded as much by past life experience as they are by their experiences in the present. The fact is, their experiences in both contexts are the product of dynamic, historical forces, and this is

a prominent feature in the narratives provided by the participants. The importance of this historical perspective for understanding the participants' rural-urban transitional experience simply cannot be disregarded. It is these forces that largely affect and even limit their ability to realize their potential and improve the quality of their lives.

The participants interviewed in this study see education as the key to change and as a means of improving the quality of their lives. When asked what is the most important thing that has happened as a result of your decision to migrate from the rural community, Jay responded: "School is the most important thing that's happened." Larry notes that attending school means, "you're on a positive side of life, you're trying to achieve." However, the participants' quest for change and self-renewal, through the processes of upgrading literacy skills in the urban setting, takes place in a situation of profound social and cultural tension that they experience as both *strange* and *familiar*. These tensions result from an intensified struggle to come to terms with mainstream social and cultural norms and values. On one level, their tensions relate to changes regarding the layout and use of physical space and the allocation of time. On another level, their tensions are social, cultural, and personal concerning their values, identities, and self-images. These tensions stem directly from the general but pervasive influence of the political and economic systems involved in their educational pursuits. Social, cultural, and systemic pressures bear heavy on these men, and, taken together, these factors make the psychological burden of transition to adult education programs even greater.

Ideology and discontinuity.

The participants' expectation that education is the key to improving the quality of their lives is based on certain commonly held assumptions about Canadian society, its institutions, and their structures. These assumptions are informed by conservative and liberal democratic theory that promotes the notion that Canadian society is based on a principle of meritocracy, and that societal rewards are distributed on the basis of merit. This prevailing ideology also claims that our social and cultural institutions and structures function in such a manner as to reduce inequalities among individuals and groups. Hence, the participants, like many members of society, assume that the educational system provides equality of opportunity, and that individuals are equally rewarded on the basis of ability and effort. Yet, the experiences of these men suggest a considerable gap between this ideology, or belief system, and social reality.

It is this discontinuity between the egalitarian promises of mainstream ideology and social reality that largely accounts for the conflicts and tensions that can be observed throughout the lives of these men, especially in their personal educational experiences. This gap between the prevailing ideology and social reality also accounts in large measure for historical patterns of conflicting relations between dominant and subordinate groups in a much larger context. It might also be argued that it is owing to this ideology, this system of belief that makes change feasible, that dominant groups have historically maintained their hegemony in Canada. However, while social cohesion, stability, and consensus are basically maintained in this country, so are obvious inequalities, and this is

apparent in the participants' experiences in accessing formal educational institutions and in their attempts to succeed in career and academic programs.

Ascribed Social Inequalities

The participants' experiences of attempting to access and participate in adult education programs indicate that educational institutions and related structures and processes reproduce existing social inequalities (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977). Their interaction with structures and processes both internal and external to the education system results in tensions concerning their self-identity and their place within the social order. The participants' experiences reveal that factors such as regional disparities in educational access, financial inequalities, ethnicity, and social class serve as barriers to full and meaningful educational as well as social, economic, and political participation.

The participants' involuntary migration has disengaged them from the contexts in which they have known themselves, and they find themselves arbitrarily separated from the settings and roles that have been important to them (Bridges, 1980). That is, the participants experience a loss of self-identity resulting in social and cultural alienation. They experience the loss of a role that not only prescribed their behaviour but made them immediately identifiable as well (Bridges, 1980). Rick says, " I've got friends that have always envied me because I've been like the definition of freedom, right… Now I don't have that freedom, I have no freedom." Garry says that he was a 'chokerman" and a "second loader" but now he struggles to define himself and concludes, "I guess I'm a

student." Issues of an absence of self-identity often result in feelings of disorientation. Larry remarks, " I come from an isolated area – you know what you want to do, and like you know who to talk to and what you can do and all that. But, once you hit the city you're lost, completely lost." In many respects, as Bridges' notions suggest, the participants' feelings of alienation can be viewed as typical of any transitional experience. Unfortunately, Bridges' conception of transition fails to connect feelings of disidentification, disengagement, and disenchantment to specific social and systemic inequalities. Transitions do not simply evolve in their own terms. The evidence, in this study, is that the participants experience feelings of alienation that largely result from the experience of marginality arising from social and institutionalized conditions of inequality. Their transition from a rural setting to the urban and academic setting is significantly affected by their interaction with systems, structures, and processes both internal and external to the education system. Their interaction with these systems, structures, and processes intensifies conflicts of identity and social place inherent in the transitional process.

Even when some of the participants were in a position to afford the financial costs associated with acquiring formal educational accreditation, they faced systemic barriers to educational opportunities. They also faced barriers to community based adult literacy programs as well. While living and working in their communities, the participants found that they could not access adult literacy and upgrading programs owing to factors such as job commitments as well as regional disparities in educational access. Garry remarks, "Going to school! There was no access to that kind of thing up there – not when I was up

there." Jay notes that the only opportunity for educational upgrading that existed in his community involved a long and treacherous journey on a "logging road" after a full day's work. Rick says that he thought about "correspondence [school] or to try and do something." However, long work shifts as well as isolated conditions not conducive to learning such as trying to study "by candlelight or flashlight in the tent," meant that he "really didn't see a whole lot of opportunity for success." It is difficult to study having already put in a long day in a physically demanding job, "you're tired at the end of the day." Voluntarily giving up their jobs in order to pursue a formal education was a luxury they could not afford.

The participants' only opportunity for accessing adult educational programs comes at a time when they are constrained by significant social, financial, and psychological burdens related to unemployment and their forced migration to the urban and academic settings. There is very little that distinguishes them more from the middle and upper classes than their reliance on the system for financial support. Their experiences suggest that the interlocking relationship between the educational system and the economic system function to preserve the status quo and perpetuate patterns of social inequality (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Unlike people from more financially privileged backgrounds, the participants in this study are entirely dependent upon family or public sponsorship programs of one sort or another for accessing formal educational opportunities. It is the experience of these men that funding programs function as screening systems that make access to formal

educational programs difficult. Rick speaks of a seemingly endless “run around” in his attempts to access educational opportunities. One of the most frustrating aspects of his experience was putting up with capricious bureaucrats who changed their minds at the last minute. He says, “I would have my plan and she would come in and say, ‘Well, I don’t know, it might get approved.’ These plans should not go past her without her knowing if it was going to be approved.” Larry experienced similar frustrations in attempting to access educational funding. He observes that there is very little assistance in navigating the tangle of bureaucracy associated with acquiring funding and that ethnicity was a factor in some of his experiences. He says, “ I was on assistance. I went to my worker, my social worker, and [the social worker] said, ‘ no we don’t do that’ [fund adult basic education upgrading]. Then I got frustrated with the worker. It was difficult, because they treated me like I was a dumb Indian … and you’re alone, you can’t talk to somebody. I had a feeling to move back to where I was before [back to the reservation].”

Not only do some funding programs make it difficult for the financially disadvantaged to access adult education programs, but they make it difficult for individuals to succeed in these programs as well. The experiences of some of the participants’ reveals that these programs do much more than regulate access to funds; they exert considerable influence and control over the curriculum options available to financially needy individuals. Rick’s experience of being forced into studying courses that he feels he does not need simply in order to maintain his funding is a case in point. These influences are pervasive and affect not only the participants’ educational and career options but deeply affect their emotions

and behavioural patterns as well. For example, Rick notes that he is "just so overloaded" and that he is anxious, "my greatest fear is losing my funding." He is angry given the limitations and expectations of these policies. These pressures sometimes find him opting out of the system and he says, "I get to a point …where I just have to sit on a log and do nothing." Likewise, Larry notes the drawbacks to being a funded student and that he sometimes feels like "moving back to where he was before." Clearly, the participants find the dual pressures related to grades and economic survival intimidating, and that these pressures only contribute to an already unhealthy, competitive atmosphere. Instead of providing economic and social conditions conducive to educational access and successful outcomes, funding policy and implementation tends to reinforce the status quo and competitive conditions, and this can be both socially and psychologically oppressive.

Given their social and economic status, the participants' opportunities for educational attainments, and the social rewards that follow, are inherently unequal in relation to people from more privileged backgrounds (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977). Factors such as financial inequalities, social class, and ethnicity as well as regional disparities in educational access tend to reproduce existing social inequalities and inequalities in educational opportunities. It is in this deficit social context that the participants seek self-renewal and attempt to improve their life chances.

Ascribed Cultural Inequalities

The participants are at a significant disadvantage in terms of successful educational outcomes, because educational institutions are adapted to the *needs* and *culture* of the

dominant social and economic groups(Mallea, 1989). They struggle with cultural discontinuities regarding a differing sense of time and space; experience conflicts and tensions because they possess types of communication, knowledge, and skills that are less valued by formalized educational and urban middle class institutions; experience tensions because of conflicting cultural norms and values that affect interactions with people and processes both internal and external to the academic setting.

The participants in this study experience significant discontinuity between the knowledge and skills that they bring from their rural experience and the forms of knowledge and skills endorsed by formalized educational institutions. Jay says that he already possesses the skills required for his work such as "being mechanically inclined," but now it is required that "you get certified, that you have a certain type of math." Rick also notes that he possesses mechanical skills and the "mental toughness" required for his line of work. However, now he is "trying to bridge the gap," because he wants to make a "move up the ladder." Social mobility is difficult because he is "missing a couple of years" of formal accreditation. Garry notes that he possesses skills "not in the way you have reading and writing" but the sort you need to "stay alive" in dangerous working conditions. Likewise, Larry believes his life experiences and the knowledge he has gained to be of considerable value to a younger generation of First Nations, but he feels that " it doesn't mean much if I don't get my program and that." The participants' comments clearly illustrate the fact that the education system values certain types of knowledge and skills more than other forms of *cultural capital*. The participants clearly

feel that their knowledge and skills are less valued, and this simply reinforces their feelings of social and cultural alienation.

The participants also experience cultural discontinuity within the educational institution given their use of vernacular forms of communication; that is, they use a less standardized form of English. The language of working class men, such as loggers, is often incompatible with the formalized and codified academic language of the institution. The participants struggle with these differences. For example, when Rick talks about his working conditions and refers to “shitting in an outhouse” and “black flies biting your ass” he apologizes. However, he points out that this is the only way he can convey his thoughts and feelings with precision. He says, “ Excuse me, but that’s the way it is.” Nor are the oral traditions of First Nations learners such as Larry compatible with the forms of written communication demanded by educational institutions. Larry notes that English writing skills present the greatest threat to his success in academic programs. He says, “Like I said before, when I’m speaking to a person, I can communicate. But, the problem is English and grammar and that. I can’t write very well … it’s a big problem for getting my program.” There is simply no formal provision in the academic institution for accommodating these differences in *cultural capital*. The participants’ comments suggest a significant gap between the forms of cultural capital that they possess and the forms of cultural capital that are produced, reproduced, and endorsed by educational institutions.

Most of these men struggle to cope with feelings of *cultural disorientation* in the academic setting that conflict with their sense of *space*. They experience considerable difficulty in orienting themselves to the institutional setting. Some feel alone, lost, or nervous, while still others feel both physically and psychologically constrained. Larry says that he feels " kind of isolated" and he makes reference to the cultural norms that account for this feeling. He says, "It's hard to make connections, because everybody is off to another class and they're busy and so on." In short, the culture of the formal educational setting does not help to integrate the newcomer but further compounds the alienating process. Garry says that being at school makes him "feel kinda nervous." Still others struggle with the confining effects of the physical setting. Rick states that he does not want to be "sittin' all day" and that he prefers "to be outside." He notes that he feels both psychologically and physically constrained: "I can't stand routine," and, "It would be nice just to have my own space…a place just to relax." The participants clearly struggle with feelings of cultural disorientation and alienation, and this can be seen as a reaction to the cultural norms regulating social and spatial relationships in the urban academic setting.

The participants not only experience a changed sense of *space* but a changed sense of *time* that conflicts with their familiar way of structuring time. Most of these men worked in the primary resource sector where hectic work during the work-season alternated with slack time during the off-season. In the academic setting, they lose the relative flexibility and freedom they experienced in their working lives.

The changed sense of time the participants experience in their transition to the academic setting is both disorienting and distressing. Rick says, "I'm just so overloaded…there's a balance you know, and I just don't think there is enough time ... you get to a burn-out point … I used to have … freedom. And, uh, now I don't have that freedom. I have no freedom right, I'm rules and regulations, and gotta be here and gotta get that done and this done … I look forward to getting a job, I look forward to the break." Garry notes the stresses related to time pressures in the academic setting and says, "Going to school … I get nervous trying to keep it all together." Larry states, "It's a challenge," and, "Some days I feel like just turning the books in, because there is no time, and … I am frustrated." The participants experience stresses and pressures regarding the allocation of time, because time is valued and m*anaged* qualitatively differently in the urban academic setting. These time pressures are primarily owing to systemic policies and decisions. They experience a compressed sense of time on a scale that they did not encounter in their rural cultures and settings. Clearly, the dominant culture's concept of time tied to the world of business and the system of the clock is antithetical to the participants' experiences of time in their lives' as they knew them.

In sharing the experiences of the participants, one becomes cognizant of the enormity of the cultural gap that exists between their rural cultural backgrounds and that of the urban and academic settings. Some of the participants struggle with feelings of isolation, changed kinship interactions, and conflicts of loyalty regarding the cultures of home and school; that is, they struggle with the formal and informal rural and urban dichotomies.

Sometimes individuals seek a network of pseudo-kin relationships. Larry notes that when he initially made the change to an urban setting he sought out people who were more like his "acquaintances." However, this was not only the need for friends, it was a matter of creating "fictitious" kin-relations. Larry's deep-seated need to re-establish close group ties with other First Nations people and to reconstruct a sense of cultural identity resulted in his making social connections in the urban setting that had powerful and negative consequences. Larry says he "picked up with the wrong crowd" and that his quality of life spiraled downward into alcoholism and poverty. It has taken him years to "sober-up" and to make the transition to educational programs. Now enrolled in adult educational programs, he finds that the program content, much as in his early years in the Residential School, remains largely compatible with the culture, values, and traditions of the dominant culture. He still struggles to come to terms with these differing social and cultural values. He says that he experiences feelings of "isolation," and he sometimes wonders, "What am I trying to prove and that?"

Even those who maintain close kinship ties experience feelings of cultural isolation and alienation owing to perceived changes in relationships with relatives and friends. Individuals in transition sometimes lack the support of the home community and shoulder the additional burden of alienation from family and friends. Jay is living with family members in the urban setting, however, he too feels isolated. Jay notes, "Some family members are a little bit cynical" about his quest for educational upgrading. Clearly, Jay's quest for educational attainments involves feelings of alienation and isolation regarding his changing relationship with relatives. He notes that his family is, "Negative.

Negative, because you should have done this before." Jay desperately wants to succeed in his educational programs, but he experiences negative psychological, social, and educational consequences because of the cultural dissonance between home and the academic setting. On the one hand, he experiences conflicts and tensions because of the way in which the educational system reinforces differences in cultural capital. On the other hand, he lacks family support; that is, he is taunted and ridiculed for his efforts. This situation not only undermines his self-confidence, but it creates genuine conflicts of loyalty as well.

Conflicting loyalties between the cultures of home and school may explain Jay's tendency to sabotage his education. Too often, the tendency to sabotage one's educational opportunities is viewed as a matter of individual instability. In fact, it might be argued that *competing cultural expectations* regarding differing activities, relationships, and roles cause him to disengage from the educational context. On the one hand, he lacks the necessary skills needed to cope with the social and cultural demands and expectations in the institutional setting. On the other hand, the effort needed to choose between divergent community values or to rebel against familial control is simply too great.

Conflicts of loyalty occur even when the participants' quest for educational attainments results in improved relations. Rick notes that his family is "a little happier" with him and the "girl I'm kind of keen on is a lot happier with me." Nevertheless, he questions his loyalty to his personal values, and this, in turn, raises issues of self-identity and self-

image. He says, "I don't know, you know, sometimes I think she [his girlfriend] wants the old rebel back, you know the old bad ass." As well, he notes that his friends now view him differently, "Oh yeah, yeah, they know me as the party animal. Doing whatever I want, throwing caution to the wind, and now I'm kind of an old fuddy-duddy. I'm doin' everything by the rules…a lot of 'em are still in shock." Clearly, Rick struggles with issues of conformity and feelings of marginality derived from living in two cultural worlds simultaneously. On the one hand, he does not wish to be seen as conforming to a set of cultural norms and values that he has so obviously resisted in the past. His sense of marginality, of being culturally dispossessed, revolves into the concept of being true to oneself and of standing up to the injustices one perceives in the world. On the other hand, he feels he is in a dilemma, because he knows that he needs academic accreditation if he is to achieve his vocational goal of environmentally responsible living. More specifically, Rick's struggle, as with the other participants, highlights concerns about the price one pays for conformity, and, the other side of this conflict, the greater price one must pay to maintain one's sense of individuality; that is, one's sense of cultural identity, norms, and values.

Clearly, the participants' transitional experiences are significantly affected by cultural conflicts and tensions both internal and external to the academic setting. They do not possess the norms and values that are so influential in educational and social selection. That is, they do not possess the forms of *cultural capital* that influence educational systems and placement within the social order. In short, the participants do not possess the particular types of communication, norms of behaviour, knowledge, values, and skills

that are most highly valued by mainstream political, social, and cultural institutions. The near monopoly by privileged groups over preferred forms of cultural capital tends to ensure that those from the mainstream possess greater access to higher education, political power, and economic position. Their possession of preferred forms of knowledge, values, and skills ensures that they are capable of fully articulating their *needs* and with a sense of confidence and *cultural* solidarity. For the participants in this study, the experience is not that of confidence or cultural solidarity; on the contrary, their experience of transition to the urban and academic settings is that of conflict, uncertainty, and profound cultural isolation.

The participants' transition to adult education programs in the urban setting subjects them to marked discontinuities regarding the ideological claims of mainstream society and culture. That is, in the process of transition, the participants experience a heightened *sense* of discontinuity regarding the egalitarian claims of the dominant ideology in relation to the realities of their lives. Clearly, they face many obstacles in realizing their potential contributions and improving the quality of their lives given the ascribed social, cultural, and systemic inequalities inherent in their transitions to the urban and academic settings. Yet, their narratives also reveal that the participants are not inert victims of dominant-group oppression; they attempt to resist in various ways, and in varying degrees of intensity, the alienation of their cultural identities, norms, and values.

Summary

In summary, this chapter reveals a pattern of marginality in the material histories and life experiences of the participants. This pattern of marginality can be attributed to the fact that dominant groups exercise considerable authority, power, and control over the political, economic, social, and cultural systems, structures, and processes that govern their lives. This is evident in their earlier educational experiences, in their working lives, and in their forced migrations to the urban and academic settings. The narratives provided by the participants reveal the intimate relationship between dominant group culture, power, and ideology in affecting rural social and cultural conditions as well as the processes of transition in the urban and academic settings. However, it is also clear that subordinate groups frequently resist the marginalization of their cultural norms and values, and this pattern of resistance is a predominant feature in the narratives provided by the participants. Despite these conditions, it is also apparent that the participants' transition to adult education programs in the urban and academic settings also creates opportunities for working with them in more creative and progressive ways to transform these social realities.

Chapter VI

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Conclusions

Historically, transitions involve the reshaping of conditions between individuals and society. This is evident in the current historical conjuncture and in the case of the participants in this study. They were forced to migrate from a rural to an urban and academic setting and were isolated in a position of dependency wherein the system attempted to mold them to rigid forms of social and cultural conformity. The social and psychological effects were oppressive, as their sense of social place and cultural identity was drastically altered. Their experiences revealed that transitional experiences occur at different points along a continuum, however, the effects of transitional experiences are not only life-long but are also life-wide. The participants' experiences of transition to adult education programs revealed how hegemonic groups in mainstream society, whether by deliberate design or unconscious ethnocentrism, attempt to bring about a metamorphosis in their cultural norms, values, and identities. This process inherently involved interaction between the participants and institutionalized forms of dominant-group authority, power, and control. Taken together, these processes ensured that their transitions to the urban and academic settings were distinguished by patterns of conflict, resistance, uncertainty, and profound cultural isolation.

Findings.

The participants' early experiences in the education system stressed the contradictory forces on their *rural social* and *cultural* consciousness. The education system placed

considerable emphasis on fostering in the participants a *competitive spirit* and the psychological capacities necessary for the development of core values such as individualism, independence and self-reliance characteristic of the mainstream or dominant culture. It was noted that fundamental educational principles of individual competition were well suited to the social, political, and economic ideology of the mainstream or dominant group. However, social and cultural tensions evolved, because the participants' rural cultures did not emphasize these competitive norms and values; on the contrary, they stressed communal values and group cooperation.

Taken together, the participants' early educational experiences revealed a strong link between dominant-group *culture, power* and *ideology* and the reproduction of particular forms of communication, norms of behaviour, knowledge, values and skills transmitted within the education system. While it was very apparent that their rural cultures did not emphasize the same norms and values as those of the dominant culture, it was abundantly clear that the form and content of education was affected and even determined by the power and influence of the dominant group. The participants' early experiences in the education system disrupted the handing down of rural cultural norms and values from one generation to the next. Their narratives strongly suggested an emergent struggle between their subordinate rural social and cultural norms and values and the normative influences of the dominant culture within the education system. More specifically, their narratives revealed tensions between the latent pre-capitalist norms and values inherent in their First Nations and working class cultures and the normative ideological influences of mainstream capitalist culture fostered and promoted in the education system. Certainly,

the participants struggled with whether or not to incorporate or resist mainstream social, cultural and ideological influences in the educational setting, and this was very apparent regarding issues such as the dominant culture's norms of behaviour that reinforced values such as competition.

It was very apparent that the participants' early experiences in the education system concerning these social, cultural and ideological tensions were critical in shaping their attitudes and behavioural patterns in response to these tensions. The data clearly illustrated that they did attempt to resist indoctrination to dominant-group culture, norms and values and ultimately rebelled against the constraints of the dominant and controlling value system. As a form of protest or *resistance* they quit the education system and went to work. They found work in the primary resource sector, as that was where work was then available for unskilled, untrained workers. However, as was observed in the previous chapter, there were long-term implications and consequences arising from their early experiences in the education system.

It was very obvious that the participants in this study did internalize certain mainstream values as well as certain mainstream value judgements concerning their structured learning environment. Their narratives demonstrated that their early experiences in the education system reinforced liberal democratic notions of *individualism*, and an implicit acceptance of a society and education system founded on the principle of *meritocracy*. Clearly, the dominant group succeeded, at least in part, in asserting the hegemony of its

culture within the education system in ways that reinforced its value system, and which displaced and devalued that of the participants.

In reflecting upon their early years in the education system, the participants in this study exhibited a universal tendency to view their lack of success in school as a matter of *individual* responsibility; that is, they blamed themselves. Their early experiences in the education system resulted in profoundly *low self-esteem*. They clearly internalized certain mainstream value judgements that placed blame for failure on individual and group characteristics as opposed to the social conditions that created the problem. In fact, it was very clear that in the process of internalizing these judgements, the participants ultimately negated the validity of their insights into the social condition and its role in affecting their early educational experiences. Clearly, their internalization of individualistic and meritocratic values during their early years in the education system resulted in a somewhat fragmented and contradictory consciousness.

Moreover, their narratives revealed that resistance to mainstream culture, norms and values promoted in the education system is a major factor regarding conflict and dropout among young students from the non-dominant culture in rural and remote regions. Their early experiences in the education system were found to be indicative of a much larger pattern of conflicting social, cultural and ideological traditions in the overall life experiences of the participants. This was apparent in discussing the participants' experiences in their working lives in rural and remote regions of the Province.

Dominant-group culture, power and ideology are the very essence of the politics of globalization currently shaping social relations and conditions in contemporary capitalist society. The experiences of the participants in this study were very revealing of how this politics takes shape at the local level in rural and remote regions of British Columbia. Their narratives revealed struggles concerning the preservation of alternative cultures, ideologies and social forms; the crisis in labour regarding work allocation and disqualification; the flight of human capital and the resultant impoverishment and even destruction of entire rural communities.

Their narratives made clear the fact that global economic trends are devastating many rural and remote resource-based communities in the Province. Changes in social, cultural, employment, and economic conditions in rural and remote regions of the Province threaten the well being of individuals as well as communities. These changes created tensions in the working lives of these men and in their communities. Their narratives stressed failing economic conditions; declining social conditions; asymmetrical power relations; and the struggle, with these constraints as factors, undermining rural society and culture, and threatening individual and community well being.

Their narratives make clear that the consequences for individuals as well as communities were clearly devastating as failing economic conditions have resulted in a culture of poverty, typified by attitudes of powerlessness, helplessness, and futility in many rural and remote communities in the Province. The participants in this study were acutely aware of the political and economic dimensions of the declining social conditions in their

rural and remote communities, and it was clear that these conditions were owing to a pattern of asymmetrical power relations.

It is in this deficit social context of rural communities in crisis that the participants in this study were forced to migrate from their rural and remote homes to the urban and academic settings. However, the social and cultural tensions experienced by the participants in their transition to adult education programs are clearly part of a dynamic, historical process. For the participants in this study, these tensions are clearly rooted in their early experiences in the education system and in their working lives in rural and remote regions of the Province.

An important finding in this study is that transitions into adult education programs are not autonomous processes. The participants' transitions from a rural to an urban and academic setting were significantly affected by an integrated pattern of social, cultural, political and economic institutions, structures and processes. For example, the transitional experiences of the participants in this study revealed the intimate relationship between the educational system and the broader political and economic system. Much of the conflict and tension the participants experienced in the transitional process was a direct result of the constraints imposed by the political and economic decision-making systems involved in their educational pursuits.

This study found that factors such as financial inequalities, social class, ethnicity, as well as regional disparities in educational access reproduce existing social inequalities and

inequalities in educational opportunities. The participants' experiences suggest that the interlocking relationship between the educational system and the political and economic decision-making systems function to preserve the status quo and perpetuate patterns of social inequality. It was found that their opportunities for educational attainments, and the social rewards that follow, are inherently unequal in relation to people from more privileged backgrounds. Their experiences were that funding programs act as screening systems that not only made it difficult for the financially disadvantaged to access educational opportunities but also made it difficult for them to succeed in their educational programs as well.

The experiences of some of the participants revealed that these programs do much more than regulate access to funds; they exert considerable influence and control over the curriculum options available to financially needy individuals. These regulatory influences were found to be pervasive and affected not only the participants, educational and career options but deeply affected their emotions and behavioural patterns as well. Instead of providing economic and social conditions conducive to educational access and successful outcomes, funding policy and implementation reinforced the status quo and ongoing patterns of social inequality and this was perceived to be both socially and psychologically oppressive.

The participants were also found to be at a significant disadvantage in terms of successful educational outcomes, because it was observed that educational institutions are adapted to the needs and culture of the dominant social and economic groups. The participants in

this study struggled with cultural discontinuities regarding a differing sense of *time* and *space*; experienced conflicts and tensions because they possess types of communication, knowledge and skills that are less valued by formalized educational and urban middle-class institutions; experienced tensions because of conflicting cultural norms and values that affected interactions with people and processes both internal and external to the academic setting.

The participants further experienced significant discontinuity between the knowledge and skills that they brought from their rural experience and the knowledge and skills endorsed by formalized educational institutions. Their comments illustrated that there was no respect accorded their *prior learning*; that is, there was no respect accorded their knowledge and skills derived from earlier training or work experience. Their comments clearly illustrated that education systems value certain types of knowledge and skills more than other forms of cultural capital. The participants certainly felt that their cultural capital was less valued and this simply reinforced their feelings of social alienation.

They also experienced cultural discontinuity within the educational institution given their use of vernacular forms of communication. It was observed that the language of working class men, such as loggers, is often incompatible with the formalized and codified academic language of the institution. Nor were the oral traditions of First Nations learners found to be compatible with the forms of written communication demanded by educational institutions. The participants' narratives clearly revealed that they struggled with these differences, but that there is simply no formal provision in the academic

institution for accommodating these differences in cultural capital. The participants' comments revealed a significant gap between the forms of cultural capital that they possess and the forms of cultural capital that are produced, reproduced, and endorsed by educational institutions.

It was also found that the participants struggled to cope with their personal feelings of cultural disorientation in the institutional setting that conflicted with their sense of space. They experienced considerable difficulty in orienting themselves to the urban educational setting. Some felt alone, lost, or nervous while others felt both physically and psychologically constrained. The culture of the formal educational setting did not help to integrate the newcomers but further compounded the alienating process. They struggled with what they viewed as the impersonal environment within the institutional setting; that is, they struggled with the cultural norms regulating social and spatial relations in the urban academic setting.

The participants not only struggled with a changed sense of *space*, but a changed sense of *time*; this conflicted with their familiar ways of structuring both. It was found that the changed sense of time that they experienced in the urban academic setting was both disorienting and distressing. They experienced stresses and pressures regarding the allocation of time and these stresses and pressures were largely owing to systemic policies and decisions. Clearly, the dominant culture’s concept of time tied to the world of business and the system of the clock was antithetical to the participants’ experience of the world as they had known it in their rural cultural settings.

Resolution of these tensions was made difficult, as the participants were simultaneously experiencing intense feelings of isolation, and alienation, owing to changed kinship interactions, and conflicts of loyalty regarding the cultures of home and school. Intense feelings of isolation led some individuals to seek out a network of pseudo-kin relationships. One individual found that having escaped oppressive socio-economic conditions in his rural community, his quality of life in the urban setting spiraled downward into alcoholism and poverty. Even those who maintained close kinship ties experienced feelings of isolation owing to perceived changes in relationships with relatives and friends. It was found that some participants lacked the support of the home community and shouldered the additional burden of alienation from family and friends. The cultural dissonance between home and the academic setting was found to have negative psychological, social, and educational consequences for some of the participants. For, it seems clear that this situation not only undermined self-confidence, but it created genuine conflicts of loyalty as well.

It was found that conflicting loyalties between the cultures of home and school could lead an individual to sabotage his education. It was observed that competing cultural expectations regarding differing activities, relationships, and roles could cause an individual to disengage from the educational context. On the one hand, the participant lacked the necessary skills needed to cope with the social and cultural demands and expectations in the urban academic setting. On the other hand, the effort needed to

choose between divergent community values or to rebel against familial control was simply too great.

Conflicts of loyalty regarding the cultures of home and school occurred even when a participant's quest for educational attainments resulted in improved relations. Loyalty to one's personal values sometimes resulted in issues of self-identity, because friends and family now viewed the participant differently. This, in turn, led to significant issues regarding self-image and feelings of marginality derived from living in two cultural worlds simultaneously. On the one hand, the participant did not wish to be seen as conforming to a set of cultural norms and values he had so obviously resisted in the past. His sense of marginality, of being culturally dispossessed, evolved into the concept of being true to oneself and of standing up to the injustices one perceives in the world. On the other hand, he felt he was in a dilemma, because he needed academic accreditation if he was to achieve his vocational goal of environmentally responsible living. His struggle, as with the other participants, highlighted concerns regarding the price one pays for conformity, and the other side of this conflict, the greater price one must pay to maintain one's sense of cultural identity, norms and values.

The participants' transitional experiences were thus significantly compounded by cultural tensions both internal and external to the academic setting. It seemed obvious that they do not possess the cultural norms and values so influential in educational and social selection. That is, they do not possess the forms of cultural capital that influence educational policy and placement within the social order. In short, it was found that the

participants do not possess the particular types of communication, norms of behaviour, knowledge, values and skills most highly valued by mainstream political, social and cultural institutions.

Their experience regarding issues of access and potential for success in adult education programs were found to be inherently unequal in relation to people enculturated to the norms and values of the dominant culture. It was observed that adult students from mainstream social and economic groups inherently possess forms of cultural capital that tend to ensure them greater access to higher education, political power and economic position. Their possession of preferred forms of cultural capital tends to ensure that they are capable of more fully articulating their needs and with a sense of confidence and cultural solidarity. For the participants in this study the experience was not that of confidence or cultural solidarity; on the contrary, their experience of transition to the urban and academic settings was that of conflict, uncertainty and, profound cultural isolation.

The difficulties of the transitional process as experienced by the participants in this study were thus compounded by the cultural adjustments required of them. Competing conceptions of what constitutes the good life whether in the context of their rural communities or that of the urban and academic settings resulted in a dichotomy for the participants in this study. Their narratives sometimes stressed a deeply felt need to reconnect with the past and to rebel against being uprooted. Their experience of cultural discontinuity could sometimes lead to conflicts related to time and space that affected

their participation in their new urban environment and in the educational setting. The cultural shift also led to internal conflicts of loyalties and uncertainty about their own identities. Problems of self-identity and self-image only made the transition process more difficult and often led them to feel like outcasts. Therefore, the participants' narratives consistently reveal patterns of resistance to the social and cultural changes demanded of them in the urban and academic settings. Their resistance was found to be one of the most intriguing aspects of the transitional process.

Transition and resistance.

The experiences of the participants reveals much about the linkages between transition and resistance on the part of individuals and groups in society who are disadvantaged by the operation of the system. Their experiences reveal that adult transitions, especially formalized educational transitions, are not as autonomous as some theorists would have us believe. Their transitions to the urban and academic settings are part of a larger pattern of institutionalized social, cultural, political and economic relations that are inherently unequal. A major finding of this study is that adult experiences of transition are not free from their historical ties. The participants' patterns of resistance in the urban and academic settings cannot be isolated from historical patterns of cultural domination and resistance that have shaped and molded their attitudes and behavioural patterns over the course of their lives. Their experiences suggest that the transition to formalized educational settings tends to intensify patterns of resistance on the part of adults disadvantaged by the operation of the system. In short, resistance during the transitional

process was most apparent when the participants experienced discontinuity between the egalitarian promises of the dominant ideology and their lived realities.

This study found that contest and struggle to dominant-group culture, power, and ideology were central issues in the narratives provided by these men. This was very obvious in their early educational experiences, in their working lives and in their transitions to the urban and academic settings. It was found that in the participants' early educational experiences, the dominant group attempted to transmit their culture and ideology, through direct and indirect applications of power, and this was met with resistance. It was also found that social and cultural tensions evolved, because the participants' rural social and cultural traditions were antithetical to those of mainstream society - its culture and values. More specifically, the participants' rural cultural values tended to reinforce cooperation and communal values as opposed to fostering competition and individualism. The data clearly demonstrated that the participants did resist indoctrination to dominant-group culture, norms, and values and ultimately rebelled against the constraints of the dominant and controlling value system. As a form of protest or resistance all of the participants dropped out of the school system and went to work. They all worked in the primary resource sector, as that was where jobs were then available for unskilled, untrained workers.

It is clear that their early experiences in the education system in rural and remote communities were critical in shaping their attitudes and behavioural patterns in relation to top-down authority. This was very obvious in their working lives in rural and remote

communities wherein they resisted the moral, social and cultural authority of the dominant elites. However, it is also clear that this was an unequal struggle. Their forced migration to the urban and academic settings is the result of an unequal contest owing to the social, cultural, economic and political power of the dominant-group.

The patterns of resistance that they exhibited in the urban and academic settings were intensified and can be seen as their reaction to what has become a lifetime of intolerable constraints. As evidenced throughout the previous chapter, the participants' histories reveal a pattern of social and cultural tensions. However, it is in their transition to the urban and academic settings that social and cultural tensions are probably at their greatest. It is at this critical conjuncture in their quest to improve their quality of life that they experience most directly, and in its totality, institutionalized forms of dominant-group authority, power and control. The participants struggle with this system of structured inequality. This struggle invariably involves issues of conformity and cultural loyalty as well as issues of legitimacy regarding their cultural capital, norms, and values. That this situation provokes moments of intense resistance from the participants is apparent in their interactions with people and processes both internal and external to the academic setting. Their experiences in the urban academic setting can be seen to intensify long-held attitudes of resistance to dominant-group norms and values.

Their experiences of transition may help to account for lower completion rates for non-dominant social and cultural groups in adult education. In short, the experiences and histories of the participants in this study are very suggestive of why the education system

seems to work to the advantage of some groups but not others. This insight may prove useful in addressing issues of student retention.

This study has repeatedly demonstrated the extent to which the participants felt the need to succeed in their transitions to adult education programs. However, their opportunities for success were restricted by conditions that limited their success. These conditions, it was observed, could sometimes drive the participants to distraction and even despair, and this depleted them of the energy required to realize their goals of greater economic security and social advancement. It was clear that the participants' ability to succeed in their transitions to the urban and academic settings achieve their goals required a much greater level of social and institutional support.

Implications

The experiences of the participants in this study emphasize the dynamics of culture, power and ideology in affecting rural social and cultural conditions as well as their transitions to the urban and academic settings. Their narratives reveal the need for a much more integrated support system at the institutional, regional, and local levels.

Their experiences also indicate the need to increase mutual understanding between people of differing social, cultural and ideological traditions and to improve the quality of everyday life in rural and remote communities. This can only happen by addressing the concrete realities of life in rural and remote regions and by recognizing the central role that the education system plays in the structuring of social relations. Educators,

researchers and teacher training institutions can contribute to an equitable and just society only by recognizing the dynamics of culture, power and ideology in the classroom, school, and community.

It is evident from the experiences of the participants in this study that the transitional experience is directly related to these issues. Clearly, if they are to make a successful transition in their educational pursuits, realize their goals, and improve the quality of their lives, they require the support of policy makers, educators as well as other cultural and institutional workers within the system. Support and social solidarity are a matter of commitment, and it is very obvious that such a commitment is dependent upon a questioning of the norms and values governing social life.

In short, values are at the core of the issues revealed in the narratives provided by the participants. The emergence of values in the narratives provided by the participants in this study is an important recognition of education as a political act. I do not believe that we can engage in dialogue about issues such as community development, educational access, transition, literacy, or the people, institutions, structures, and processes involved without recognizing this fact.

Qualitative research on issues in rural education and community development provides an opportunity to participate in an on-going dialogue about the culture of education and its role in community development. Participation requires that we present in a *sensitive* and *purposeful* way what others have experienced, their attempts to make sense of their

experiences, respect and interpret their feelings and perceptions, and from this come to some practical means for addressing learners needs. Our participation in the on-going dialogue about education and its relationship to the broader community provides an opportunity to present knowledge about lived experience that contributes something not only insightful but *purposeful*. As Freire (1970) suggested, knowledge is lived experience rooted in critical social and cultural consciousness, and it is a knowledge for which we are all responsible. An important means through which this objective can be achieved is the collection and dissemination of knowledge and information and the fostering of links between teachers, schools, and communities.

Recommendations

The participants' narratives reveal the need for further research in the area of cultural transitions in adult education. More specifically, research is required to explore the realities and dilemmas of transitions in adult education that further explain why the education system works to the advantage of some individuals and groups but not others. Educators as well as policy makers could benefit from further study of how intersecting social, cultural, political, and economic policies either enhance or deny individuals and groups access to education and occupational opportunities and advancement.

It is clear from the evidence in this study that globalization is having an immediate and profound impact on rural individuals and their communities. That is, the shift from a resource-based economy to the new information-based global economy is particularly acute in rural and remote communities. More research is required into the shift from

rural resource-based economies to the new information-based global economy in Canada. Further interdisciplinary research is necessary regarding how social, cultural, political and economic factors contribute to or inhibit social cohesion and mobility. Much more empirical research in rural education and community development is required, incorporating both macro and micro-sociological studies, if we are to fully comprehend the impact of social, cultural, political and economic change on the education system and the broader community.

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Appendix A

The Participants

The following profiles use pseudonyms and present background information on the participants in the study. They have each signed the "Literacy Nanaimo Participant Informed Consent Form" which is on file (See Appendix D).

Garry

Garry is a single parent in his mid-forties. He is a former forestry worker who became unemployed after a logging accident. He is a shy and quiet person and is basically a non-reader. Having only recently been diagnosed with dyslexia, he suffered throughout his early educational experiences, as he was made to feel that he was mentally deficient. He was labelled and streamed into special help programs, and he decided to drop out of school in his mid-teens.

Garry accessed literacy upgrading programs by bridging from the one-to-one tutor help program at Literacy Nanaimo. While he has no concrete plans for the future, he hopes to some day return to a rural community.

Jay

Jay is the youngest of the participants in this study and is just 18 years old. He has spent his life in rural and remote areas of Northern Vancouver Island where his family has largely been based in logging communities. He dropped out of the public school system at age twelve. Although he lived in forestry communities, he worked with his father in various capacities from fishing to automotive mechanics. As a result of changing economic conditions, the town was shutting down, and there were no options for his family but to migrate to an urban setting.

After his sisters had accessed the educational system, he decided to upgrade his literacy skills. Jay did not experience difficulty in accessing courses in adult basic education at

Malaspina University-College, but he has experienced social and psychological problems in adapting to the academic setting. Unfortunately, Jay is no longer involved in his academic upgrading, as he dropped out of his program.

Larry

Larry is a man in his mid-forties. As a First Nations person, he has experienced the apartheid policies of the Native Reservation and Residential School systems in Canada. While the Residential School system no longer exists, Larry is a living testament to the pain and suffering it has caused his people. Originally from a Reserve in remote Northern Manitoba, Larry now resides in Nanaimo.

He is attempting to upgrade his literacy skills in order to become a drug and alcohol counsellor. He struggles with issues of race and culture in the urban and academic environment. Nonetheless, despite these issues it is apparent that Larry is a very resilient person. He is in the process of completing academic upgrading and has bridged to some college level courses.

Rick

Rick is a young man in his mid-twenties. He is a high school drop out who until recently was employed in the forestry sector in a remote region of the province. Economic and personal factors forced him to migrate from his remote setting to Nanaimo. Rick was out of work owing to rapidly changing economic conditions that forced him to make a decision about his future. He decided to upgrade his education, but access to opportunities for upgrading in the remote setting was limited. His decision to come to Nanaimo was also based on his need to distance himself from his community, as he needed to recover from personal problems related to drugs and alcohol.

Rick's transition to the urban and academic setting has been challenging as he has struggled with problems related to access and funding. Even more challenging for Rick has been the adjustment to his new social and cultural setting. He is in the process of upgrading his literacy skills in order to enter an environmental technology program. While he has made considerable academic progress, he struggles with issues of social and cultural conformity. Nonetheless, he shows every sign of realizing his goals.

Appendix B

First Interview Questions

1.) Could you tell me about your educational and training background?

- a. Where did you go to school?
    1. Rural
    2. Suburban
    3. Urban
    4. Did you move much?
        - a) Frequently
        - b) Infrequently
        - c) Not at all
- b. What grade did you complete?
    1. 1-6
    2. 7-9
    3. 10-12
- c. What additional education have you had?
    1. literacy classes
    2. Adult Basic Education
- d. What additional training have you had? (i.e. First aid, etc)
    - a) vocational training
    - b) certification
    - c) non-certification
    - d) on job training

2.) When you lived in your community were you employed? If no proceed to question #4

1. Yes.
2. No.
    - a) What kind of job did you have in your community?
        1. skilled

2. unskilled
3. unskilled

b) What skills does the job involve?

c) Did you require reading and writing skills for this job?

1. Yes. Explain.
2. No. Explain.

3.) Have there been major changes that have happened in your usual work area?

a) Yes. Explain.

b) No. Explain.

c) How have these changes affected you/family/friends/community?

d) Given a choice would you have stayed with your job?

4.) What was the principal cause that influenced you to move to Nanaimo?

a) Was your need for upgrading and/or literacy help part of your reason for your move? Explain.

1. Economic.
2. Social.
3. Familial.
4. All of the above.

5.) Do you know if there was a literacy, or upgrading program in your community?

a) If yes, why didn't you attend there?

b) If not, would you have attended if there had been?

6.) Did you seek help for your literacy needs in your community?

a) If yes, with whom? Before or after you lost your job?

b) If not, why not?

7.) Do you know if there was a literacy program in a nearby town?

a) If yes, why didn’t you attend there?

b) If no, would you have attended? Why or why not?

8.) Can you describe what your experiences have been in making the shift from your community to Nanaimo?

a) What was it like getting the information and help you needed?

b) How do you feel about the whole experience?

9.) What/who influenced you to come to Literacy Nanaimo?

10.) Was it difficult for you to come for help?

11.) Are you in a training program or ABE program right now?

a) If ABE: do you plan on attending a training program/ college/ university?

b) If not, do you plan on attending a training program/ ABE/college/university?

c) If in a trades program: What do you think the job prospects are for your chosen field? Have you done any research regarding job prospects?

Appendix C
Second Interview Questions

1.) What is the day to day experience, of schooling like for you? - Best thing?
- Worst thing? - What would make it better?

2.) How has getting tutoring or returning to school made a difference in your life?
Prompts:
- are their things you know now that you didn't know before?
- what difference has this experience made in your life?
- are their people you have met that have affected you positively? negatively?
- Are there things you've learned about yourself? Other people? Coping?
- Do you feel your views changed since you left your rural community?
- If yes, how?

3.) What is the most important thing that has happened to you, as a result of your decision to move and to upgrade?

4.) Do you feel more, or less, confidence about yourself?

5.) Have your goals changed? If yes, how?

6.) Do you feel you have lost anything?

7.) Where would you like to see yourself in the future? Interests? Jobs?

Appendix D

Learner Informed Consent Form

Literacy Nanaimo Participant Informed Consent Form

School: Faculty of Education, James Cook University
Project: Male Adult Literacy Learners Making the Transition From a Rural to an Urban Setting
Chief Investigator: Brendan Derby. B.A. History, Master of Education Candidate
Contact: Literacy Nanaimo, 375 Franklyn Street, Nanaimo, B.C. V9R 2X5
Telephone: (250) 754-8988

Description of Study:

The purpose of this study is to explore issues for male adult literacy learners recently displaced from the workforce and making the transition from a rural setting to an urban setting. The study will address the following questions and interviews will help literacy tutors and instructors to better understand the issues:

1. What were your experiences of literacy needs and services in the rural setting?
2. What have your experiences been in making the shift to an urban setting?
    a. Why did you move from a rural community to an urban community?
    b. What problems have you experienced as a result of this move?
    c. What benefits do you perceive in having made this move?
3. What are your experiences of literacy needs and services in the urban setting?
4. How do your perceptions interface with what we currently know about rural and urban literacy in British Columbia?

Your Participation:

Your participation is appreciated. It involves being interviewed twice, and each interview session will last between one and two hours. Interviews will take place at Literacy Nanaimo, or at a mutually agreed upon location. Interviews will be audio taped and I will take notes during the interview.

If you wish to remain anonymous in the credits for the final report, I will do my best to ensure your anonymity by disguising your identity in the report. However, even when great care is taken, sometimes anonymity cannot be absolutely guaranteed. I can guarantee you that whatever you tell me during interviews will be confidential. Audio tapes and notes from interviews will be kept under lock and key, and will be destroyed

when the study is completed. Unfortunately, owing to time constraints, I cannot provide each participant with a copy of the final report. However, Literacy Nanaimo will receive a copy of the final report that you will have access to.

________________ ______________

Participants Initials Witness' Initials

The aims of this study have been clearly explained to me and I understand what is wanted of me. I know that taking part in this study is voluntary and I am aware that I can stop taking part at any time and may refuse to answer any questions.

I understand that any information that I give will be kept strictly confidential and that no names will be used to identify me with the study without my approval.

Name (Printed) _________________________

Signature: __________________________ Date: ___________________

Witnessed by Researcher Obtaining Consent

Name (Printed) ___________________________

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________