NOTE TO USERS

Making the Links:
Investigating a Social Inclusion Framework for Adult Learning in Art Museums

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ABSTRACT

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Investigating a Social Inclusion Framework for Adult Learning in Art Museums

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This thesis project examines the role of community adult educators as critical liaisons for art museums. Focusing my study on personal interviews with five adult educators, I present these keyworkers' perceptions about art and art museums, the links that exist between art museum education and the teaching they do within their respective milieus, and the possibilities for transformative adult learning that may lie in community partnerships. Discussing these responses using a social inclusion model, I highlight the need for inclusive approaches to adult education that are rooted in dialogue, empowerment and participation.

My discussion draws on reflections from my own practice as I identify strategies for improving it. I highlight interview responses that support my assertion that attempts to make art museums more accessible and relevant depend on equitable partnerships with keyworkers. In concluding, I identify areas for further research into the ways in which art museums can better serve adult learners whilst supporting increased pedagogical consciousness in the management and realization of museum-wide activities. My recommendations implicate existing and potential keyworkers, learners, and other art museum workers in working towards more inclusive perspectives and approaches.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The consideration of social outcomes has been part of art museum[1]

practice since its inception. It is in more recent literature, however, that exhibition

and programming designed to reach and/or implicate broader social networks

has not only been recognized for its educational value, but has become a model

for good museum practice. Increased pressure for public accountability, as well

as a recognized need to break barriers to access (and to define access more

comprehensively), has meant that social inclusion strategies are more frequently

influencing museum programmes and policies.

The political and pedagogical values driving these strategies shape the

overlapping work I do as an art museum educator, community worker and

researcher. While I do believe traditional notions of 'expert' may be challenged,

the inter-disciplinary approach I have taken towards my work and studies in

education has not been in an attempt to arbitrarily blur the lines between

disciplines. My approach has been more a process of ongoing inquiry into the

ways in which different strategies for teaching, learning[2], and community[3]

organizing may transcend professional boundaries.

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[1] My use of the term art museum includes art galleries.

[2] I apply Falk and Dierking's (2000) understanding of learning as a product and process, a noun and verb. "Learning is a dialogue between the individual and his or her environment" (p. 136).

[3] I understand community to be a group of people with something in common but that is always fluid. Amit (2002) suggests that claims of community are "claims of, and for, social engagement, whether as recognition of an existing set of social relations or as a call for the formation of new sets of social relations." She goes on to write that, "Yet while the category invoked and social relations mobilized in the name of community are always linked, they are never wholly commensurable and are frequently in tension with one another" (p. 11).

It is my assertion that effective engagement in any learning project

depends on the transmission, collection and creation of knowledge[4] and

meaning(s). It is also my assertion that the sustainability of any teaching project

requires an ongoing, multi-perspective look at emerging processes, relationships

and impacts. Values, strategies and outcomes should be continually revisited to

ensure that participants' needs are voiced and original objectives are not only

met, but also revised to remain relevant.

This research project therefore encompasses critical information gathering

and perspective sharing across museum and 'non-museum' boundaries. It is the

pushing of cross-domain boundaries -- essentially coalition building -- that I

believe strengthens any educational activity or movement. More specifically,

such an approach to recognizing diverse adult values, experiences and

expectations is crucial for art museums in achieving their aims to define,

promote, and prove their relevance to a broader cross-section of learners from

the many communities that comprise the public that museums are mandated to

serve.[5]

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[4] In *From Knowledge to Narrative*, Roberts (1997) makes the distinction between *What does a thing mean?* and *What makes a thing meaningful?* She states, "The once prevalent view that knowledge is objective and verifiable has been widely challenged by the notion that knowledge is socially constructed and shaped by individuals' particular interests and values. Language about facts and certainties has been replaced by language about context, meaning, and discourse" (p. 11).

[5] Hooks (2003) argues that because the concept of service has been culturally devalued, it is perceived as an act of subordination. By contrast, she discusses teachers' service to their students as an act of kindness that is pedagogically sound: "The teachers who can ask of students, ' What do you need in order to learn?' or 'How can I serve?' brings to the work of educating a spirit of service that honors the students' will to learn." She goes on to state, "Caring education opens the mind, allowing students to embrace a world of knowing that is always open to change and challenge" (p. 92)

This thesis is divided into four sections with a total of eight chapters:

Research Design includes a description of the development of the research question, my chosen methodology and procedure followed.

Theoretical Overview presents a review of recent literature on adult learning in museums and an introduction to social inclusion theory. I also identify values and strategies shared by these two bodies of literature, and specify those that correspond directly to the analytical model I have chosen.

The Interviews presents the perspectives of the five adult educators that I interviewed for this project. The first chapter examines educators' perceptions of, and motivations for visiting, art museums. The second highlights educators' perceptions of their adult learners' needs, as well as recommendations for how the museum can better meet them. Both chapters analyze the implications of these responses in terms of my own immediate and long-term action as an individual educator and researcher inside and outside the museum.

Reflections and Conclusions returns my focus to the research process itself as well as possible areas for further research. It concludes with final reflections on collaborative partnerships and the direction of my practice as an educator and researcher.

CHAPTER 1

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The question guiding this inquiry is the following: How can community adult educators' perspectives on art, teaching and learning inform art museum educators' work with adults? Furthermore, how might information sharing between art museums and other non-formal[6] learning organizations contribute to more effective, inclusive strategies for increasing adult participation in art museum education programmes? Three important factors determined this thesis and its methodology:

1) related research;

2) observations of an educator who frequents an art museum;

3) my own identity as an educator moving between disciplines.

These factors have all contributed to my academic and personal interest in lifelong learning and the arts, non-formal learning sites, and cross-domain, equitable partnerships.[7]

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[6] I apply Livingstone's (2000) concept of non-formal learning to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) current education programming based on his following criteria: 1) participation is the choice of the learner; 2) there are learning objectives that relate to a particular body of knowledge; 3) content is adapted to learners' needs and lived experience; 4) teaching and learning are rooted in dialogue.

[7] I stress equitable given that 'partnership' is a term that is increasingly being used in community, cultural, and government sectors to signify relationships of one-sided compromise. Shragge (2003) makes the distinction clearly, "...partnerships are real when they are established between differing groups within a common project in which the goals and values are clearly defined. This implies a process of discussion and debate between partners and a consensus with movement on all sides. This is quite different than a partnership in which one group...drops in and does something for or with the community sector. The former implies a common project with power sharing among the different participants, while the latter is an extension of a charity relation under a different label" (p. 113-114).

During the 2001-2002 academic year, I was an intern at the Montreal

Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA).[8] The basis for the internship was a research

project examining program evaluation, which provided me with the opportunity to

participate in the first evaluation of *Bridging Art and the Community*, the MMFA's

community outreach program.[9] My personal contribution to this process was a

series of in-person interviews with community workers who had participated in

Bridging Art and the Community.

The primary goal of these interviews was to obtain detailed responses

from community workers on their (and their interpretations of their clients')

experiences in the MMFA. For my own research purposes, the interviews also

included questions related to possibilities for future evaluation strategies, as well

as – which I have pursued in more detail for this study – investigating why they

had decided – and continue – to bring their adult groups to the MMFA.

The Education and Public Programmes Department (EPPD) also held

focus groups as a part of the evaluation process. It was during one of these

discussions that a participant made a comment that stayed with me for some

time. This adult educator stressed the importance of building links with individual

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[8] This thesis reflects my own analysis and does not reflect the opinions or interests of any department of the MMFA.

[9] Running from 1999 to 2004, the goal of *Bridging Art and the Community* was to reach communities and groups that had not traditionally prioritized going to the MMFA. Leading up to and following the launch, the Education and Public Programmes Department (EPPD) contacted a variety of community organizations to encourage them to take advantage of free activities and programming tailored to meet specific needs and interests. The common factor among the diverse groups with which the EPPD works – such as women's shelters, 'at-risk' youth, the elderly, or people with disabilities – is social and/or economic disadvantage (MMFA, 2000).

workers, arguing that without one community leader committed to or interested in the arts, museums would be much less able to reach community members. This statement peaked my interest in further discussions with these potential liaisons, what Gray and Chadwick (2000) describe as 'keyworkers'. Since the time of this internship I have been employed by the MMFA as an educator, and continue to work with a local women's organization that develops social reinsertion and community development programs. My interest in the relationship between adult and art museum educators, therefore, has increased in relevance as it relates directly to my work both inside and outside the MMFA.

Reflexive in scope, this project has come as a result of – and will hopefully contribute to – my understanding of where I situate myself as an educator. Over the last ten years I have moved academically and professionally between the cultural and social service sectors, facilitating capacity building at individual and community levels through programming, researching and organizing. Working in diverse educational settings has led me to explore in more depth the potential for advocacy and activism in education, art museums as community centres, and non-formal learning sites as integral to broader community development.

This process has been the source of many rich experiences, as well as an equal amount of internal debate over what and how I might ultimately contribute to the education of adults. What has remained a constant is my interest in working with adults or older youths that have diverse life experiences, and who

are pursuing new (or previously unattained) educational goals. The nature of my practice is reflected in the approach I have taken towards this thesis; merging theory with my own and others' cross-domain experience has assisted me in my attempt to better understand the dynamics of adult learning in art museums, and in doing so make a stronger case for social inclusion strategies.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

The following is a qualitative, action research project. The basis for this methodology lies in my work as an art museum educator and community worker, and the values that consistently drive both. Barnsley and Ellis (1992) of the Women's Research Centre describe action research as "the systematic collection and analysis of information **for the purpose of taking action and making change** [authors' emphasis]" (p. 10). They go on to write:

> Action research is also meant to strengthen and mobilize the group that does it. One way it does this is by increasing the group's understanding of the issues it's working on...a chance to test assumptions and to be surer of the ground we stand on (p. 10).

They also suggest action research is an opportunity for community members to build connections with each other, which is a process that can build skills, confidence, and knowledge.

May (1993) reminds readers that through reflexive inquiry, the potential for personal and professional improvement, empowerment and accountability is limitless: "Inquiry in to our own practice centers us, grounds us viscerally in real place and time with real persons, begs our questions and possibilities, makes us responsible for what we believe and do" (p. 124). Through the action research process, I took advantage of my prior knowledge of the community sector in which my interview subjects' clientele learn. Therefore, while I remained an outsider to specific organizations, I was engaging in dialogue as a colleague.

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Furthermore, targeting other educators in my research made possible an exploration of questions that are related to, but beyond, my personal experience. I engaged in interviews under the assumption that inquiry into the values and practices of other educators would make a valuable contribution to the quality and intent of my own.

Defining Action Research and Reflective Practice

As part of this study, I analyzed my research process itself. This step was inspired by Scratz and Walker (1995) who illustrate the possible errors of well intentioned -- but not well questioned -- qualitative and action research:

> We adopt models... that appear to fit our research needs but then we fail to act consistently. For instance, few responsive studies respond, many democratic evaluations are autocratic and not many interpretive studies interpret the interpreter. *Mea culpa* [authors' emphasis] (p. 168).

Further reading in reflective practice revealed the demand for a similar level of accountability in the teaching/researching/writing process. For example, Usher, Bryant, and Johnston, (1997) define a lack of interrogation into one's own method as a form of 'meta-reflection'. In this context -- or rather lack of context -- *reflective* does not necessarily imply *reflexive*. The 'How' and 'Why' of questioning, then, is as important as the 'What'. I include, therefore, a critique on the research process itself: my original aims and assumptions, as well as successes, limitations, and contradictions of my process of inquiry. In doing so, I identify some values, assumptions, and theories that not only informed my interview questions, but more broadly, my research-teaching practice.

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Once I made the decision to reflect on my research practice, I dug deeper into my readings on action research, revisiting articles I had already consulted as well as looking for articles that made more direct reference to reflective practice. What followed was an at times painful search for a clear distinction between the two concepts. Academic articles, books, and education faculty sites helped me to make that distinction; I have come to understand action research and reflective practice -- noting here that they are concepts in practice, which vary between individuals – in terms of both their similarities and differences.

Imel (1992) defines reflective practice as "a mode that integrates or links thought and action with reflection. It involves thinking critically analyzing one's actions with the goal of improving one's professional practice" (p.1). May's (1993) discussion of action research (or teacher-research) in art education describes action research as "the study and enhancement of one's own practice" (p. 114). She draws similarities to the concepts of 'reflective teaching', 'teaching as inquiry', and 'critical praxis' based on what she considers to be common underlying assumptions: particular epistemological, professional, and sociopolitical interests "which are not isolated categories with distinct boundaries." (p. 115). Action research -- like reflective practice -- challenges the dichotomy of theory and practice. May describes the two in terms of interplay, that is to say two sides of the same thing (p. 116). Herein lay the obscurity of the two concepts.

Action research can be described as a broader, more systematic approach to improving one's practice than reflective practice. While both involve self-study that recognizes the everyday as a source of knowledge, reflective practice can be identified as a part of action research. Hatten, Knapp, and Salonga (1997) further distinguish action research and reflective practice in terms of context, timeframe, required knowledge base, the degree of complexity and outside involvement. Usher et al. put it most simply: "action research is effectively conducting research in a reflective practice mode" (p. 117).

Self-Interview

The second step in reflecting on my methodology prior to data collection involved a colleague interviewing me with the questions I developed to interview research subjects. Analyzing both the experience of being interviewed as well as my answers, I examined the content and process I had initially proposed and developed. This included an examination of the values and perspectives that emerged from my answers, the extent to which the content of my answers was reflected (or not) in my practice, and my response to the questioning process itself.

In light of all of this, I considered if or how I might revise my questions, adapt the questioning process, or reconsider my research process. It was my intention, in experiencing the interview process from the position of an interviewee, and in receiving my colleague's feedback, to

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1) refine the clarity - and possibly the direction - of my interview questions;

2) shed light on any implicit biases or assumptions; and

3) improve my understanding of my underlying research and teaching goals.

As a result of this self-interview process, I made certain modifications to the interview procedure, and was equipped to analyze my findings. Recognizing educators themselves as participants, this action research was *participant-focused* but not *participatory*. I asked for interviewee reflections on the research questions and the methodology, however they did not participate in any planning of the research, nor did they control the analyses that conclude it.

Procedure

Collection of data

During the spring of 2003 I conducted individual, in-person interviews with five community adult educators who had previously come to the MMFA with their respective groups. Contact with these educators was made possible by the assistance and approval of the Education and Public Programmes Department of the MMFA; all the interviewees had participated in *Bridging Art and the Community*. Prior to each interview respondents read and signed an Informed Consent Form (See: Appendix 1), respecting Concordia University's guidelines for ethical treatment of research participants.

The five interviewees represented different spheres of non-formal learning: an employment centre, a women's centre, two language training programmes, and an adult learning centre. I conducted these interviews at the community sites where the educators worked, in French or English as required. Twenty interview questions were clustered under following thematic headings: Approaching the Art Museum; Personal Values and Experiences in Art Museums; and Teaching Strategies (See: Appendix 2).

Approaching the Art Museum included questions that examined the origins of educators' contact with the museum, their motivation for bringing their clientele to the MMFA, the type of programs they participate in, their assessment of the MMFA's outreach efforts, and their groups' experiences with museum visits.

Personal Values / Experiences in Art and Art Museums included questions that touched upon educators' personal experience, including their perception of the social role of art museums, their visiting habits, and the importance they place on art-based experiences for adults.

Teaching Strategies included questions that explored educators' assessments of strategies used by museum educators, diverse adult learning needs, links between museum education and their own teaching, and the possibilities in community partnerships.

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The transcripts and a short written questionnaire were sent to subjects post-interview (See: Appendix 3). I made these transcripts available to the subjects to allow for any revision, clarification or deletion they felt appropriate. The questionnaires were optional, and asked for further comments on the issues raised in the interviews, as well as the interview process itself.

Treatment of Data

The goal of this analysis is to better contextualize both outreach and teaching strategies -- which I consider to be interconnected -- by looking at multiple perspectives in the theory and practice of engaging adults in democratic, meaningful learning. If one considers, as I do, education as a primary function of art museums, then concerns about inclusion or access are not understood in terms of broadening an audience base but, rather, broadening (and rethinking) a

learner base. My analysis of interview results, therefore, is framed by the following concerns:

1) Identifying relevant links, gaps, or contradictions between primary sources (interviewee's personal values about art, teaching philoSylvies, and strategies) and secondary sources (readings on adult museum education and social inclusion).

2) Informing my own practice as an educator by gathering new insights from respondents' reflections. What would I learn -- or confirm -- that I could bring to my own teaching and organizing strategies within and beyond art museums?

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW: ADULT EDUCATION AND THE MUSEUM

The literature on adult museum education published in English over the last decade, while limited in quantity, represents the broad range of approaches to exploring, understanding, and promoting the learning needs of adults in museums. Research has emerged from psychology, developmental theory, lifelong learning and community outreach. The following is a review of the literature that specifically situates adult learning in a social context and, more specifically, that views the art museum as a unique and potentially transformative[10] lifelong learning site and partner.[11]

Adult Museum Learners: Motivation, Needs, and Responses

Matthew (1996), looking at museums as sites of lifelong learning, questions to what extent museums are committed to turning 'visitors' into 'learners'. More specifically, the author addresses the need to change both methods and approaches to programming in order to meet the learning needs of adults. Matthew argues that educators are able to make certain assumptions about adult learning in museums, regarding teacher-student relationships, adult projections about the world, and the place that learning may take in their lives.

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[10] Sachatello et. al. (2002) state that "breaking free to form new perspectives or outlooks on the world is truly 'adult learning' for it transforms our earlier conceptions of reality" (p. 11). Similarly, Davoren and Fleming (2001) write, "Taken for granted meanings can be made clear, obvious and transparent, alternative meanings can be sought, tested and, if appropriate adopted. Changing one's frame of reference on more inclusive worldviews is facilitated in the dialogue with art and artists" (p.191).

[11] For other literature, see for example Dufresne-Tasse, C. and Lefebvre, A. (1994), Lachapelle, R. (1999), Weltzl-Fairchild, A. and Emond, A. M. (2000).

Matthew argues museum educators should be less focused on the goals of the exhibition and more concerned with learning that is relevant and important to learners.

Jenson (1999), who published a developmental comparison of child, youth, and adult learners, echoes the view that learning be relevant in the claim that, "Relating museum programmes and collections to the broad threads of human experience is one means of bringing objects to life in a way that is emotionally stimulating and meaningful to a broad spectrum of adult audiences" (p. 114). Jenson argues that because museum audiences have traditionally been examined demographically, developmental theory offers another means by which to understand them. Jenson distinguishes adults from young children and teenagers based on a number of considerations, including broader life experience to draw upon, a more established identity, increased ability to think abstractly, a greater confidence in their understanding of the world and more coherent, individual expectations for their learning.

Svedlow (1997) examines adult learning behaviour qualitatively, within the framework of lifelong learning. Assessing the experience of older adults visiting a traveling exhibition, Svedlow proposes that museum professionals consider diverse learning dimensions by developing and promoting a range of educational formats. This range – seminars, lectures, hands-on activities, and self-guiding materials – ensures that diverse learner needs are met. Svedlow also stresses

that with a greater number of real life experiences to relate to, the more information will be acquired and used.

Examining the museum as a non-formal learning institution, Heimlich, Diem, and Farrell (1996) stress that adult learning in museums can take place whether the intent of the visit is social or educational, and that a non-intimidating environment is an essential condition to effective learning. The authors argue that adult learning in museums can range from formal to non-formal to informal, including such examples as lectures, signage, and spontaneous, internal meaning-making. Museum educators' strategies of layering interpretations and posing issues as questions encourage a range of learners to feel ownership over the process(es) of gaining or confirming knowledge. In light of these goals, the role of the educator is to enhance the attraction of learning for adults, and facilitate new levels of understanding and action.

Describing an innovative artist-run centre (ARC) project, MacNamara (1997) makes the case for integrating a pedagogical agenda into curatorial design. The author argues that contrary to the assumption that often drives the isolated work of ARCs, educational practice is in fact consistent with their mandates to first and foremost serve artists' needs. Through the project, which engaged the non-artist public in photographic documentation of self-guided city tours, participants contributed to exhibition content. Through photography and written reflection, participants publicly reflected on and interrogated the issues

proposed by the artist-curator. MacNamara argues that this type of exhibition-driven public dialogue is a creative example of how ARCs can take a new approach to a wider public.

Sachatello-Sawer, B., Fellenz, R. A., Burton, H., Gittings-Carlson, L., Lewis-Mahony, J., and Woolbaugh, W. (2002) conducted a national study of adult museum programmes. They provide an overview of adult learning and a description of projects, and also examine the dynamics of adult museums learning from the perspectives of participants, program deliverers, and program developers. The authors suggest that all adult learners order the world in ways that make sense in the context of their experience and culture, and that all adult educators need to understand specific learning interests and needs. Exploring motivation, Sachatello et. al. place adult museum learners in four categories: knowledge seekers, socializers, skill builders, and museum lovers, knowledge seekers being the most common. The authors also categorize adult learning itself, in the form of a pyramid, with life changing experiences (both the least common and the ideal) at the top. Transformed perspectives, changes in attitude, increased appreciation, exploration of relationships, and acquisition of knowledge and skills are situated in the lower and wider strata of the pyramid. To different degrees, these levels reflect the multitude of forms that personal change can take, changes that may occur long after participants have completed a program and integrated their learning into their daily lives over time. Sachatello et. al. argue that multiple voices and views are imperative to the process of making

meaning, and base their study on two main assumptions: that excellent programs

engage people in personal ways, and that transformation is a measure of

excellence.

Analysing case studies in adult museum education, Anderson (2000)

makes the argument that participatory learning and access to cultural heritage

are essential for a true democracy: "A democratic society is not just one where

people have the right to vote every few years; it is one where as many people as

possible contribute actively and creatively to the cultural and other development

of their communities and society as a whole" (p. 49). He too argues that

museums' and galleries' perceptions of – and responses to – adult learners are

too narrow. Using the predominance of lectures and publications as an example,

Anderson critiques museums' tendencies to approach learning as one-way (from

'expert' to public). Anderson also writes that the common lack of attention paid to

the wider communities versus existing audiences limit museums' and galleries'

potential as transformative learning sites.

In the same volume, Davoren and Fleming (2000) describe an art

museum programme for older adults within a framework of social values and the

maintenance of civic society. The authors suggest that a policy focus on job and

skills training has meant that relationships of trust and reciprocity are undermined

in adult education programmes. By contrast, older people's ongoing engagement

with the museum acknowledges the important role that they can play in

contemporary culture. Davoran and Fleming stress that art education is effective in promoting personal growth as well as collective social action:

> By engaging in art, adults make new meanings, transform their way of looking at the world and see their own place differently. This happens because the museum enables people to exercise their imagination, to imagine new ways of caring, of being a neighbour, a friend, a member of the community...(p. 196).

Falk and Dierking (2000) research museum learning across ages, but include analyses of adult learning. For adults and children alike, stress that learning is situated: "What some one learns, let alone why some learns, is inextricably bound to the cultural and historical context in which that learning occurs" (p. 50). At the heart of 'free choice' learning[12] is choice and control. It is intrinsically motivated by the learner's own desire to: a) find out more about the world; b) gain information; c) enhance understanding. The authors describe free-choice learning as non-linear, creating a learning situation that permits – and encourages – visitors to "bring their own understanding and interests to the experience, yielding a wide diversity of learning outcomes" (p. 184). Learners are engaged at different entry points and are challenged at different levels. The authors' Contextual Model of Learning conceptualizes learning as the integration and interaction of personal, socio-cultural, and physical contexts over time.

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[12] The authors suggest this term better captures the underlying motivational and structural nature of museum learning than more traditionally used terms like 'informal' .

Museums and Professional Exchange

Brennan (1994), discussing the status of art museums in the adult education sector, makes the claim that adults have been traditionally perceived as passive learners. The author argues that the initiation of adult education programs requires, most importantly, the delineation of assumptions regarding adults as learners. Brennan argues that this gap in understanding on the part of museums can be largely attributed to a lack of recognition and information sharing between museum and adult educators. The field of adult education has traditionally ignored galleries and museums as important sites for learning. Similarly, galleries and museums have not prioritized adults as learners, therefore not making links with - or learning from the experience of – other adult educators. In order to overcome past and present neglect between museums and adult education organizations, Brennan recommends linking professional associations, increasing opportunities for discussion and debate, collaboration, research and professional development.

Kerka (1997) also assigns two-sided blame for the lack of recognition of arts and humanities as contributors to adult learning. The author argues that this gap is a result of art education's traditional focus on youth, and adult education's focus on basic literacy skills. Kerka suggests that adults' learning experiences in museums can simultaneously introduce alternative perspectives, unlock creativity and break social isolation. Furthermore, increased pluralism is challenging notions of what art is, who creates it and what are appropriate responses to it. It

is therefore educators' responsibility to assess the broader range of learning that takes place, as well as how learners have developed their individual knowledge and creative processes.

It is the challenging of traditional roles and notions of 'expert' that underlies the comparative, international study of museums and keyworkers described by Gray and Chadwick (2001). The needs and activities of these keyworkers (youth workers, public employees, etc.) are examined in the context of lifelong learning, cultural exclusion, and new approaches to professional practice. The goal of this project was to effectively identify and disseminate methodologies for greater adult participation in museums and similar organizations. In their description of the project, the authors argue that responsive, adaptable, and long-term collaboration with keyworkers is an effective strategy for successful community work, and as a means to raise public interest in museums as sites for learning.

Clive (2003) also describes a lifelong learning project. This report describes an action research initiative that realized dozens of small-scale collaborations between libraries, museums and galleries. Focusing on the experience and responses of both staff and participants, this report uses case studies to highlight the challenges and possibilities that lie in what the authors refer to as cross-domain work. While participants learn through and about different cultural organizations, the organizations themselves share skills and

resources, as well as experiences and methodologies in research, marketing and service delivery. Evaluations of the initiative led Engage to identify and make recommendations in four areas for collaborating well: recognition of similarities and differences; joint ownership and clear understandings of organizational contexts; mutual openness, adaptability and support; and sustainable community relations.

It is the lack of such sustained partnerships that Van Gent (1997) attributes to what he considers to be a "commercially successful yet socially failed" attempt on the part of art museums to deliver meaningful adult education opportunities. The author's historical analysis of museums' adult education efforts acknowledges a long history of educational intentions, from enlightenment and propaganda to training and entertainment. However, Van Gent argues that the emancipatory intentions that have woven in and out of the history of museum education have fallen prey to market-driven customer relations in efforts to increase attendance. Arguing that the democratization of museums is not a new concept, Van Gent points out that even if put into practice, such visions are either temporary or perpetually vulnerable due to the impact on public policy of changing social patterns and politics.

Taking a more optimistic approach to the possibilities of art museum programming, Kavanagh (2000) surveys current museum involvement in the growing field of reminiscence work with seniors. The centrality of objects in the

stimulation of participants' memories puts museums in an ideal position to share

their resources and collections with the public in a new way. Museum personnel

draw on their expertise in collecting and preserving in the context of opening

collections to the public in a way that prioritizes participants' interpretations of the

works/objects. She suggests this involvement is effective in expanding museum

audiences whilst demonstrating a genuine commitment to diverse communities.

Thinesse-Demel Kunstgespräche (2001) explores the growing

diversification of lifelong learning providers, and the potentially transformative

role of museums in adult education. Adults' aspirations for diverse learning

experiences challenge museums to increase their relevance: "The recognized

mission of the museums to collect, document, preserve, exhibit and interpret

collections for the public benefit is indeed to be reinterpreted in the new context

of learning societies"(p. 7). Drawing on current theory and practice in the shared

terrain of adult education and museums, the author reports that museum staff

and adult educators are recognizing common goals and that museums are

entering the stage of multidisciplinary research and production. Thinesse-Demel

Kunstgespräche calls on the efforts, expertise, and resources of a range of

stakeholders to strengthen and develop policies, strategies, programmes and

projects with adult learners.

Storr (1995) also explores current practice and potential in adult museum

education. The author's survey of diverse adult programming offered in museums

is at once historical and current, examining obstacles and possibilities in

professional and program development, resource use, and research. Storr calls

for a divergence from historical patterns of object/ curatorial/ institutionally

focused programming in order to reexamine assumptions about benefits to the

public, and be better able to respond to local learning needs. Storr argues that

systematic documentation of research on adult learning does not exist, and

information on successful programs does not circulate. For these reasons those

engaged in the work also need to support others practitioners in the field:

> A visible, proactive effort in the field of ▢ ▢ [community-based
> learning] for adults will be valuable for its own sake. The very
> concept of integrating the results of reliable studies in to the
> development of solid, interesting, locally-originated education
> programs, and seeking out that knowledge from a widening array of
> allied institutions is just now on the cusp. We need to support that
> fragile trend, in part as a fundamental part of collaboration itself (p.
> 12).

Recognizing the quality of current and possible programming, Storr envisions a

more established research agenda for adult learning in museums that would

encompass increased information sharing both inside and beyond the field of

museology.

Summary

The preceding review of literature on adult learning in museums highlights

shared values and approaches in developing, promoting, and delivering

educational opportunities for adults. The models embrace either (or both):

1) a learner-centred approach that recognizes, respects and
   responds to the diverse realities, responsibilities, learning needs
   and expectations of adults;

2) an acknowledgment of various sources of expertise; meaning is derived from both professional (museum and non-museum) and personal experience, and is valued as an integral part of a given work, object or exhibition.

Considerable emphasis is placed on the diverse context(s) within which learning is always situated, and significant value is attributed to lived experience. More broadly, these types of approaches require more accountability to learners and a broadened understanding of the social role of museums. This implicates learners, other educators and keyworkers in processes of empowerment through the development of a more inclusive and dynamic adult learning culture.

CHAPTER 4

ELABORATING ON THE LITERATURE:
MAKING THE CASE FOR A SOCIAL INCLUSION MODEL

If we view museums as first and foremost educational sites, then reaching

a broader audience can be more accurately – and more meaningfully –

understood as reaching a broader cross-section of learners. Making museums

relevant, then, means understanding learner needs, developing more supportive,

engaging learning scenarios and creating more inclusive learning sites. Looking

more precisely at art museum education, much of the available time devoted to

group learning has targeted established audiences, primarily young learners

enrolled in public or private school systems. My thesis research is based in part

on the assumption that a more inclusive approach to educational programming

largely depends on building further relationships with, and actively engaging,

diverse groups of adults and the organizations that serve them.

As is the case with other adult educators, my approach to adult education

is participant focused, deliberately critical[13], context-specific, and politically

motivated. This approach is consistent with the values and strategies that

emerge out of current literature on social inclusion and museums. The work of

Sandell (1999, 2001, 2002), supported by other authors, provides a summary of

the issues and proposes a model that will guide my discussion of the interview

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[13] Hooper-Greenhill (1999) describes critical museum pedagogy as "...an educational approach that reviews and develops its methods, strategies, and provisions with regards to both educational excellence and to working towards the democratization of the museum. Current emphasis on access, on public value and on audience consultation, offer opportunities to work to address long-established relations of advantage and disadvantage, to enable new voices to be heard and critically to review historical (and other) narratives" (p. 4).

findings as they relate to my own teaching and wider programming strategies. My discussion and subsequent reflection will make a case for the implementation of social inclusion strategies in order to better serve adult learners in art museums.

What is Social Inclusion?

Dodd and Sandell (2001) develop a holistic approach to their understanding of the social role of museums and galleries in larger society. The dimensions of social inclusion encompass economic, social, political, and cultural concerns: "With greater recognition of the multidimensional and interrelated nature of disadvantage, the responsibility for developing and implementing solutions has similarly been widened" (p. 12). They argue the implementation of socially inclusive strategies requires a "rethinking of the organization's purpose and practice" (p. 5). This process is particular to the unique circumstances of different cultural institutions and the communities they aim to reach, and those communities who aim to represent themselves through those institutions.

The role of museums as potentially inclusive learning sites has been described in a variety of ways. For example:

> Museums have the potential to inform, challenge stereotypes and discrimination, promote tolerance and contribute towards the creation of inclusive communities (Sandell, 1999, p. 31).

> [The museum is] a world of objects and memories, a way of feeling and a way of thinking, a place of stories and ideas. It is a natural and cultural history, it fosters the arts of living, and is a place for debate of all the issues connected with the society we live in (Friman, 2000, p. 28).

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As a case in point, a recent report on social inclusion acknowledges the fuzziness of the term and includes the following terminology used by museum workers to describe what the authors considered to be social inclusion work: community capacity building; community involvement; community learning strategies; cultural strategies; lifelong learning; local regeneration (GLLAM, 2000, p. 11). This terminology may be viewed as an indicator of the overlapping objectives and strategies between museums and galleries and the diverse agencies that serve communities underrepresented in museum and gallery attendance figures. This overlap may point to the potential that lies in various kinds of consultation, collaboration and shared decision making to establish a basis for adult museum education outreach efforts and, more broadly, the full scope of museum practice.

Healthy communities depend on reducing inequalities and strengthening social fabric (Dodd, 2002). The interdependency of individual and community barriers, as well as their combined effects, requires multi-agency and multi-sectoral collaborations (Carrington, 1999, Scottish Museum Council, 2000, Vashwani, 2000). As a site for the communication and exchange of ideas through objects and images, museums are in a position to make a significant contribution to this effort. Sandell (1999) also suggests that a multi-agency approach is necessary to address social issues holistically, but recognizes that the history of collaboration between museums and community organizations is not well established, or at times not even recognized: "As it stands, museums are at the

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bottom of the list or absent from it when social services and other agencies are looking for collaborators." This puts the ball in the court of museums to reach out and demonstrate the potential of their collections and related educational opportunities.

Predictably, the social inclusion agenda for museums has its critics. One such critic states that "The politicization of museums is a disaster" (Appleton, 2001, p. 1). This author argues that curators and other museum workers, under unfair government and social pressures, suffer from self-loathing and uncertainty about their role as conservators of culture; the social inclusion agenda is indifferent to activities upon which the museum was built (Appleton, 2001). By contrast, the arguments put forth by authors promoting social inclusion suggest that museums are not *being* politicized, as they represent a historical construct that is *inherently political.*

For example, the Scottish Museum Council (2000) argues that because preservation and interpretation of culture (what many might consider to be the activities upon which museums are built) are in essence responding to society, these activities need to change as society's needs change. Dodd (2002) challenges any notion that culture and heritage are intrinsically valuable, and re-positions their value in relation to individuals, communities, and wider society.

Art museums have been particularly resistant to rethinking existing

models,[14] and are guilty of a long history of institutionalized exclusion (Sandell,

2001). O'Neil (2002) agrees, and states his criticisms clearly, pointing out that,

"By some slight of hand, art in art museums becomes the object of amoral

hedonism, which has no social purpose other that to give a higher form of

pleasure...also the epitome of all that is 'beautiful', 'natural', and 'legitimate' ..."

(p. 32-33). He goes on to write, "Splitting art museums off from the rest of society

is not about aesthetic standards but avoiding working out a relationship between

aesthetic and ethical values...if we believe that museum objects on public display

have a value, that museums in some way are central to society, then the ethical

context of the visitor experience must be addressed" (p. 34).

Friman (2000) challenges museum workers to acknowledge persistent but

often overlooked prejudices about who is 'excluded'. The author warns that many

well-meaning inclusion policies still assume the centrality of museums, and don't

acknowledge that museums themselves may be deliberately excluded from

active cultural life that is occurring beyond their walls. It is also argued that

focusing too much on a 'centre' – in defense or critique of it – legitimizes it,

ultimately reinforcing what is marginal or 'other' (Tronwell, 2001). Young (2002)

calls on museums to relinquish power, and ties her concerns back to questions of

commitment:

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[14] It is interesting to note that another author suggests that artist-run centres, which are mandated to serve artists and support innovative contemporary art practice, are guilty of similarly exclusive ambivalence: "With notable exceptions, most artists and curators working within contemporary art institutions are little concerned with challenging how the general public thinks about contemporary art, responds to the social questions art addresses or the role of art in the construction of public consciousness" (MacNamara, 1997, 298).

...there is a dissenting view worth noting: there is an argument that says that there are many who wish to remain 'excluded' because they do not wish to be part of a system that promotes inequality and injustice throughout its structures....It is necessary at least to acknowledge that position because, if there really is desire to change, rather than paying lip service to a policy initiative or to gain funding, we need to be clear about the implications of the work we are setting out to do (p. 204).

Once committed to a broad range of activities, approaches and perspectives, museum workers can acknowledge power imbalances and better address concerns for broader social change; they can then also critically assess the assumptions behind any changes in practice (Jackson, 1999).

Social Inclusion and Adult Education

In order to best situate my decision to use a social inclusion model to discuss adult education in art museums, I compiled a list of project descriptions that were described in adult museum education and social inclusion literature, which suggest a growing interest on the part of museums to engage in collaborative partnerships with keyworkers and ❑ or new groups of learners (See: Appendix 4). While the diverse educational projects reflect the range of possibilities for programming with adults in art museums, they also demonstrate ways to act on changing priorities – priorities that, as discussed above, risk being nothing more that lip service if not critically questioned and ❑ put into committed practice.

Having compiled these project descriptions, I identified values and strategies that are shared by adult educators and social inclusion advocates and, more specifically, that have guided my discussion of the interview data:

1) Acknowledging an historical, systemic exclusion on the part of art museums

2) Becoming open towards democratized[15] institutional change

3) Favouring both concrete and hard-to-measure learner outcomes

4) Challenging assumptions about the "general public"

5) Equitably collaborating in cross-domain partnerships or networks

6) Developing new knowledge and competencies amongst museum workers

Central to the above concerns is the notion that access is more than opening doors, extending hours or simply inviting new visitors. Improving access means improving relevancy to, and participation of, a range of learners.

Jackson (1999) calls for a shift in thinking about access to better reflect democratic rights, a collaborative give-and-take of knowledge, and a cultural vigor that recognizes new knowledge, ideas, and perspectives. As it stands:

> The model we have of access is a one-way street. We, the museums, have the information, and we may consider making it accessible to the public in more or less user-friendly ways. The museum remains almost exclusively the information providers, editors, and gatekeepers (p. 21).

True accessibility therefore implies both taking from and contributing to; a commitment to it demands a range of museum-wide effort.

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[15] Here I refer back to Anderson (2000) on page 20. Democracy from this perspective is measured by levels of participation, and the quality of relations that exist within.

While my own inquiry is within the domain of art museum education, it should be reiterated that effective inclusion efforts must go beyond education and outreach departments. This type of awareness – and corresponding commitment and change – means addressing what Mpumlwawa, Corsane, Pastor-Makhurane, and Rassool (2002) identify as the essential gap in most discourse and promotion of better access to museums: a self-critique of institution-wide agendas and purpose. Similarly, Teather (2001) writes, "… we discuss work with cultural communities as an add-on to our ways of thinking about museums or institutional practices, rather than fundamental museological, institutional or sectoral systemic change" (p. 1). Sandell (2002) points to educators' face-to-face, daily interaction with visitors and community organizations as a possible explanation for the common (and misplaced) assumption that inclusiveness is solely their responsibility.

Referring to the table below (Table 1) Sandell categorizes social inclusion at individual, community and social levels. He suggests that individual and community concerns are more regularly addressed through education and outreach, and that it is the wider shifts in institutional thinking discussed above that embody the processes and impacts of societal change.

<u>Table 1</u>

Museums and the combating of
social inequality: impact and process (Sandell, 2002)
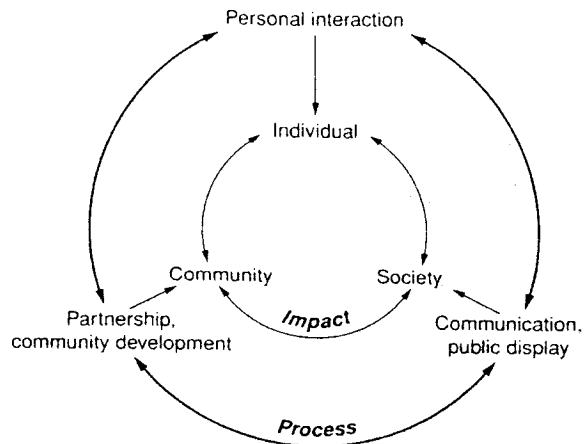
I focused my interview questions, and my discussion of the answers given to

them, on the terrain that exists between four points of Sandell's model[16]:

1) Individual

2) Community

3) Personal interaction

4) Partnership, community development[17]

I will explore the issues emerging from the interviews under over-arching themes

that correspond with the latter three values / strategies identified on page 34:

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[16] Sandell's model is applicable yet challenging as a guide for my discussion because it assumes that process and impact are not linear or chronological, nor are individual and community fixed, mutually exclusive territories for examination. I believe this to be true for both learners and educators in any domain, and also admit to the challenge involved in categorizing data when the points for analysis are interconnected.

[17] Shragge (2003) contrasts community development with community action, stating, "change is usually focused inward on the community itself rather than outward on the wider social, economic, and political structures" (p. 109). He argues that the important opportunities for building democratic practices and capacity building that community development offers are more relevant to social change if power relations are called into question and community workers take what he describes as an opposition, rather than an integrating, approach.

1) challenging assumptions about the "general public"

2) equitably collaborating in cross-domain partnerships or networks

3) developing new knowledge and competencies amongst museum workers

As stated, my discussion will also make a larger case for employing social inclusion strategies in order to better serve adult learners and the educators that work with them.

The first chapter in the next section will focus on educators' perceptions of the role of art museums, their motivation for participating in MMFA education programmes, and the impacts they believe education in art museums may have on the learners with whom they work. The second chapter will highlight educators' perceptions of their learners' needs, as well as recommendations for teaching programming strategies that they feel could engage individual learners and their respective community organizations. Remaining faithful to an action research methodology, both chapters will also include critical reflection on my own practice as an educator and researcher inside and outside the MMFA, in terms of both teaching strategies and project development goals.

SECTION III: THE INTERVIEWS

CHAPTER 5

APPROACHING THE MUSEUM

The following chapter examines my initial steps in the process of getting to
better know the educators: 1) what sphere of adult learning they work in and how
they describe the role of an art museum; and 2) why they chose to bring their
learners to the museum. From learner-specific to society-wide benefits, their
answers to the broader question "What can museums offer?" provided insight
into their perspectives on the educational potential of visual arts as well as their
own teaching practice.

5.1 Who are the educators?

Sylvie

Sylvie works in a women's organization that offers programmes and
services to women of all ages. She works in employability, where services
include individual counseling, a single mothers programme, small retail
enterprise training, and a project that targets recently graduated youth (for which
Sylvie is personally responsible). Sylvie stated that the role of an art gallery is to
offer learners a tactile understanding of art and art history while allowing them to
explore their own emotional responses to individual works:

> *Je pense que c'est de tenir les citoyens au courant de ce qui se fait
> ou de ce qui a été fait, à différent paliers des arts, que ça soit visuel
> ou n'importe quelle forme d'art.... Je crois que c'est aussi l'occasion
> d'éduquer les gens sur ce qui ne se fait pas dans les livres, si je*

peux dire. Ce qui est moins palpable. Donc, c'est une façon
d'entrer dans l'imaginatif, dans l'esprit de certaines personnes pour
comprendre que certaines personnes sont avant-gardistes sur tel
plan. De suivre les différents courants qu'il y a eu dans le temps
aussi.... Ou très simplement, avec une peinture, une photo, pouvoir
aussi emmener des émotions chez des personnes.

Gennaro

Gennaro , also an employment counselor, works for an organization that offers job preparation and integration programmes targeting ethno-cultural communities, visible minorities, youth and women. Services, among others, include job market information, portfolio building, counseling, mentorship, network building and intercultural training. Gennaro stated his belief that art museums serve to conserve objects for display whose quality will inspire those who encounter them:

> *To really display – to bring to our attention, our presence – as much*
> *as possible. As many works as possible that display people's*
> *imaginations, people's talents, whether it be painting, sculpture,*
> *anything, to make them available to us. It is not for nothing I use*
> *the word treasures; I truly believe they are treasures and they are*
> *to be seen, admired, maybe criticized. The role of the museum is to*
> *give us as much as possible to admire, see, enjoy and stimulate us.*

Christine

Christine is a French-as-another-language instructor, working in a basic skills training centre for adults. The school offers courses in literacy, mathematics and French-as-another-language. Christine described the long and short-term roles of art museums, referring to both social and individual development:

> *....de permettre à des gens de s'exprimer, de diffuser une façon de*
> *voir le monde, de percevoir, de sentir le monde et ce qui nous*
> *entoure. De permettre des échanges à partir de ce que l'on voit, on*

*va échanger entre nous. De donner des idées pour aller de l'avant,
pour voir ce qui s'est fait avant pour aller vers le futur. Le plaisir,
tout court... sans aller dans les grandes philoSylvies, juste
ressentir. Faire développer des émotions chez quelqu'un aussi.*

Véronique

Véronique teaches French in a community centre. The organization she

works for is an adult education branch of the local school board that offers

literacy and French language training, popular education workshops, social

reintegration and employment programmes in community centres, hospitals, and

other education sites. Véronique teaches intermediate and advanced French

courses that focus on concrete communication situations such as job interviews,

business French, and job or service-specific vocabulary. She described the role

of an art museum in terms of helping visitors to learn about art history and better

understand aesthetic responses:

> *C'est de nous faire connaître l'art, bien sûr. Puis l'art, c'est pas
> toujours facile d'accès. Moi je trouve que son rôle, c'est vraiment
> de nous montrer comment l'apprécier. C'est ce que j'admire un peu
> chez ces gens-là. Des fois, je me dis « pourquoi, eux, ils trouvent
> ça beau et pourquoi moi j'ai pas pensé à trouver ça beau ». Donc,
> c'est de l'éducation.*

Karen

Karen is an English-as-another-language instructor in an adult education

centre that offers programmes for students to complete their Secondary High

School Diploma, pre-requisites for College, French and English-as-another-

language courses, and basic English literacy training. She described

complimentary processes of both intellectual and emotional reflection:

Especially in a big city, the museum is part of the soul. If you look into the soul, if you go into a museum, even if you don't understand art, you can learn something about yourself when you go. I think anything that encourages you to look within, or look at the social context of a historical period is valuable.

The different teaching in which these educators are all engaged demonstrate the fact that adult learners with whom they work have goals – learning or otherwise – on the peripheral of the learning they do in class. While the social roles they attribute to art museums – to be challenged and inspired, to express oneself, to consider new perspectives and possibilities, and to learn from history, did not necessarily reveal their particular motivation for coming to the museum with their learners, they are all tied in some way to reflective and transformative learning that can be applied to situations beyond the walls of an art museum or the scope of its activities.

This prospect of broadening our horizons (learners and educators alike), and the lifelong possibilities for personal change (and engaging in social change), drive much of the research and practice in adult education. Whether or not they used the term 'education', learning was at the core of each educators' description of art museums' social roles. This demonstrates how an art museum can act as an effective starting point for understanding and exchange that go beyond aesthetics, to encompass personal, professional, historical, cultural and social change.

5.2 Why come to an art museum with adult learners?

I have summarized educators' reasons for bringing their learners to the Museum in the following two ways:

- Transformative engagement and the importance of well-being

- Complimentary learning that can be achieved in a new learning context

5.2.1. Transformative engagement and the importance of well-being

One reason Sylvie brings her groups to the museum is the confidence that can be built through experiencing new and positive things. She also stated her belief that more public investment should be made into culture because exposure to the arts can be transformative to our ways of looking at the world, of communicating and approaching problem solving:

> *Tout le côté imagination, créativité, que ça soit dans n'importe quel travail. Meme quelqu'un qui serait un comptable. Un jour ou l'autre, tu es pris avec un problème, il faut que tu dévéloppes ce côté-là. De dire <<bon, c'est quoi une autre solution.>> Il y a un processus de trouver d'autres solutions, d'alternatives.... Etre dans une situation, plus tu as une decision à prendre ou tu as quelque chose a créer par toi-même, sans savoir...la structure, les balises, le soutien.... Je pense qu'on ne pousse peut-être pas assez le côté de conception.*

Christine, too, shared how she believes art is able to touch different adults, describing the possibilities that lie in encountering something new:

> *Parce que les arts, ça touche plusieurs cultures.... Dans les arts, on peut aller exprimer des émotions, puis les personnes vont les percevoir ... percevoir les émotions d'un artiste, ce n'est pas toujours facile, alors ça leur permet de s'ouvrir des horizons. Parce que l'on voit quand même que les personnes sont très fermées. Ils ont une manière de voir la vie sociale, la société, la famille, etc. Ça*

*leur permet donc une certaine ouverture d'esprit. C'est un impact à
long terme, c'est difficile de percevoir ça tout de suite le lendemain.
Le lendemain, on essaie toujours de sonder la classe, de les faire
écrire par rapport à cela. Et puis, des fois, ils ont des choses à dire,
des fois ils en ont moins. C'est difficile de percevoir les effets à long
terme.*

The possibility for museums as sites for building critical thinking and problem solving skills should not be underestimated; engaging groups in critical, reflexive exercises is a way of engaging groups of learners who may have varied interests in a given exhibition or collection on another level. Similar to advocates for socially inclusive adult museum education, the educators' interview responses also reflect a level of confidence in learner outcomes that are not necessarily tangible, especially in the short-term. This faith on the part of keyworkers is invaluable given that the value of a museum experience becomes harder to justify in an educational climate that increasingly favours concrete, measurable and quantifiable skills acquisition.

Gennaro emphasized the need to view the arts – visual and others – as a priority in life rather than something frivolous. He stressed that interaction with art not only offers an opportunity to step away from the at-times difficult realities of the everyday, but also offers inspiration for individuals in whatever their domain of work, study, or personal struggle:

> *I truly believe that it stimulates us, and not necessarily towards art,
> but towards accomplishing something. If you look at something and
> you realize the amount of time, the patience, the effort, the talent
> that went in to it, then you think, "Well, if I were to put that energy
> into what I am doing, then I can accomplish anything." It doesn't
> have to be artistic.*

Gennaro brings his adult learners to the art museum to offer them what he considers a necessary opportunity for pleasure, relaxation, or inspiration during an often discouraging and potentially high stress time in their lives. Integrating this type of outing is consistent with his organization's holistic approach to individual well-being.

Gennaro 's comments more explicitly consider speculations about artists, works of art and artistic process, and their combined impact on non-artists. Slightly more individually focused, Gennaro 's comments also return to questions of health as described in Chapter 4. Recognizing the intersecting effects of settlement and unemployment for many of his clients, Gennaro seeks out a balance for them in order for them to better achieve their learning goals. In approaching the well-being of his students holistically, Gennaro identifies something missing from their regular lives – exposure to art – and instead of interpreting its absence to mean it is unnecessary, he does the opposite – he identifies it as a necessity that is missing.

5.2.2. Complimentary learning and new learning context

Christine stressed the benefits for language learners of hearing someone other than their teacher speak. A different accent, combined with a visual rather than written reference, is a natural way of engaging in second or third language dialogue and offers an alternative to typical classroom-based language training.

Christine frequently refers back to the themes explored with museum educators once she and her students return to the classroom.

The above comments raise two critical concerns for teachers in different domains; the implications of off-site learning and the integration of new content into existing curriculum or lesson plans. For students and for educators, what are the benefits of leaving the classroom, of engaging in learning outside the regular classroom context – physical, relational or pedagogical? How does going one step further by implicating other educators in the teaching we do and how does this challenge the 'teacher' role and result in learning opportunities for all educators and learners involved?

New dynamics can emerge out of participants using different skills, responding to another facilitator, or sharing knowledge on a topic not previously explored in class. This is also important for keyworkers; they are also leaving the security of a familiar place, and may be as unfamiliar with content or concepts as their learners. As they acquire new information and ideas, what do educators do with learners once they are back in the classroom? Educators' responses revealed to me that both the formal (new content for discussion or analysis) and the informal (relationships and new rapport that emerge from the experience) are both appreciated.

The need to get out of the classroom and for language learners to listen to voices other than their teachers' was also one of Karen's concerns. She commented that an art museum offers an opportunity for learners to be engaged in dialogue on topics with which they may not be familiar. This means acquiring new vocabulary, and the need for students to listen attentively to what they are hearing. Recognizing that certain types of visual reference are unique to an art museum, a guided museum visit is a logical choice:

> *I think that visualization helps them, talking about a picture, sometimes talking about personal things.... I think that anything they can see, look at for a length of time, I think it really opens up another area, gives them something to talk about. I think that is what is nice about art, it is not overdose, you have time to absorb one image at a time.*

Adjusting to the pace of learners: in my experience this has included lingering in a room longer than expected, or leaving individuals behind and allowing them to catch up with the rest of the group when they are ready. Conversations frequently emerge with a portion of the group as other concentrate on something else, or move at another pace. This is an approach that is unique with adult learners and used much less frequently, if ever, with children who need supervision and whose learning is part of a monitored curriculum. Working with adults allows for an approach that is as much – or sometimes more – individual learner-focused than it is concerned with class or institutional needs.

Christine spoke about the impact of art making on her students' learning. She stated that because individuals learn and are touched by art in different ways, visits that combine art interpretation and a studio activity provide a more

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holistic approach to art education. She stressed that these activities are not

simply for children, that adults could very well be absorbed in a tactile experience

such as working with clay:

> *Puisqu'ils s'expriment, ils vont s'exprimer beaucoup plus par le dessin, beaucoup plus que dans la classe par la parole. C'est un autre aspect : ça nous rapproche, ça nous permet d'encore mieux connaître son groupe et puis de trouver des talents d'une personne qui n'en avait pas. J'aime encore cet aspect là de l'atelier. Parce que la visite guidée, seulement guidée, ça dépend du niveau des étudiants et de l'intérêt. Parce que c'est...on se dit très bien que des étudiants en francisation décrochent à un moment donné. Si c'est trop abstrait, si c'est dépendant du guide, ils n'ont pas tous des talents oratories.*

Strategies combining observation, drawing, or (in Christine's case) sculpting with

other teaching clarifies concepts, leaves a physical mark of learning, and

provides objects for later discussion. She found this approach more conducive to

open and relaxed communication among students.

What is often referred to as 'safe spaces', as well as opportunities for self-

expression and the production of a project (however small) are all essential

ingredients to empowering education and training across domains. These

examples are also consistent with the complimentary approach to programme

and service delivery that is being used in the women's organization where I work.

Participants (rather than 'clients', implying a learning process and active role) are

more and more frequently moving between programmes. This is not as a result

of dependency on the organization, but rather a growing acknowledgement and

appreciation of the ways in which learning that occurs in one programme may

lead participants to another; this may be an opportunity to apply or compliment previous learning. For example, a woman coming out of a programme designed to increase self-esteem may then move on to be a member of a participatory housing committee. Conversely, another woman participating in a collective kitchen may, in the process of developing skills in group communication, identify the need to improve her self-esteem, and participate in the other programme to address it.

Karen's reflections on her initial uncertainty about studio activities reflect how the complimentary learning that may take place in a museum can be narrowly defined or underestimated. Her original choice of a guided tour was influenced by the opinions of her colleagues, who suggested that her students would be insulted by a studio activity:

> *Lots of the students are very well educated in their own countries and their education isn't recognized here and so I think that some of the teachers think that you are treating them like children, getting them to go play with plasticene. And so I let people convince me that that was the way but I don't think so anymore. I've done different things with my class, things that are physical, and once they are laughing they forget they are learning. So now I won't let anyone convince me otherwise.*

Karen's comments reminded me of a group of English-as-another-language learners that I took through the MMFA's Canadian collection. It was a multi-level group, which is often the case, and so participants were not all equally engaged. However, once each participant was standing in front of a painting of their choice with a pencil, paper and clipboard in hand, it was exactly as Karen described; laughter ensued, relaxed the group, and the workshop took a turn for

the better. If this had occurred prior to our dialogue, this anecdote could have been shared with her in a way that could further affirm her speculation, perhaps reduce her doubts, and encourage her to try something new with her learners. This reflection is an example of how dialogue can act as an opportunity for educators on both sides to acknowledge and address their biases or uncertainties. Karen took some time to reflect during our dialogue on an activity that she had previously not yet embarked on and decided then to try it. She made the decision having reflected on the peer pressure of other educators and her own lack of information and, finally, making the connection to other teaching strategies.

Gennaro appreciates the MMFA as a particularly important cultural site because it offers a type of cultural orientation, which he believes assists his recently immigrated participants in their settlement process. For this reason he takes advantage of programming that focuses on the permanent collection:

> Show us the permanent collection first, because the people are not
> necessarily into different artists but also want to ask "What does
> Montreal have?" Not necessarily an exhibition, but "This is going to
> become my city, I am here, I'd like to see what my museum has." I
> stress the idea of 'my' because if you are going to come and live
> and work here it is becoming your city. People are looking forward
> to that, to being able to say 'my city', my 'downtown', my 'museum',
> in a sense.

Sylvie stated that she not only integrates museum visits into her program as an opportunity for creative exposure and expression, but to also to encourage her participants to consider the museum as a potential site for employment:

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*On les emmene au musée pour qu'elles connaisent d'avantage
c'est quoi un musée, c'est quoi les professions a l'interieur d'un
musée. Puis aussi pour donner la chance aux femmes de
découvrir le milieu artistique. Plusieurs d'entres elles ne sont jamais
allées dans un musée ou une galerie. Donc, c'est pour les attirer
vers ce milieu là; l'exploration professionelle, puis du marché du
travail.... [Elles] on vu un autre côté.*

The complimentary learning described in these two reflections is tied to a sense of ownership and orientation; both educators' comments reflect an interest that goes beyond exhibitions or collections to the museum itself. They take distinctly different slants on the demystification of the museum, however. Gennaro 's emphasis was on his learners as informed visitors who can return with confidence, Sylvie asked how her learners could learn more about the museum field in order to realize what opportunities exist for employment that they may not have previously been familiar with. Despite this difference, both comments further reflect the range of motivation amongst adult educators that go to art museums with their learners.

One of the many things I learned from the interview process was that the educators were very much learners themselves. Their belief in the role of museums as learning sites, as well as their own motivation to learn something new, were tied to their sense that a museum education program supports the teaching that they do. Individual benefits of museum programs are both emotional and pragmatic, and can often be unintended or emerge on the periphery of programme goals. The educators all described the ways in which

they not only learned about art and art history, but about themselves, their group's lived experiences and their learners' relationships to others.

CHAPTER 6

ASSISTING THE ART MUSEUM

This second chapter devoted to the interviews examines in more detail how community adult educators may equip museum workers through information sharing, constructive criticism, and proposals for museum activities. The educators indicated that partnerships offered three important possibilities: as a means for museums to better sensitize themselves to the special needs of different learners, as a liaison for outreach and as collaborators in the development of new tools and projects.

6.1 Learner needs

6.1.1. Confidence and empowerment

Véronique suggested that art interpretation is an empowering or a stressful experience, depending on the individual and situation. She stated that speaking about personal experiences or expressing emotions is not necessarily an easy task for anyone, and can be particularly challenging for adults who do not have the language skills or vocabulary to express themselves on these levels. She also stated her belief that art interpretation is a learning terrain where educators must put adults at ease to express themselves, and to assure them that there is do no right or wrong answer. Karen also described the potential for risk in art interpretation: "*I think once you get to a certain age you're very jaded, you have a lot of defenses. So looking at something, it can be good and bad. I think it can open the things you've buried; imagery can trigger something.*"

She went on to stress that taking the opportunity to talk about this type of reaction, or to articulate a lack of understanding about a given work of art, provides important linguistic and personal challenges for groups of learners.

Christine also described the vulnerability she sees in her adult learners. Like Véronique and Karen, Christine has learned through her teaching that the need to express oneself without the tools to do so is a temporary but particularly frustrating experience for adults learning a new language. It is also one that needs to be accepted in order to move ahead in learning. At beginner levels, *"En tant que professeur, il ne faut pas trop non plus leur poser de questions, les amener à vouloir expliquer quand ils ne peuvent pas."*

Sylvie also expressed some hesitation about educators handing too much responsibility for learning to learners themselves. Her observation was in relation to a studio activity she participated in with one group, where she felt educators took a laisser-faire approach to learner exploration, which wasn't conducive to all the learning needs within her group: *"c'était <<fait quelque chose>>. Donc là, il y a des gens qui n'étaient pas pris d'angoisse je dirais, mais il y a des gens qu'on voyait qu'ils se sentaient mal de dire <<comme quoi?>>"* While she could appreciate the liberty this approach tried to encourage, she felt that learners with low self-esteem needed a more structured framework, more guidance and examples. If then they wished to branch out, then they would be free and better equipped to do so.

These comments raise the question of how to 'manage' or monitor our efforts to make visits as interactive as possible. This is particularly relevant when reflecting how far to push learners to participate, draw on their personal experiences, etc. An additional factor necessarily arises, that of adapting lesson plans designed for children to the learning situation of adult learners exploring something or somewhere they are unfamiliar with.

Concerns about freedom and boundaries also abound in community settings where, when given too much freedom, workshop participants can grow resentful. Sometimes this freedom is interpreted as a lack of effort on the part of the facilitator. Other times it can complicate group dynamics when participants do not have the confidence or communication skills to adequately respond to a conflict they or another participant may be confronted with. I have learned from participants that there can be safety in knowing a facilitator is taking – or will take if necessary – hold of the reigns of a learning situation.

Sylvie went on in more detail to describe the specific emotional challenges that art interpretation – and art making – presents to the women with whom she works:

> ... ce qu'on est habitué d'apprendre depuis qu'on est jeune, malgré qu'on faisait beaucoup de dessin et d'art plastiques. Mais il y a un temps lorsque vers le secondaire, ou ça disparait. Pour certaines personnes, ça disparait complètement si les personnes ne s'en vont pas dans les domaines des arts au CEGEP ou peu importe à quel niveau. Il y en a qui n'y toucheront jamais de leur vie...c'est malheureux parce que c'est un côté aussi que l'on devrait avoir, tout le monde ou une confiance qui peut se dévélopper aussi.

This comment in particular struck a chord with me, since the stage in life that she described was in fact the same one in which I myself stopped making art. My passion to see, to read, to talk and to write about art stayed with me, but any art making stopped. At times this reality causes me to hesitate during art activities. Other times, however, I am able to see myself as more of a peer facilitator; engaging in art as a 'non-artist', alongside learners, can be a rewarding experience that helps me to better understand their process. I am confronted with the reality of my creative process as it relates to the commonly held educator belief that art making can be an empowering and stimulating experience for 'non-artists' as well.

Back in the exhibition galleries, Gennaro said that he appreciated the way that guides continually reinforce what he and his group says, suggesting that this approach is consistent with the work he does in confidence building. Engaging museum visitors in learning about techniques, thinking about content, and responding aesthetically all contribute to a rejuvenation of spirit and increased confidence. Gennaro also described the pride that many of his participants feel when, after visiting the museum once or twice, they are able to bring friends or family on their own and show them around.

These concerns return my reflections to the questions raised in Chapter 5 about ownership. Having now worked at the MMFA for two years, still a relatively short time, I have started to recognize learners who are returning for subsequent

visits, usually with another educator. This recognition can build a special rapport if acted upon, even simply saying "hello" in a familiar way. Teaching part time hours in a large museum, in a large city, these experiences are more rare than might be for art museum educators elsewhere. I have also realized that, in order to facilitate another's experience of feeling 'at home', this also has to happen for educators themselves.

6.1.2. Privileging learner-educator interaction

Christine critiqued the guides who led her group's visits for their lack of questioning techniques, which she argued are essential for keeping a group's attention and facilitating learning. "*Ce n'est pas seulement le professeur qui parle, qui donne sa connaissance, mais qu'il y ait une interaction entre les personnes."* She suggested that guides are not always open to receiving questions, and interpreted this type of reaction to mean that guides perceived questions as interruptions, and reflected a fault on the part of the learner:

> *Ça la dérangeait dans son discours et puis la question, elle l'avait dit un peu avant, elle avait dit une partie de la réponse. Il aurait fallu déduire qu'elle en avait parlé et que si on avait bien écouté, on n'aurait pas posé la question. On a le droit à l'erreur, on n'a pas le droit de perdre un petit peu l'attention....*

As with all learners, especially in a context like the museum where learners are present for a short, finite time, adaptability on the spot is an important part of everyday teaching. Patience is important, as is picking up on signs and clues that learners may have a fear of making a mistake or of not responding appropriately, or are not engaged. As museum educators we are

always ready to switch gears – even direction – if necessary. This task is not always an easy one, nor can I always successfully 'read' my groups. Using the example of allowing learners to move ahead or lag behind in a teaching situation, I can guess that their disappearance is either simply a sign of their independence, or that it could be a direct reflection of their lack of interest in me and/or my teaching. This type of situation always requires critical self-questioning; sometime there is need for concern, other times there is not. The question remains, where do we go with it in the long term?

Reflecting on scenarios in the museum as well as in the community has continually helped me to put things into perspective. For example, cleaning up following an activity I had organized, I found a paper with one short line written in teenaged handwriting stating, "I'm so bored". As this was coming from a high school student during an activity designed primarily for educators and fieldworkers, I was not surprised to find it. However, as I placed the piece of paper in the pile of formal evaluations, I asked myself if in fact there hadn't been any adults participants feeling just the same way as this young woman.

Inside and outside of the museum I must consider the responses of learners and assess for myself what I could have improved. There will always be something to improve, even though, as Sachatello et al. (2002) writes, "...programs with excellent instructors, committed participants, intriguing content and rich context won't have an impact on every individual" (p.14). Either way, I

ask myself, *"What can I do next time to make this experience better for the learner and for me?"*

In contrast with Christine's critique, Karen addressed similar concerns about museum educator awareness as she identified strategies used by guides that were consistent with her teaching approach. She stated that soliciting answers, rather than transmitting information, was a positive and effective technique. Véronique also mentioned interactivity and questioning techniques when describing the similarities between her teaching and museum educators'. She described how in the classroom she tries to limit the amount she speaks. Like her, the guides and educators must speak, but posing and taking questions, returning to themes covered, adapting vocabulary, and allowing time for absorption were, she felt, all strategies conducive to her learners' needs. That said, she acknowledged that this is not always the case:

> *Ça dépend, il y en a qui sont super, il tiennent compte du fait qu'ils apprennent le français, mais d'autres qui déballent tout ce qu'ils ont à dire, qui ne tiennent pas compte de l'interaction.*

Addressing the question of language is also part of my work in the community. As I facilitate a regular collective kitchen workshop in my second and third language simultaneously, I watch as women who do not share even a second language successfully exchange their knowledge and ideas, and collectively plan and execute meals. This example of communication suggests to me that food, like art, can transcend specific spoken language. Peeling, cooking,

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drawing, or observing together in a small group can break barriers that may originally be perceived as substantial.

I compare this example with a museum tour I observed a colleague lead last year. During this tour of the permanent collection with language learners, I watched and listened to her teaching, as I did their responses to it. The educator was speaking so quickly that I concluded that the group would have difficulty following her. As I began to think the workshop might be a write-off, I took a closer look at the other aspects of her teaching—smiles, laughter, varied intonations of voice, physical movement and contact, as well as visual aids. Even though she was, I believed, speaking too quickly for the level of language the group had, she was engaging them in such a personal way that the group was in fact quite animated. I came to realize that the pace that we use to speak is something that can be trained with more information, guidance, and sensitivity; interpersonal skills, which are very much integral to who an educator is and how he or she connects with others, are rare, precious, and essential to achieving interactivity within a group.

In reflecting in these comments and experiences, I realized that in the context of the MMFA, unless they are returning groups and by coincidence happen to be scheduled to work with me again, I rarely know the groups with whom I am working. By contrast, knowing your learners is a first step in knowing what types of questions to ask and how to ask them. This is not to say that

knowing exhibitions and collections does not provide art museum educators with enough rich content to develop questions, but that the depth of questioning cannot be as personalized. Faced with this reality I commit myself to two activities that facilitate the process of getting to better know the group with whom I am working, even if the interaction is only going to last ninety minutes. First, I take some time at the beginning of a visit to talk with the group; asking about their interests, their existing knowledge of a given exhibition, the kind of experience they have had in museums, and their preferences for an exhibition. The second thing I do, like all museum educators are compelled to do, is to simply do my best to follow the group's lead, picking up on previously unarticulated interests, pursuing or letting go of a given topic of discussion, and engaging learners in answering each other's questions.

These strategies are also relevant to Karen and Véronique's concerns that diverging sensibilities within and between groups of learners must be taken into account. Karen's concerns about exhibition content had to do with the sensitivity required to gauge whether or not learners would be comfortable with the content of an exhibition. She related one example of her concerns, and how she chooses to respond:

> When the Picasso exhibit [of erotic art] was on a couple of years ago a few of my students wanted to go, but we also have students who would be very offended by anything that they would deem obscene.... So I am very careful, I try to be culturally sensitive. When we go we usually do the Canadian collection... I try to also pick art from their countries.

Similarly, Véronique stated that, "... *ce n'est pas tout le monde qui va réagir de la même façon. D'en tenir compte. L'origine culturelle est importante.*"

If more diverse collection, preservation and curatorial strategies depend on long-term institutional and social change, keyworkers can play an current role in educating and sensitizing museums staff about the range of possible responses to given works, exhibitions, or collections. This could be in the form, for example, of debriefing on a group of learners, or training on pluralism or anti-oppression. As educators, being open to this means that we must be open to acknowledging our respective assumptions, prejudices and privileges. Amstutz (1999) regrets that "Although [liberatory learning] theories encourage learners to critically examine the values, beliefs, and assumptions they may have uncritically assimilated from the dominant culture, the implementation of these concepts in adult education practice has been less than stellar" (p. 19). Overcoming this gap may be a challenge, Tronwell (2001) states, "To support a wide range of student needs, the educator...must be excited by unfamiliar territories, state clearly what they don't know, and invite collaboration from students and external resources..." (p.43). Just as the museum offers opportunities for capacity building, adult educators and other community workers may offer museum workers the same, in order that they may create more inclusive, appropriate and relevant learning scenarios.

6.1.3. Establishing relevance

Sylvie stated that content has to be particularly relevant to adult learners, whose attention needs to be captured by something concrete. This may mean adapting to conventional learning styles, such as visual, oral or experiential, or responding to more basic needs that different groups of learners may have. Her adult learners, for example, may need to know something as basic as how long the activity will last, and exactly the activities to be undertaken. They do not want to waste their time; they need to know that what they are doing serves or relates to them in a specific way:

> Comment rejoindre ces gens-là? Pas juste rejoindre
> physiquement, mais comment rejoindre personellement ou
> emotionellement? Comment peut-on les atteindre pour ne pas
> qu'elles soient émues a ne pas s'en remettre, mais qu'elles vont se
> rappeler de la visite?

Véronique echoed this, saying, "Ça va aller les chercher d'avantage si ça leur rappelle quelque chose."

As an educator with little seniority in a large museum, I am aware that I am not in a position to affect curatorial decisions that would make art museum exhibitions more relevant to adult learners. It is my responsibility, then, to work with what does exist. One way to respond to a lack of relevance of a particular exhibition or collection is to engage learners in critically exploring that lack; this can lead to interesting discussions that focus on art museums themselves – trends in collecting, learning styles, and the historical roles of artists,

commissions, and museum practice – to wider topics such as cultural privilege, feminist art history or popular culture, among others.

In one instance at the MMFA I happened to have prior knowledge of a community group that was coming to visit a recent exhibition on art of the 1960's. This group of young women was enrolled in an employability programme tailored to participants aiming to work in fashion retail. The museum activity that the educator had reserved included a visit though the exhibition followed by a short drawing workshop whose learning objective was to design a CD cover. Familiar with this programme, I did two things in order to increase the relevance of the exhibition for participants, while still respecting the learning objectives of the museum's lesson plan. Walking through the exhibition I focused on links between visual art, design and popular style. When it came to the practical workshop, I took advantage of having the time to prepare in advance for a group whose specific needs I was familiar with. Through a simple web search, I collected images of Op Art and Op-inspired fabric designs from the same era. Returning to the influence of fine art on popular style, instead of engaging them in a CD design, I asked them to design a fabric swatch. The technical objective of the activity was met, and the group's facilitator expressed her pleasure in seeing that her participants could connect the exhibition to something tangible from their everyday lives.

Christine suggested that adults' most significant learning need is related to the diverse and extensive life experience behind them, and that making learning relevant means acknowledging this fact. Many of her language students are professionals such as engineers, professors, and architects, who have a specialized knowledge base but, as described earlier, have a limited vocabulary to express it. As an educator she searches for vocabulary and examples that best serve her students. She also draws on the relevance of lived experience in her attempt to respect what adults have already learned – formally or informally – throughout their lives: "*Que ce soit de l'expérience de la difficulté, de la misère, de bonnes et de mauvaises choses, de travail. Il faut les respecter dans ce qu'ils savent déjà.*"

Recognition of prior knowledge and experience is increasingly essential to working with, and in some case accrediting, adult learners. It is also what I enjoy about working with them. Rereading Christine's comments led me to reflect on two related experiences that reveal how, as an educator, I can take different pathways – some better than others – to reach similar conclusions and learning about my practice. One instance was also during the 1960's exhibit where I did not immediately establish a good flow or rapport with a group of adults who were not very vocal. Partway through the visit, I found myself very aware of my own discomfort of talking about a historical era to people in mid-age who had obviously lived through it. My increasing awareness of their lack of engagement led me to shift my approach mid-visit; I started asking them questions that tied

the exhibition themes to their personal knowledge and experience. My attempt to bring the learners back was moderately successful, but I never fully achieved a 'natural' dialogue or rapport as described below.

In another instance I was facilitating a visit to a recent exhibition of 17th century European painting. By contrast, the individuals in this group of seniors expressed a tremendous amount of historical knowledge from the outset. I was struck by the enthusiasm with which they were sharing this knowledge with everyone, and at the same time received some knowing smiles of those less vocal that were listening to their peers. This was an occasion where my exhibition-specific knowledge complimented the dialogue that was led by the learners rather than the other way around. In adapting to their already established rapport I was also able to find moments to speak with those less vocal as they slipped away from the various conversations that ensued. I learned many things about my teaching that day, as well as historical facts that I was able to share with other groups.

6.2 Outreach, information sharing and dialogue

6.2.1. Making the effort to make contact

Sylvie suggested that through liaisons museums could take advantage of outreach work that is already realized by community organizations. In her case, this is especially useful for museums, since reaching socially isolated women is particularly challenging and labour-intensive:

C'est extrêmement difficile de les rejoindre.... On s'est rendu compte que ces femmes-là c'est avec les journaux de quartiers qu'elles reçoivent dans leur porte, chez eux, dans leur CLSC.... Tu sais, il a fallu vraiment développer où est-ce qu'elles vont.... On a essayé d'imaginer plusieurs moyens pour rejoindre ce groupe-là.... Donc, peut-être pour certains groupes, c'est vrai que vous allez peut-être avoir de la difficulté à les rejoindre. Parce que ces gens sont plus en retrait de la vie en société. En effet, c'est peut-être un bon moyen, des groupes communautaires, d'aller faire une partenariat avec eux pour dire : il y a telle activité, voulez-vous embarquer?

Gennaro also stated that, to reach different communities, a liaison from a community organization is a necessary partner. The challenge for his organization is not reaching potential participants, but rather convincing them to participate. Using his own parents as an example, Gennaro suggested that many adults in immigrant communities see work and family life as a priority. He went on to suggest that, given the challenges that many of his learners face (such as secure housing, children's schooling, job searches), museums and other 'artistic endeavors' are rarely a priority. Through his programme, he offers a visit to the MMFA as an option by giving adults a chance to integrate cultural activities into their other, often pressing, responsibilities:

They may have been enjoying museums and art work in their countries immensely, but now their priorities have shifted – they have to find a job, they have to settle in. Because it is part of the program, it gives them a chance to get back to something that maybe they were enjoying before, that was a part of their life before. Or, in some cases, was never a part of their life. We make it part of something – not that it doesn't give them a choice – but we have made it a priority so they don't have to ask themselves if it is a priority. Then afterwards they may make it a part of their lives.

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Christine stressed her concerns about outreach in terms of accessibility:

> Je suis très contente que le musée s'ouvre, justement. On trouve qu'il y a un besoin que ce soit accessible. Je suis contente de voir qu'il y a cette ouverture et puis que ça continue dans le même sens. Puis que varient d'avantage les activités que l'on peut offrir. Il faut aider les gens à se sortir de leur petite routine qui parfois n'est pas toujours agréable. C'est toujours d'aller chercher les gens. Puis, ça les amène à penser à autre chose. Il faut toujours travailler sur notre société.

Equitable community partnerships bring museums in contact with new people, perspectives and approaches. Recognizing diverse responses to, and engagements with, art and artifacts can contribute to healthy communities through increased agency, empowerment, and capacity building. Building partnerships with communities in mind – and the individuals that comprise them – is an important way to collectively respond to social issues and to share limited resources. Rather than undermine the work of museums, these approaches compliment existing work while increasing its relevance, accessibility and potential.[18]

6.2.2. Information sharing

One way that Gennaro judged the success of the BAC program was the extent to which he is more motivated to become involved in museum activities. He also suggested that through increased contact with the museum's education department he is becoming more aware of the opportunities he may take

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[18] There is established documentation and evaluation, amongst museums, associations, and universities, of these types of programmes in Great Britain. It would be interesting to assess why Canadian art museums and policy-makers did not move in this direction at the same time or pace. To what degree we can learn from their experience, models, and policies?

advantage of with his group, and stated that his lack of time, more than anything, was standing in the way of further participation.

Véronique explained the importance of promotional information sent to community organizations, word-of-mouth communication among adult educators and, more specifically, the sharing of their personal experiences at the museum. Combined and harnessed, these forms of communication would result in increased awareness amongst community educators of the opportunities available to them at the MMFA and other museums. Echoing this conclusion that having more information allows more educators to take advantage of art museum programming, Karen stressed the need to increase information circulation using multiple strategies. She suggested that museum workers attend educator fairs to distribute information to a large number of people working in adult education, and be available to respond to questions that are not answered in the publicity. She stressed that information circulation amongst educators was something to which she herself could make a contribution.

Information sharing and dialogue with adult educators provides art museums with access to new networks, resources and perspectives. As part of a network of organizations engaged in community and cultural work, museums are in a position to promote and implement all that they can offer. In opening themselves to diverse and previously unconsidered

ways in which their facilities and resources can be both developed and used, art museums may reach learners they have never known.

6.3 Different learners, different learning projects

6.3.1. Active engagement of community adult educators

Karen recommended greater outreach to adult education centres and more direct involvement of adult educators. In art museum programming. Gennaro also expressed his desire for more complete information on how people can become more involved with the Museum; not only as a visitor, but as an active player in its programming or development. He stressed the need, first and foremost, for museums and educators from community organizations to sit down and, through a process of discussion and analysis, determine the specific ways in which the Museum may meet diverse needs and mandates:

> ...not everyone has gone through that procedure to determine what role [the museum] could play. Maybe they have never thought about it. Not only showing up at committees but then actually going through a procedure, actually sitting down and saying what role can we play and why? Because if it really has nothing to do with it, they don't have time, short schedule, it's not wanted because the adults are preoccupied with something else, then we say, ok, we tried, there is not a role to play, or one says it doesn't and the other insists that it does.... But those discussions can come to the conclusion that yes, there is a role, a reason, to be involved. It can only be beneficial to participants.

While Gennaro did not share any criticism of *Bridging Art in the Community*, his comments are consistent with writers concerned with improving museum-community programmes. For example, Trend (1997) states the importance of collaboration in planning: "If these hybrid projects are to have a value for both the

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arts and education communities, then surely some benefit would result from an

increased exchange over the premise, methods, and ultimate purpose of such

work" (pp. 257-258). Christine went further than Gennaro , in stating that greater

involvement of adult educators in the development of museum activities would

not only be enriching, but also be a step towards an equitable, participatory

society. While she acknowledged the complexity involved in recruitment, she

stressed the added importance of involving learners in the planning of projects

and in the work of advisory committees.

Through my most recent experience in developing community-

located research and education projects, I have become aware that the

use of advisory committees is becoming more commonplace. This

implicates various people – keyworkers, researchers and participants – in

the project's development, resulting in a network of individuals who work

at arms' length with project organizers in short-term decision-making,

giving feedback, suggesting or providing resources, and promoting the

project within their respective networks. This offers opportunities for a

certain level of participation, while not demanding a significant time

commitment from the many people work in the community sector who are

already busy with existing responsibilities and obligations. This type of

partnership also fills gaps in knowledge or training, and/or helps to identity

formal and informal training that may be needed to foster mutual

understanding of lived realities, distinct organizational contexts and participant-focused educational approaches.

6.3.2. Learning tools and new content

Sylvie suggested that a curriculum focused on women artists would interest both her and her participants. Reflecting on the work she does in an organization that promotes women's power to achieve, Sylvie suggested that this type of workshop could provide role models as well a broader recognition of women's social and cultural contributions that are often overlooked.

Karen expressed her desire for pre-visit support materials, in particular for adult English learners, and proposed a project for development:

> ...there are not a lot of art books; either they are for little kids or the big thick art history books. I don't have a lot of things in between to help them so I don't know if you have materials, or want to develop anything.... There is nothing between. Just so that the English isn't so.... I have a lot for composers but I haven't found a whole lot for artists.

Véronique echoed the need for preparatory materials as another means to better accommodate different learners, suggesting the development of pre-visit guides for use by schools or community groups. As it stands, she consults friends or research materials to prepare her students for visits to exhibitions. Her ability to do so, however, depends on her own knowledge and interest, as well as her available time.

Sylvie's desire for programming tailored to her group's needs points to certain limits of *Bridging Art and the Community*. The programme offered community groups free opportunities to participate in educational activities. Educators adapted pre-existing curriculum and content to meet specific group needs based on general information collected by the person taking the reservation and any information provided by keyworkers at the start of the visit. The outreach effort importantly built contacts and increased the participation of community groups in museum activities. The extent to which these activities were tailored to (or based on) specific needs and interests, however, was limited.

Karen and Véronique's suggestions point to the importance of cross-domain dialogues, not only in identifying ways in which museum collections may be used within and beyond museum walls, but also in identifying needs or gaps that museum staff perhaps did not know existed. The educators' concerns also point to certain institutional realities (for example a lack of funding, seniority, narrow job descriptions) that might hinder this type of project development in large art museums. At the same time, specific projects such as training, research or writing could be excellent opportunities for cross-domain collaboration, with those who develop lesson plans to work alongside those who actually deliver them. A collaborative approach between a museum team and a team of learners and educators from a community group would be an affirming experience

for all participants, as multiple perspectives could result in tools that would

draw on – and ultimately enhance – both teacher and learner experiences.

6.3.3. Rethinking spaces

Sylvie suggested that educational programming could focus on teaching

about the museum itself – as a place to consider for employment or engagement

– would be well received as a form of community education. Exploring corners of

the museum beyond the gallery spaces, such as the library or the restoration

facilities, would be effective in learning more about a milieu that is, for some,

difficult to get into. This recommendation is interesting, given that while the

MMFA offers an activity that explores museum professions, it does not include a

visit 'behind the scenes'. At times, some tour groups cross paths with, for

example, conservationists working in an exhibition gallery. This could be an

educational opportunity, if the conservationists take a moment to describe what

they are doing. In my experience, such occurrences are rare, and depend upon

other museum workers seeing what they do as educationally relevant – that

museum education is not just about the content of collections but also

acquisition, restoration and exhibition processes. More broadly, such

occurrences also demand a certain educative spirit amongst museum staff that

recognizes educational responsibility across the museum.

Sylvie and Véronique both expressed their support for physical space

where the MMFA could collaborate with other organizations. Sylvie proposed

bringing together women from different communities with practicing women

artists to engage in dialogue. This was an exciting proposal, which invites further

inquiry. To what extent are art museum educators in differently sized and located

institutions provided with training or teaching opportunities that include artists?

Some art museum educators are practicing artists themselves and can shed

personal insights into technical or creative processes, but what may remain

absent is the interaction between an artist, their work, an educator and the public.

Véronique proposed that space and time be devoted for community-driven

exhibtions:

> Peut-être offrir un espace où les gens présenteraient des choses.
> Soit des textes sur des œuvres vues, soit des œuvres en tant que
> telles. Parce qu'il y a des artistes parmi les étudiants, il y a des
> gens qui font des œuvres. Peut-être d'offrir un espace plus public
> où les gens pourrait exposer. C'est ce que je verrais.

Véronique's proposal demands distinct approaches to programming that also

require faith in the educational potential that may lie in learners appropriating

physical space and decision-making power within a museum. These approaches

are alternatives to consultation or other more passive participation in pre-

determined curriculum or services. These approaches also reflect the objectives

of the recently launched *Sharing the Museum,* a programme that built on the

networks and lessons learned over the five years that *Bridging Art and the*

Community was in place. *Sharing the Museum* moves from a phase of

relationship building – identifying learner groups, establishing confidence and

trust between them and the museum – to a phase of more active, equitable

collaboration. The values driving the project are openness, attentiveness and action. The project goals are about:

- Engaging people through their responses to art and artifacts

- Creating partnerships, exchanging ideas and building a sense of community

- Encouraging lifelong learning as well as amateur art practice in an informal and stimulating setting (MMFA, 2004).

Taking a step beyond the approach described on page 72, where organizations are invited to participate in existing activities, community educators now have the opportunities to design and realize activities (or, importantly, a series of activities) in collaboration with the Education and Public Programmes Department.

The MMFA's most recent education project, which reflects this approach and helped to launch *Sharing the Museum*, was realized in cooperation with a community organization that provides adult mentors to young people. Both generations toured a current photographic exhibition with museum educators, and subsequently took photos on the theme of their city. Their works were exhibited in the gallery space managed by the education department. If lessons learned from these types of initiatives could permeate the consciousness and daily work of other departments, the upcoming years could be transformative for the whole museum. If approached critically in a way that does not privilege museum interests and recognizes that the cultural ground upon which these projects are built is not neutral, the types of recommendations made by the

interviewees may be successfully (and meaningfully) realized to the benefit of many.

CHAPTER 7

REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

As briefly described in the methodology chapter, between the completion of my thesis proposal and embarking on my data collection, I asked a fellow graduate student to interview me with the questions I had developed for my research. I did so in order to establish a more self-critical foundation for developing and analyzing the research process. By reflecting on the experience of being interviewed as well as my experience interviewing, I examined both the values and assumptions that underlie my research and, more broadly (but inseparably), my teaching practice. Now, as I near the conclusion of this thesis, I will offer further reflections on the process of doing this research.

Values, assumptions, and articulating my thesis goal

Imel (1992) suggests that reflective practice allows for a necessary examination of the strategies that support our theories and practice. It provides practitioners with a means to assess whether or not the values we espouse are in fact the values we practice. Listening to the audiotape and reading the transcripts of the self-interview clarified for me in various ways what has informed my thesis goals. I was better able to see common threads between my community work and teaching; that participation, empowerment and equity are at the heart of the work I want to commit myself to. The conviction with which I speak about understanding leaner needs is consistent with my desire for wider

involvement in the development of educational opportunities in the museum. My

interviewer's written feedback appeared to echo this:

> *The observations that I most thoroughly recall from your interview,*
> *which kept coming into your answers, were your overall,*
> *passionate, commitments to museum outreach and the need to*
> *facilitate learning by catering to individual learning needs... making*
> *the museum environment a place where learning about art needs to*
> *take a more dynamic role in the community at large.*

For example, I stated:

> *[Art museums and galleries] are really special learning sites and for*
> *that reason I consider them community centres, effectively a place*
> *where people can come together and learn, on their own or*
> *together. It's my job to develop learning opportunities where people*
> *learn in collaboration with each other. And so I think that focus*
> *groups are one thing, you talk about what people want to do at the*
> *art gallery, and they are going to give you an answer, but I think*
> *that kind of question holds so much more meaning if you challenge*
> *people to work with you, reach out to other organizations.*

The two ideas that emerged most frequently in my own interview were 1) my

respect for lived experience and 2) the potential for better work that lies in

collaboration. I pull these together by arguing that it is the diversity in lived

experience, worldviews, and ways of working that make the potential of

collaborative partnership so exciting.

Moments of hesitation, personal ethics, and building knowledge

Listening to the transcripts, I noted moments of hesitation most frequently

when I was answering questions about adult learners in real life. The patchwork

that is my direct experience with adult learners does not reflect the level of my

interest. In my recent experience of 'reading more than doing', I also wonder

where the lines might blur between my real experience and the many

experiences and perspectives I have been exposed to through research and professional literature.

Another hesitation I noticed was in speaking about the women with whom I worked as a group facilitator at a local women's organization. I then asked myself, when can I be sure that I am respecting the subjects of my research, if a large part of it is based on real interactions with real people? The risk of objectifying others was of great personal concern, so I reflected further on what my perimeters are as an educator and researcher.

Schon (1987) recognizes the complexity and difficulties practitioners face, not only in solving problems, but in identifying them: "...the problems of real world practice do not present themselves to practitioners as well-formed structures. Indeed, they tend not to present themselves as problems at all, but as messy, indeterminate situations." These "indeterminate zones of practice" are characterized by uncertainty, uniqueness, and value-conflict (p. 6). Cunnigham (2001) argues that reflective practice provides a sustainable approach to understanding these zones because it exercises the practitioner's individual skills and attitudes, which eventually become a regular part of good practice. These various perspectives allowed me to better understand my hesitations as areas for further analysis, and that uncertainties are a necessary part of teaching and learning.

Resulting changes in procedure

The self-interview and further reading confirmed for me that a qualitative, action research methodology was the most suitable approach to my thesis work. It was not only conducive to the type of data and the context I wished to collect it in – it was consistent with my value system, and has constituted an important experience for me as a practitioner. Following the self-interview, I also made two specific changes to my questioning procedure: 1) re-writing existing questions and 2) incorporating a second level of questioning.

I rewrote some of my questions to clarify their language. As one often realizes from one's written work at a later date, what is obvious to the writer can be cloudy for the reader; the structure of our language itself is a practice based on assumption. Listening to my questions as an interviewee, with the distance of a few months since writing them, I was closer to hearing them as they might sound to another person. Even though they were my questions, having them posed to me by another person gave me a kind of distance from them that I hadn't yet experienced. Similarly, my interviewer reading them meant that she too needed to understand them. In asking the questions, she was effectively testing their structure.

As interviewer and interviewee, we both recognized areas in which I could clarify the interview questions. She suggested that I consider asking informants

to provide written answers to my questions. While this process would cut down on my transcribing time, she suggested it might also give me richer data: "*Some people are perhaps more able to think on paper, or even commit to their own ideology when it has been clarified by them in writing.*" I considered her suggestion, but wanting to use verbal dialogue as my primary method of data collection, I decided on another option. As previously stated, through a short questionnaire I offered them the opportunity to respond in writing after having time to reflect and the chance to read their own transcripts. In the end, the written portion did not provide me with significant data, as only two interviewees responded, and within those responses, no new findings emerged.

Looking inside on the project – conception, writing, follow-up

A given piece of writing is part of a larger body of work that is moving forward. This reflexive step in my thesis project shed light on my practice as an educator and researcher. I have perhaps spent less time picking apart the content of my answers than surveying the larger picture of recurring themes and uncertainties. McNiff (1993) situates her research and writing, acknowledging the subjectivity and instability of it:

> It is not a final answer. It is a firm but temporary intellectual
> platform on which I am standing to create new, more mature
> structures.... This firmness should be fluid, provisional, part of my
> conscious intent to transform my own thinking, and subject to
> dismantling when the time is right to move on (p. 1)

In doing so, she challenges the reader to recognize it as a moment in knowledge building that should be understood and/or applied in consideration of varying

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contexts and structures, and open to critique and adaptation. As an older

colleague good-naturedly said to me the other day, no matter how many

revisions or moments of anguish I have endured during this thesis project, in five

years I will be embarrassed by something I have written; I must find a point

where to finish and move on.

The richness of data and the pleasure I experienced in interviewing the

educators also confirmed that a qualitative, action research methodology was the

most appropriate for both the type of data I was looking for as well as my

sensibilities as a researcher. Having gone through the process, I had to ask

myself again the question, *What do I want out of this research?* In all honesty, I

wanted my findings to support the hypothesis that the MMFA's efforts with

Bridging Art and the Community was a positive step towards what I consider to

be inclusive research and practice in adult museum education. I also wanted to

confirm that the experience and perspectives of the keyworkers involved could

not only inform my work, but if harnessed in the long term, help to move the

project further in a critical, participatory direction.

Further implications for my professional practice

I also imagined ways in which the interviews I did could do more than offer

data for my Master's thesis. This could include the formation of longer-term

professional contacts, recommendations to my department, or program and

partnership proposals. If any of these could be accomplished, I would realize my

other thesis goal, to address my need to reconcile my worlds - art museums and the communities around them - to make sense of who I am as an educator, and how being a generalist might best contribute to educational and other community initiatives. This brings me back to the core of action research as described by McNiff and Whitehead (2002): an inquiry into the self, involving others as research participants and critical learning partners.

CHAPTER 8

FURTHER RESEARCH

The areas I have identified for further research are based on both sets of data – literature and interview responses – and emerge from the many questions I continue to ask myself (and others) as this thesis project concludes. I have identified five areas for further research:

1) targeting learners themselves

2) reaching potential rather than existing keyworkers (i.e. who is excluded?)

3) examining the role of smaller art institutions and practicing artists in the development of joint lifelong learning projects

4) exploring in more depth other models and case studies of participatory project development

5) collaborating with museum workers in other departments (such as curatorial, restoration, design, security) in further research and project development, and evaluation

Learners

Deeper research into the processes and impacts surrounding museum – community education would involve input from both educators and the learners with whom they work. While other educators offer an important pedagogical perspective, learners themselves are often in the best position to articulate their needs. A range of voices is therefore necessary in talking about teaching strategies, access, and the benefits of partnerships. This could also lead to further investigation into how learners can be engaged in museum activities in the longer term.

Who is excluded?

Educators' responses reflected a pre-existing acceptance of art museums as cultural centres, whereas much of the literature raised the issue of how in their efforts to broaden their relevancy, museums still unfairly assume their centrality in people's cultural lives. This question could be explored by targeting a larger group of educators who better reflect the diversity of the communities they work with, or by implicating two more keyworker groups: educators who do not participate in museum programmes but are open to doing so, as well as those who have made the conscious choice not to go to art museums. Why do they believe museums are not relevant learning sites for them or the adult learners with whom they work? What popular perceptions of art museums persist, and how might established relationships be better sustained through successive community workers with the same organization?

Smaller cultural institutions and practicing artists

The roles of practicing artists and community-driven activities of smaller cultural centres were both mentioned only once during the interviews. Given the well-documented history of community artist initiatives, and the activities of smaller cultural organizations, it is worthwhile asking in what ways art museums collaboratively partner within the cultural sector itself. For example, in addition to artist's talks and transmission-model art workshops, how could art museums engage artists more directly with learners? How might museum educators compliment their experience facilitating collection-based group learning with

other approaches such as those rooted in critical cultural studies and contemporary art practice? How could they share their expertise in other gallery settings?

Participatory models

Increasingly, educators and social workers are taking a community development approach to the programs and curriculum they develop by proactively integrating participants into the development of projects, or acting in a supporting role in participant-driven projects. As museum and other non-formal education work is becoming increasingly cross-disciplinary, further research could also involve the growing number of museums – now including the MMFA, through their second phase initiative – building active, two-way partnerships with community organizations, their leaders, and participants. Models of good practice do exist; a historical and ongoing analysis of their experiences could also involve further research into models of participatory evaluation.

Implicating the whole museum

At the time of this writing, the MMFA, through the EPPD, mounted an exhibition entitled *Touching Art.* Exhibition content and design were geared to the visually impaired; text was enlarged, audio-based didactic materials were developed, corners of the room and display cabinets themselves were modified, and all of the original works of art included in the exhibition were open to being touched. This temporary exhibit engaged educators, curators, designers,

technicians and security guards in new ways of thinking about how museums can be made more accessible. It doing so, it also demanded that they reconsider their respective jobs by challenging their assumptions about the limits and responsibilities of the work that they do. The example of this exhibition provides a starting point for further research into the experiences of –and impacts on - different types of museums workers –not just educators - engaging in more inclusive practice. How can this approach to exhibition development move beyond educational spaces? What is the role of art museum educators in advocating for increased pedagogical consciousness in the management and realization of activities throughout their institutions?

<u>CONCLUSION</u>

The goal of my thesis research has been to better equip myself to pursue my interest in equitable cross-domain partnerships and inclusive educational projects. My research has explored the perspectives of community adult educators who participate, with their adult learners, in organized educational programmes at an art museum. It was based on the assumption that reaching individual educators – keyworkers – is a necessary first step in building conceptual and relational links between museums communities of learners that are currently underserved. At the heart of this project is the belief that information sharing – more specifically, dialogue – is essential to developing and sustaining meaningful learning experiences in art museums. Effective dialogue depends not only on consultation, but collaborative partnerships from programme start to finish.

The responses of the five community adult educators who were interviewed for this thesis project confirm my own and other researchers' views that in order to better serve learners – and to reach new ones – museums must engage and implicate keyworkers from other organizations in the process of programme development. In their efforts to better respond to the diverse publics that they are mandated to serve, all art museum workers – not just educators – are in a position to benefit from equitable partnerships with keyworkers, to help make museums more accessible and relevant to a broader range of adult learners. Museums can learn from professionals in the field of adult education,

with its established history of putting the agency of learners at the heart of its efforts.

The educators I interviewed revealed to me their dedication to their learners, their appreciation of art museum educators, and their confidence in art museums as learning sites. Their responses provide examples of important perspectives on learner needs and teaching strategies, as well as potential areas for educational development within the museum. Responses also highlighted the importance of an empowerment approach; all of the educators placed great emphasis on respecting lived experience, interactive learning, and responding with sensitivity to the various barriers faced by participants in organized learning and daily life.

What educators' responses did not reveal was a thorough critique of museums themselves. While they stressed the need to demystify museums and challenge the notion that museums cater to an exclusive few, their criticisms did not extend to discussing power relations, nor how negative perceptions of art museums may be grounded in the need for them to make fundamental structural changes. In order to further pursue a social inclusion agenda, further research involving both existing and potential keyworkers and learners, as well as peers in other museum professions, would allow for a clearer picture of how museum workers from all departments can rethink decision-making and work towards more inclusive perspectives and approaches.

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Benitez (1999) describes the museum as a place of encounter and communication, and suggests that education is about "strategies where people define and debate their identities, and reflect on their living conditions, beliefs, values, and ultimately their social order" (p. 103). With this understanding of education, we can assert that 'teaching' and 'learning' are inevitably fluid between the 'teacher' and the 'learner'. Returning to one research team's conclusion, true lifelong learning demands openness to change on all sides (Gray and Chadwick, 2001). To be committed to teaching is to be committed to our own learning: from our research and experiences, from other educators and from those we teach.

Schon (1983) stressed that reflection does not have to be complete or faithful as long as it is good enough for the inquirer to criticize and restructure his or her understandings, and to then produce new actions. Young (2002) challenges cultural workers to ask awkward questions and make critical interventions in order to better understand the way history is made and represented. I have started asking questions, and am embarking with confidence on a long-term commitment to reflexivity and openness to change. I trust that my uncertainties reflect the honesty and humility necessary to looking towards myself, and others, in my attempts to better my practice as an educator, researcher and lifelong learner.

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APPENDICES

Informed Consent Form

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Emily Keenlyside of the Art Education Department of Concordia University.

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is a Masters thesis on adult education in art galleries. I understand that as part of her data collection process, the researcher is interviewing adult educators about their teaching experience and their participation in art gallery education programs.

B. PROCEDURES

I understand that interviews will take place at the interviewees' teaching site, in a private location of their choice. Interviews will be oral and recorded on to audio tape. The interview will last approximately 1 hour. I understand I will have the opportunity to review interview transcripts and at that time I may edit, elaborate, or omit any information or opinions I offered during the interview.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

• I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
• I understand that my participation in this study is NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., my identity will be revealed in study results)
• I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print):_____

SIGNATURE:_____

WITNESS SIGNATURE:_____

DATE :_____

Appendix 2:

Interview Questions

Approaching the Art Museum

Why did you first bring your group to the Museum?

Does the size, architecture, or location of the Museum an art museum affect the desired benefits of a visit for your group?

Does the style or content of an exhibit affect your desire or ability to bring groups to an art museum?

How does a studio activity – i.e. artistic making – fit into your group's visits? Essential? Important? Not important? Why?

How has the relationship between your organization and the art gallery developed? What role did you play in this process?

Do you think that the Museum is successful in its approach to broadening its audience through outreach to community organizations?

Does your group fell welcome in the Museum (as a group, as individuals)?

How did your group perceive art museums before coming? Has this perception changed?

How does the social dynamic within your group change within the setting of an art museum?

What do you think is missing from art museum programmes or exhibitions? If you have had experiences in other art museums, how do they compare?

Personal Values and Experiences in Art or Art Galleries

What is the role of an art museum or gallery?

How often do you personally go to art galleries?

Why do you go to art galleries? Are the exhibits you attend are the same as those to which you bring your groups?

Do you agree that art galleries depend on individuals to decide for groups the value of an art experience? Has your group articulated amongst themselves a desire to experience an art gallery?

Why do you think that exposure to art is important for adult learners?

Have you ever considered becoming more involved with an art museum?

Teaching Strategies

Do you think that tools or strategies used by art educators reflect a certain approach to teaching?

How would you summarize the learning needs of adults as distinct from children or adolescents?

How would you summarize the different learning needs between different groups of adults? What are the specific learning needs of your clientele?

How might these differences apply similarly or differently in art museums?

What gaps do you believe exist in the teaching abilities / approaches of art educators that have worked with your groups?

How do your teaching methods differ from the art educators you have worked with? How are they the same?

How does art interpretation relate to the work that you do, i.e. the other learner your group is involved in?

What do you think art educators, who work with learners of many age groups, might have to learn from adult educators working in other types of non-formal learning?

If the gallery engaged adult educators in regular input or involvement in project development, would you be interested in participating?

In what ways do you think that art museums might partner with other non-formal learning organizations to improve or develop the programming they offer adults?

Do you have other comments, observations, or experiences to share with me?

Post-interview Questionnaire

This is an optional questionnaire to give you the opportunity to respond to the transcript you have received. You will find attached a stamped, self-address envelope in which you made send the questionnaire back. You may also contact me by email at ekeenlyside@yahoo.com. Thanks again for your participation.

1. Do you have other comments about art museum's education work with adults? If so, please indicate below.

2. Do you have other comments about how museum education department might partner with community organizations that serve adults? If so, please indicate below.

3. Do you have any comments regarding my research project (themes, method, organization)? If so, please indicate below.

4. Are there any comments in the transcripts that you would like to clarify or omit? If so, please indicate below.

5. Additional comments:

Appendix 4:

Project Descriptions Emerging from
Adult Museum Education and Social Inclusion Literature

Adult Education:

- a two week design project where the public was lent digital cameras to take photos in the museums galleries and subsequently design museum posters (Anderson, 2000);

- a two-year collaboration between an art museum and a retirement association went from a regular painting group to workshops and discussions with visiting artists and a final exhibition of participants' works (Davoren and Fleming, 2000);

- a newsletter project by and for young 'at-risk' adults aimed at increasing interest and participation in an art museum. The project included participation from artists as well as youth, museum, and community workers (Gray and Chadwick, 2001);

- a reminiscence project that involved small museum lending artifacts their collection to a hospital through the support of a local health authority (Kavanagh, 2002);

- a series of and painting / drawing workshops developed by artists, an art museum, library, and day centre for adults with learning (Engage, 2003).

Social Inclusion:

- collection-based art courses and literacy activities in a picture gallery developed in collaboration with a prison, and homeless, senior, and detoxification centres (Carrington, 1999);

- an art course and public exhibition developed initiated by an art gallery and a mental health centre (Dodd, 2002);

- open documentation projects between museums, schools and community groups develop public database fields that allow the public to contribute their own knowledge to collection records (Jackson, 1999);

- a museum-university partnership that established a cultural sector training program geared towards communities underrepresented in museum management and decision-making (Mpumlwana, K., Corsane, G., Pastor-Makhurane., and Rassool, C., 2002).

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