

THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND EDUCATION

The Future of Lifelong Learning and Work

Critical Perspectives

D.W. Livingstone, Kiran Mirchandani
and Peter H. Sawchuk (Eds.)



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THE FUTURE OF LIFELONG LEARNING AND WORK

The Knowledge Economy and Education

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The series is particularly aimed at researchers, policymakers, practitioners and students who wish to read texts and engage with researchers who call into question the current conventional wisdom that the knowledge economy is a new global reality to which all individuals and societies must adjust, and that lifelong learning is the strategy to secure such an adjustment. The series hopes to stimulate debate amongst this diverse audience by publishing books that: (i) articulate alternative visions of the relation between education and the knowledge economy; (ii) offer new insights into the extent, modes, and effectiveness of people's acquisition of knowledge and skill in the new circumstances that they face in the developed and developing world, (iii) and suggest how changes in both work conditions and curriculum and pedagogy can led to new relations between work and education.

The Future of Lifelong Learning and Work

Critical Perspectives

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SENSE PUBLISHERS
ROTTERDAM / TAIPEI

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-90-8790-399-2 (paperback)

ISBN 978-90-8790-400-5 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-8790-401-2 (e-book)

Published by: Sense Publishers,
P.O. Box 21858, 3001 AW Rotterdam, The Netherlands
<http://www.sensepublishers.com>

Printed on acid-free paper

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ix
Contributors	xi
Introduction: Critical Perspectives on Learning and Work in Turbulent Times <i>D.W. Livingstone, Kiran Mirchandani and Peter H. Sawchu</i>	1
PART I: GENERAL PERSPECTIVES ON LIFELONG LEARNING AND WORK	
Section Introduction <i>D.W. Livingstone</i>	11
Chapter 1. Mapping the Field of Lifelong (Formal and Informal) Learning and (Paid and Unpaid) Work <i>D.W. Livingstone</i>	13
Chapter 2. Just Women’s Stuff: Lifelong Learning through Unpaid Household Work <i>Margrit Eichler</i>	27
Chapter 3. Lifelong Learning and the New Economy: Sorting through the Rhetoric <i>Jane Cruikshank</i>	47
Chapter 4. Human Capital as a Mind of State and Canada as a State of Minds <i>Thomas J. Courchene</i>	59
Chapter 5. Lifelong Learning and Work as ‘Value’ Production: Combining Work and Learning Analysis from a Cultural Historical Perspective <i>Peter H. Sawchuk</i>	73
Chapter 6. Art in the Workplace: Innovation and Culture-Based Economic Development in Small Cities <i>John A. Bratton and W.F. Garrett-Petts</i>	85

CONTENTS

PART II: SOCIAL JUSTICE

Section Introduction <i>Peter H. Sawchuk</i>	99
Chapter 7. The World Turned Upside Down – Again <i>Stanley Aronowitz</i>	101
Chapter 8. Lessons of Gender Politics from the Centre and the Fringes of the Knowledge-Based Society <i>Shauna Butterwick, Kaela Jubas and Jen Liptrot</i>	107
Chapter 9. ‘Work Around’ or ‘Jerk Around’?: Social Injustice and the Creation of Information and Misinformation in the Ontario Public Service Sector <i>Deborah Boutilier</i>	119
Chapter 10. Learning Social Justice? Assessing the Benefits of Work Study Placement for Marginalized Students in Post-Secondary Education <i>Jan Kainer</i>	131
Chapter 11. Doing Disability at the Bank: Discovering the Work of Informal Learning/Teaching Done by Disabled Bank Employees <i>Kathryn Church, Catherine Frazee, Melanie Panitch, Teresa Luciani, and Victoria Bowman</i>	147

PART III: PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT

Section Introduction <i>Kiran Mirchandani</i>	155
Chapter 12. Precarious Employment and ‘Lifelong Learning’: Challenging the Paradigm of ‘Employability Security’ <i>Leah F. Vosko</i>	157
Chapter 13. The Paradox of Training and Learning in a Culture of Contingency <i>Kiran Mirchandani, Roxana Ng, Nel Colomo-Moya, Srabani Maitra, Trudy Rawlings, Khaleda Siddiqui, Hongxia Shan, and Bonnie L. Slade</i>	171
Chapter 14. Learning on the Line: Skills, Sociality and Solidarity among Garment Workers <i>Tara Fenwick</i>	185

PART IV: APPRENTICESHIP

Section Introduction	201
<i>Peter H. Sawchuk</i>	
Chapter 15. Whither(ing) Learning? Apprenticeships and Young People in Europe	203
<i>Keith Forrester</i>	
Chapter 16. Building a Future for High School Students in Trades	217
<i>Alison Taylor and Bonnie Watt-Malcolm</i>	

PART V: MULTIPLE LITERACIES

Section Introduction	233
<i>D.W. Livingstone</i>	
Chapter 17. Implications of Multiple Literacies for Literacy: Instruction in School and Workplace	237
<i>Jim Cummins</i>	
Chapter 18. From Literacy to Multi-Literacies: Implications for Lifelong Learning and Work	251
<i>Margaret Early</i>	
Chapter 19. ‘Can Volunteer Work Help Me Get a Job in My Field?’ On Learning, Immigration and Labour Markets	263
<i>Daniel Schugurensky and Bonnie L. Slade</i>	
Chapter 20. New Home, New Learning: Chinese Immigrants, Unpaid Housework and Care Work	275
<i>Lichun (Willa) Liu</i>	
Afterword: General Themes and Future Research Directions	287
<i>D.W. Livingstone, Kiran Mirchandani and Peter H. Sawchuk</i>	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book emerged from “The Future of Lifelong Learning and Work: International Conference” held at the University of Toronto, Canada, June 20–22, 2005. The Educational Policy Group of OISE/UT, led by research associate dean Ken Leithwood, proposed the FLLW conference. OISE/UT and the Ontario Ministry of Education were the main sponsors. TVOntario assisted in the planning and filming of parts of the conference. The WALL research network provided a core group of scholars working in the field and links to its various community partners (see <http://www.wallnetwork.ca>). The Work and Learning Network at the University of Alberta (Canada) collaborated in developing some joint sessions and a parallel conference held in Edmonton. The Toronto Training Board also sponsored an event during the conference. The support of all of these organizations was invaluable.

The planning committee for the FLLW conference was co-chaired by David Livingstone and Ken Leithwood, who was later replaced as associate dean and co-chair by Normand Labrie. Denise Makovac-Badali, research manager in the dean’s office, served as the committee’s administrative coordinator. Char Alleyne was hired as conference coordinator in the period leading up to the conference. The members of the planning committee included representatives from OISE/UT faculty (Alister Cumming, Jim Cummins, Margrit Eichler, Ben Levin, Kiran Mirchandani, Peter Sawchuk); other U of T faculty (John Myles, sociology; Anil Verma, industrial relations); OISE/UT education commons (Bob Cook, Scott Hollows, Avi Hyman); dean’s office (Heather Berkeley); TVO (Nancy Chapelle, Sarah Irwin, Wodek Szemberg); Ontario Federation of Labour (Janice Gairey); Conference Board of Canada (Michael Bloom); Toronto Training Board (Karen Lior); and the Work and Learning Network at the University of Alberta (Tara Fenwick). A sub-committee (Gairey, Livingstone, Mirchandani, Sawchuk, Makovac-Badali) was responsible for directing detailed conference development.

Many members of the Centre for the Study of Education and Work (CSEW) at OISE/UT (see www.learningwork.ca) assisted in both preparing and running the FLLW conference. CSEW coordinator D’Arcy Martin and CSEW/WALL secretary Rhonda Sussman, as well as WALL research coordinator Ilda Januario, played key roles and several graduate students working on WALL projects were very helpful as well, most notably Chris Harris, Arlo Kempf, Milosh Raykov and Antonie Scholtz. The Department of Sociology and Equity Studies and the Department of Adult Education and Counselling Psychology at OISE/UT, the co-sponsors of CSEW, also provided useful resources.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The co-editors of this book have all been involved in this process from the outset. The papers included here are revised versions of the larger array of papers presented at the original conference. Cam Cobb deserves special thanks for astute editorial assistance in bringing these manuscripts to final format.

We are very grateful to all of the above people for assistance beyond the call of duty.

D.W. Livingstone, K. Mirchandani and Peter H.J. Sawchuk
July, 2007

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INTRODUCTION: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON LEARNING AND WORK IN TURBULENT TIMES

There is now a great deal of discussion about the changing nature of work and the turbulence of economic and environmental conditions. Everyone seems to agree that lifelong learning is needed to survive in these changing times. Yet, in comparison to the bulk of mainstream analysis, there have been few critical investigations of conventional notions of work-related adult learning in the context of this turbulence. The papers in this book explore little examined aspects of adult learning and work relations critically, and identify fruitful directions for future research and practice.

A generic definition of *learning* involves the gaining of knowledge, skill or understanding, self-consciously or tacitly, anywhere through individual and group processes throughout our lives. Three fundamentally different notions of lifelong learning now contend in common understanding and research literature: vocationalist, critical and transformative.

Instrumental vocationalist views see lifelong learning as structured around developing employment skills required for adapting to and accommodating the existing dynamics of paid workplaces, and they assume that better continuing education programs for older youths and adults as well as workers' own informal learning efforts can and should address these requirements; this view gained currency in the 1980s among human resource development departments, human capital theorists and knowledge-based economy heralds such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2001). Drawing on humanist adult education principles and human capital perspectives, technological change and globalization are seen to demand better skilled workers who need to be constantly learning and adapting to rapid change.

In contrast, critical perspectives on lifelong learning focus on the marketization of training in the context of modern capitalism. Cruikshank (2002, p. 151) argues, for example, that lifelong learning has become a "handmaiden of the market" and serves to reinforce the existing social order which is characterized by "a polarization between the rich and poor, a social safety system that has been shredded, and poor bashing – a blaming of the unemployed and underemployed for their fate". Indeed, many contemporary Western societies are characterized by a highly polarized labour force, with many confined to temporary, poorly paid and precarious employment. Critical approaches situate lifelong learning within analyses of the structures of power in late capitalism (Murphy, 2000).

Finally, transformative approaches are based on images of a learning society in which all citizens have enhanced opportunities to combine learning with their everyday lives. From this perspective, more democratized forms of work have been promoted by generations of liberal and radical adult educators; a view which found clear global expression in UNESCO from its inception through the Faure report (1972). More recently, UNESCO's Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century emphasized the need for a broader conception of lifelong learning which constitutes "... a continuous process of forming whole human beings – their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and the ability to act. It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community" (Delors, 1996, p. 21, quoted in Cruikshank, 2002). At the heart of this perspective is the active, participatory engagement necessary to bring about enhanced and democratized work and lifelong learning relations.

Our contention is that a contest between the more expansive critical and transformative, and the narrower instrumental views of lifelong learning underlies virtually all current debates about relations between learning and work (cf. Wain, 2004). Likewise, expansive and narrower views of *work* also contend. A generic definition of 'work' includes any activity directed toward making or doing something. But 'work' is now commonly used as synonymous with 'earning a living' through *paid employment* in the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services through market relationships as commodities; as such there is an obfuscating conflation of the 'work-place' with the 'job-place' (Bratton, Helms-Mills, Pynch, & Sawchuk, 2004). The growing commodification of labour results in a contradictory process: on the one hand, the pressure to commodify labour incessantly identifies previously unrecognized forms of work (e.g. emotional labour); and, on the other, this process inherently undervalues the forms of work and types of skill that are not (as yet) commodified (e.g. housework, volunteer work). Most of us still do a great deal of unpaid work as part of households, organizations and communities; much of this work continues to be gendered. As some women gain some measure of economic power through paid work despite persistent gender segmentation in education and labour markets, feminists and others increasingly make the case for both the economic value of unpaid work (see Waring, 1988) and its necessity for reproducing society and ourselves.

Dominant discourse still typically equates paid employment with work, and research and policy about learning and work relations is commonly reduced to versions of vocational education. But large-scale changes including global economic restructuring, environmental threats such as global warming and an explosion of information technologies have stimulated reforms in both paid work organizations and education/training systems. Alongside ever heightening inter-capitalist competition, these conditions provoke rethinking of dominant notions of work, learning and their relations.

Significant learning can occur in a continuum ranging from spontaneous responses to everyday life to highly organized participation in formal education programs. While clearly issues of formal versus informal learning are ultimately

best thought of as representing a continuum (Colley, Hodkinson, & Malcolm, 2003; Sawchuk, 2008) the heuristic we begin from in this volume is as follows. *Formal schooling* is the provision of instruction in age-graded, teacher-led, bureaucratically-structured primary, secondary and tertiary institutions (see Illich, 1971). *Further or continuing adult education* includes a diverse array of teacher-led courses and workshops in many institutionally organized settings, from schools to paid workplaces and community centres. Such continuing education is the most evident site of lifelong learning for adults past the initial cycle of schooling. But we all engage in intrinsic informal learning activities to acquire knowledge or skill outside of the curricula of institutions providing educational programs, courses or workshops. *Informal education or training* occurs when mentors take responsibility for instructing others without sustained reference to a formalized curriculum, such as guiding new entrants in learning job skills or in community development activities. All other forms of explicit or tacit learning without direct reliance on a teacher/mentor or an externally-organized curriculum can be termed *non-taught self-directed or collective informal learning* (see Livingstone, 2006). Debate continues within the scholarly literature, as well as within our own research network (see Church, Bascia, & Shrage, 2008), on dividing lines between informal learning and more organized or structured forms of education. But there is a growing consensus that more informal aspects of adult learning in particular deserve more attention.

The concept of lifelong education became current in the 1970s and focused on giving adults access to formal courses at educational institutions through the life course, or lifelong education (UNESCO, 2001). A growing sense that more knowledge than initial schooling and occasional adult education courses was needed to cope with change led to calls for more recurrent education and finally for lifelong learning. By the 1990s, this more comprehensive view was being widely declared. According to OECD Education Ministers (1996), lifelong learning encompassed "... all purposeful learning activity, the cradle to the grave, that aims to improve knowledge and competencies for all individuals who wish to participate in learning activities" (p. 5). In advanced market economies there are now aging populations with large proportions who have obtained advanced formal education and who have continued extensive participation in adult education courses. In the context of already highly schooled populations, the recent large-scale economic and environmental changes have led to almost universal advocacy of lifelong learning beyond schooling as relevant for all throughout their lives. Even the most vocationalist approaches now acknowledge informal learning in workplaces as necessary for coping with such large changes. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the OECD (see OECD, 2007) now stress human capital generation on a continuing lifelong basis from a vocationalist perspective. However, since one of the main goals of this collection is to contribute to a critical conception of lifelong learning and work relations broadly conceived, it becomes essential to explore and contextualize these trends to reveal their dynamics and move policy understandings beyond the rhetoric of 'lifelong learning society', 'knowledge society' or 'educative society' adopted by the leading international institutions. While informal learning

is now included in definitions and policy discussions of lifelong learning offered by these organizations, grounded studies of actual informal learning are much needed to understand these practices per se, in relation to formal education and in relation to paid/unpaid work.

Most empirical research on adult learning to date has focused on organized courses and paid little attention to more informal aspects of adult learning. From the 1960s onward, provision of adult education programs expanded rapidly in many countries; for example, adult course participation exploded in Canada from about less than 4% of all adults in 1961 to over 40% in 2004 (Livingstone & Scholtz, 2006). By the 1990s, adult education courses were a very evident part of all school systems and participation rates were being widely reported. The pioneering research on self-directed informal learning led by our colleague Allen Tough (1978) suggested that such learning is the submerged part of the iceberg of adult learning activities. Some later surveys find that informal on-the-job training constitutes the bulk of job-related learning (Betcherman et al., 1997; Peters, 2004). While there is now a growing body of research on workplace learning, informal learning remains poorly documented and analyses of the integration of such informal training and non-taught learning activities with work is still in its infancy (Sawchuk, 2008) – even though it may represent our most important learning for coping with our changing environment.

Whether we take critical, transformative or vocationalist approaches to lifelong learning, the continual acquisition and sharing of knowledge and skill to cope with and/or transform our changing environment defines the human species. Learning to survive and gain partial control of our environment has involved the invention of powerful mediating tools and the social construction of complex systems of language, culture as well as technology. Learning to use these tools and language systems has been intimately linked with the work of developing them throughout most of human history. The quest for knowledge has been our most distinctive intrinsic feature since the origin of our species. In this sense, human societies have always been learning societies.

We now spend over half our waking lives in paid and unpaid work and related activities (Livingstone, 2002; Livingstone & Scholtz, 2006). It follows that we now must engage in a lot of work-related learning. Most of this work-related learning is likely to be informal, either done in the context of work per se or in intentional projects either alone or with peers. Research on lifelong learning and work that does not consider peoples' informal learning as well as their formal educational activities through the life course is bound to be partial and potentially misleading. The exploration of connections of informal learning with different forms of work is one of the central contributions of this collection. Another contribution is the attempt to situate learning within the broader social, economic and political context in which it occurs. Extensive empirical research on relations of informal learning with both formal schooling and further education may be found in Livingstone (1999) and the further studies of the WALL research network referred to below.

WORK AND LIFELONG LEARNING RESEARCH NETWORK AND CONFERENCE

It is against this backdrop of the need to more fully understand, gather evidence and articulate analysis of lifelong learning and work that a research network dedicated to exploring the issues raised above was established. Most of the papers in this book were contributed by members of the Centre for the Study of Education and Work (CSEW) at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) as well as by members of the Work and Lifelong Learning (WALL) research network based at CSEW (see <http://www.wallnetwork.ca>). WALL has been funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) from 2002 through 2007 as a Collaborative Research Initiative on the New Economy (Project No. 512-2002-1011). WALL has documented the current array of learning activities of Canadian adults, recent relations between work and learning practices, and the differences in these learning and work relations between socially disadvantaged groups and others. The WALL research team addressed these issues by conducting a large-scale, country-wide 2004 survey and 12 closely related case studies to provide unprecedented documentation of lifelong learning and work relations in Canada. These studies were based on expansive conceptions of both formal and informal learning and paid and unpaid work.

Amongst the most salient findings, the 2004 WALL Canadian national survey reported that the labour force participation rate was at an unprecedented high with over two-thirds of the working age population; and the proportion employed for over 50 hours a week had increased since the 1990s. It directed our attention to the fact that the amount of time that all adults spend in unpaid housework and volunteer work may be similar to the time devoted to paid work. In terms of formal learning, findings of the survey indicated that the increasing levels of school attainment in recent decades has been associated with general increases in participation in all forms of adult further education; and that the basic participation gap between those with more and less schooling is closing as the proportions with higher education grow. The survey revealed indications that benefits of further education are now relatively greater for those with less formal schooling; and, that self-reported participation in informal learning activities is much more extensive than participation in formal schooling and further education. Those with less formal schooling as well as those in various other disadvantaged groups are generally no less actively engaged in informal learning in relation to paid employment, housework, volunteer work or general interests. In fact, we see that occupational classes remain highly differentiated by formal educational attainments, less so by adult education participation and very little by incidence of job-related informal learning. We also see that job requirements have increased since the 1980s both in terms of formal education levels required for entry or performance as well as training time to learn the job. But increases in the educational attainment of the employed labour force since the 1980s exceeds increases in the educational requirements of jobs, and the general rate of underutilization appears to be increasing.

WALL offers rich insights into the current working conditions and learning practices of diverse disadvantaged groups (including low income workers with little

formal education, recent immigrants, racialized and disabled workers, women and older people) as well as unpaid homemakers and volunteer workers. Both the survey and case studies confirm the persistence of significant barriers to participation in adult education courses for those with less schooling, notably lack of money, available courses or employer support. Both the survey and case studies indicate that many adults generally and socially disadvantaged people in particular are relying greatly on extensive informal learning activities to develop their competencies in both paid and unpaid work, suggesting that means should be found to recognize this prior learning more effectively and equitably.

Unfortunately, there are few studies comparable to the WALL survey in providing profiles of adults' formal and informal learning activities in relation to paid and unpaid work, although there have been OECD-led efforts to 'monitor' some basic features of lifelong learning (OECD, 1998). WALL case studies begin to identify the complex skills involved in learning and performing housework and volunteer work and point to the significance of both for paid work. The WALL studies as well as a growing research literature on paid workplace learning (e.g. Rainbird, Fuller, & Munro, 2004) reveal the extent and value of informal learning and the vital interplay of informal learning with adult education participation throughout the life course.

The chapters in this book start from differing standpoints but all are open to more expansive views of both learning and work. The authors all critique the narrowness of received assumptions about conventional ways of thinking about relations between jobs and schooling. They begin to explore aspects of learning and work relations in original ways, either in terms of theoretical and conceptual approaches to lifelong learning and work or in terms of previously marginalized workers and forms of learning. Authors in this collection share an interest in developing a more critical approach to lifelong learning – one which conceptualizes learning in an embodied manner (learning by whom and for what, across social differences). Most authors are also sympathetic to transformative images of a learning society in which all citizens have enhanced opportunities to combine learning with democratized work and community life.

All chapters were originally presented at "The Future of Lifelong Learning and Work: International Conference" held at the University of Toronto, June 20–22, 2005. This conference was organized by the Educational Policy Group of OISE/UT, sponsored by OISE/UT and the Ontario Ministry of Education and supported by the WALL research network and its various community partners (see <http://www.wallnetwork.ca>). This conference was designed to assess recent changes in the nature of work and related education and training activities throughout the life course. Our call for papers sought to address this expansive view of learning and work. We were not disappointed. Papers at the conference presented different theories of learning and work in relation to empirical research evidence on actual relations of paid and unpaid work and formal as well as informal learning. Many took up issues of social justice in terms of the existence of race and immigration, gender and social class barriers to fair learning and employment opportunities. Matters of precarious employment (such as part-time, on-call, casual, temporary,

self-employment, and contract jobs) and how this condition affects access to work-related training and job-related learning were addressed. Likewise, papers speaking to the multiple forms of literacy (reading and writing, computer, multi-cultural, civic literacies) in terms of their changing roles in a complex society were delivered, as were papers exploring the nature and future trajectory of apprenticeship systems, with perspectives of major stakeholders (unions, business, government, schools and the general public) and policy options for a re-vitalized apprenticeship approach. Finally, a range of work explicitly sought to offer perspectives on the 'state of the art' of policies and practices of sustaining learning in relation to work (provisions for post-school adults as well as links between early childhood education and adult education). Presenters included an array of researchers from multiple disciplinary traditions, panel discussions involved a diverse set of opinion leaders and produced focused policy discussions, and policy briefs. Further conference information, including a video by a major public broadcaster in Canada (TV Ontario) of the opening plenary session debate between Stanley Aronowitz and Thomas J. Courchene, may be found at the WALL website (<http://www.wallnetwork.ca>).

Paralleling the structure of the conference, the papers from the conference revised for this book are organized in five sections. The first section on general perspectives offers an expansive conceptual mapping of the field of learning and work by Livingstone, as well as an unprecedented analysis by Eichler of the mostly informal learning that occurs in unpaid housework. There is a critique by Cruikshank of dominant discourse rhetoric about lifelong learning in the new economy based on workers' standpoints. Courchene's contribution attempts to think beyond the conceptual limits of received human capital theories of education and employment. Then two papers develop versions of activity-based theories of work-related learning to offer more grounded insights into how lifelong learning is embedded in the range of activities of workers and work processes: the first, by Sawchuk, through a general analysis of the contradictory process of workers' production of use and exchange value in the labour process; the second, by Bratton and Garrett-Petts, through a case study of affinities between artists and other workers' creative processes in a community economic development project. Overall, these papers are reflective of current efforts to break through the dominant narrow paradigm of training for jobs.

The section on social justice issues reviews of forms of inequity and discrimination in paid workplaces and learning, including 'glass ceilings', 'sticky floors', un/underemployment of specific groups including immigrants, and the prospects for democratizing of work, training and work-based learning. Aronowitz sets the stage for this section and the issues of social justice that run through other sections as well with an historical overview leading to the context of the struggle for equity that rages on today. Next Butterwick, Jubas and Liprot analyze findings from their extended case study of women struggling, supporting each other, challenging and learning through the gendered pathways in the IT sector. Boutilier's chapter on public sector welfare workers coping with the restructuring of welfare delivery points toward the way that workers' informal learning produces 'workarounds' and partially challenges system deskilling. Kainer explores the power dynamics

of learning in the non-profit sector showing how marginalized interns cope and develop. Finally, Church highlights the learning strategies of disabled employees as they negotiate the complexities of difference, accommodation and the corporate bottom line.

These broader issues of social justice are particularly significant for workers who occupy poorly paid, unstable jobs, and the section on precarious employment addresses the lifelong learning of these workers. Economic restructuring has led to a dramatic growth in precarious employment (such as part-time, on-call, casual, temporary, self-employment, and contract jobs). The trend towards precarious employment disproportionately affects new immigrants, people of colour, women and youth workers. These workers have limited access to formal work-related training, new technologies and skill development. Vosko highlights the ways in which the rhetoric of employability security places the onus on already vulnerable workers to engage in lifelong learning which exacerbates their precariousness. Mirchandani and her colleagues investigate the ways in which precarious workers gain the knowledge they require to do their jobs, and how their precariousness affects their learning. Finally, Fenwick explores the ways in which garment workers use social networks to engage in forms of learning oriented to solidarity and interdependence which are nevertheless framed by larger dynamics rooted in gendered exploitation.

The section devoted to apprenticeship offers a broad re-consideration of the nature and future trajectory of apprenticeship systems in both Canada and Europe. What policies can re-vitalize apprenticeships, especially in countries that have relied heavily on importing skilled workers? Are national qualifications frameworks part of the solution? Beginning from the British context, Forrester's chapter offers a summary of European challenges focusing on the differential experiences and outcomes in different countries from a work-life perspective that demonstrates both the recent development of new knowledge-based programs and the imminent danger to existing traditional apprenticeships. Following this is a chapter by Taylor and Watt-Malcolm who explore the transitions from high school, through training centers and into trades apprenticeships and workplaces in Canada where current barriers are outlined. Detailed empirical analysis is offered and matched by observations on policy change.

The final section on multiple literacies is perhaps the most developmental, offering challenging expansive concepts for future research. Notions of literacy have expanded beyond reading and writing to include a wide array of other competencies now needed to cope with contemporary life. The increasing ethno-linguistic diversity of communities and schools also requires more attention to multiple language literacies. The literacy section chapters by Cummins and Early suggest how pedagogies sensitive to the expanding need for multi-lingual literacy, as well as media literacy and computer literacy, can be addressed effectively by engaging with the social realities of such culturally diverse groups of students. But beyond schooling, we need to learn new competencies throughout the life course to cope with change. Definitions of adult literacy are also expanding to include problem-solving skills to function on the job and in society, and to develop one's knowledge and potential. The development of many new literacies or competencies among adults is hidden

in everyday life. The challenges of the multiple essential literacies that all people must acquire to cope with everyday life may be most evident among immigrants to new societies with very different customs of everyday life. The Schugurensky and Slade chapter shows how recent immigrants cope with barriers to employment and social integration by seeking volunteer work. Liu's chapter on Chinese immigrants reveals some of the most basic housework and carework learning needed to cope with everyday life.

Overall, this book will achieve its purpose if helps readers more fully to appreciate the narrowness of conventional equating of work with paid employment, of thinking of learning exclusively in terms of formal education, and of ignoring the many learning activities that people continually do within their paid and unpaid work to sustain themselves, their families, their organizations and ultimately their societies. Lifelong learning will continue to thrive, informally at least. Whether such learning will be effectively recognized and linked with legitimate forms of work is the crucial question.

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D.W. LIVINGSTONE

PART I: GENERAL PERSPECTIVES ON LIFELONG LEARNING AND WORK

While claims for the importance of lifelong learning are now pervasive, actual documentation of adults' learning processes has been very partial and fragmented to date. Analyses of paid workplaces, even in knowledge-based labour processes, have tended to presume notions of learning, while analysis of learning in work typically have transposed conventional concepts with little attention to the distinctive practices and relationships of paid work. Adult learning beyond paid workplaces has received little scrutiny.

The first paper in this section by Livingstone attempts to expand the conceptual field for future studies by presenting adults' learning as a continuum of formal and informal activities linked to and often embedded in a range of spheres, including not only paid employment but unpaid housework and volunteer community work. This paper also offers preliminary empirical estimates of the extent of formal and informal learning activities in paid and unpaid work settings. These estimates suggest that intentional informal learning is generally more extensive than formal educational activities in relation to both paid and unpaid work, and that previously ignored arrays of learning activities warrant much more attention in themselves and as essential ingredients for designing more effective work systems. In particular, housework is done by nearly all and is little valued by most. There has been virtually no prior scholarly interest in housework-related learning. It is too mundane. But as the Eichler chapter begins to show, this work is more complex than normally thought and often involves quite challenging learning activities which may have much broader relevance for everyday life in advanced technological society.

The other papers in this section focus more closely on paid employment and assess the limits of currently dominant approaches to linking learning practices with the changing economy. Cruikshank examines government policies for enhancing competitiveness in the new global economy. Drawing on interviews with union organizers and staff representatives as well as university-based adult educators, she contrasts government lifelong learning policies for high skills development to ensure economic competitiveness with summary accounts of workplace conditions of increasing workloads and job insecurity, declining job satisfaction and credential inflation. She suggests that more proactive government economic policies would be more likely than free market economic policies and exhortation of yet more investment in 'human capital' to lead to greater use of workers' skills.

In contrast, Courchene's chapter starts from the basic human capital assumption of the primacy of continuing investment in workers' skills and human capital, but attempts to think beyond the conceptual limits of received human capital theories of education and employment in the context of challenges and opportunities of the new global economy. He suggests a number of new educational initiatives such as more support for early childhood learning, as well as various student aid programs to encourage lifelong upgrading or reskilling. Courchene points to the strategic dynamic importance of drawing members of a creative class of knowledge workers to global city regions. He recognizes serious obstacles to attaining a sustainable, socially inclusive and internationally competitive infrastructure but presumes that any private-sector initiative is permissible in this regard unless it can be demonstrated to be contrary to the public interest. While Courchene's analysis represents current efforts to revise human capital theories of education and work, the two remaining papers in this section develop versions of activity-based theories of work-related learning to offer more grounded insights into how lifelong learning is embedded in the range of activities of workers and work processes. Sawchuk's chapter attempts to understand how human development and work can be embedded in one another, how the labour process and the learning process are mutually constitutive. After a brief review of traditional approaches to analyses of work and adult learning, he provides a general analysis of the contradictory process of workers' creation of use and exchange value in the labour process of commodity production. This dialectic constitution of the commodity form through the interwoven production of use-values and exchange-values is seen to constitute the reality of both work and human learning change processes. This perspective is proposed as a guide for future grounded research on learning and work in advanced capitalist settings. The final chapter, by Bratton and Garrett-Petts, presents a local case study of affinities between artists and other workers' creative processes in a community economic development project. In contrast to Courchene's focus on incentives for an elite creative class, these authors see strategic creative potential expressed – at least in Sawchuk's use value terms – throughout the occupational class structure. The reorganization of employment could ensure the wider sharing of this creativity throughout the community.

These papers, ranging from conceptual maps and critiques of dominant discourses to efforts to revise leading theories of education and employment or to devise new theories, suggest the high level of ferment in the field of learning and work studies at this juncture. Paradigm wars in this field have barely begun, but the previously dominant narrow paradigm of training for jobs is clearly under attack.

D.W. LIVINGSTONE

MAPPING THE FIELD OF LIFELONG (FORMAL AND INFORMAL) LEARNING AND (PAID AND UNPAID) WORK

PAID AND UNPAID WORK

A generic definition of work would include any activity directed toward making or doing something. Work is now commonly used as synonymous with 'earning a living' through *paid employment* in the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services commodities. There has been an increasing tendency since rise of market-based economies for work to be identified in popular thought and practice with commodity exchange and paid wage labour. Growing commodification has pulled more people into paid labour and served to obscure unpaid labour. Recently some aspects of unpaid housework and community volunteer labour have received more recognition for various reasons, including relative scarcity and resistance to their own further commodification.¹

Most of us still must do some household work and many need to contribute to community labours in order to reproduce society and ourselves. Both housework and community volunteer work are typically unpaid and underappreciated, but they remain essential for our survival and quality of life (Waring, 1988) All three forms of labour should be included in any general accounting of contemporary work practices.

Paid Work

Since the rise of industrial capitalism, the forms, extent and duration of paid employment have been increasingly determined by the profitability of private enterprises, as well as the relative bargaining strength of business owners and hired labourers and the availability of labour-saving technologies. In recent decades, the concentration of large corporations, extensive automation and declining unionization have lead to significant changes in employment conditions, including increasing numbers participating in paid labour, increasing levels of chronic unemployment, intensification of employment hours, a rise in temporary jobs as well as much dispute about the skill requirements to perform most of the jobs in the 'new economy'. The empirical analysis of both paid and unpaid work, as well as formal and informal learning, in this chapter is based mainly on data from the Changing Nature of Work and Lifelong Learning in the New Economy Research Network (WALL), supported by the SSHRC. WALL conducted a large-scale national survey in 2004 (see www.wallnetwork.ca). Compared to another national survey conducted in 1998, New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL) (see www.nall.ca), there were significant increases time devoted to paid employment,

from an average of 38 to 40 hours per week while the proportion of the active labour force employed for more than 50 hours a week rose from around 15% to around 20%.² A long-time trend toward part-time jobs may have slowed in this period of economic productivity growth, but those in part-time jobs appear to be working longer hours as well, without increasing benefits. The official unemployment rate has remained over 6% for more than a generation (Akyeampong, 2007, p. 6).

In terms of the stability of employment, about a third of the active labour force moved to a new job in the past five years. Many workers have experienced significant organizational changes at their workplaces. Around 40% have seen downsizing of employees, growth in multi-skilling/job rotation and growing reliance on part-time or temporary workers, while around a third have witnessed increased overtime. While downsizing was common practice in many enterprises in the mid-1990s, the incidence of job rotation and reliance on part-timers appears to have increased in recent years (Statistics Canada, 1998, p. 17). Workers are being called upon to use a wider array of skills for longer hours, but not necessarily a higher level of skill.

Unpaid Work

Unpaid housework is reported by virtually all Canadian adults. They spent around 17 hours a week doing it in both 1998 and 2004 – about 12 hours a week for men and over 20 hours for women. For homemakers who devote themselves primarily to housework, the average is now around 40 hours per week and appears to have increased over this period. If we express labour expended in terms of the total amount of paid employment time and housework time done by all Canadian adults, the averages are around 25 hours of paid employment and 15 hours of housework per week in these recent surveys. By these general estimates, total employment hours may have increased, but total housework hours have not. While the small numbers of primary homemakers are doing more hours of housework, most others may be doing marginally less. The point of these estimates is simply to establish that unpaid housework is a very substantial portion of the work that most of us do and deserves to be consistently recognized on its own merits.

Indeed, these estimates exclude other essential labours of childcare and eldercare. Over a third of Canadian adults report some involvement in unpaid childcare, for an average of over 30 hours per week. About 15% are now involved in eldercare, for an average of over 10 hours per week. Add in community work with both voluntary organizations and friends and, even in terms of crude estimates, it is likely that around half of the work that Canadians now do is still unpaid. The crudeness of these estimates must be stressed. Paid employment is typically measured in industrial clock time, another instrument of commodification. While both housework and community volunteer work have been increasingly constrained by paid employment, they do not obey the same rhythms (Sorokin, 1943). Most obviously, childcare responds to the needs of the child. For many mothers this is a constant labour of varying intensity but inherently different than the time measured by a plant or office time clock. Even in terms of clock time measures, mothers with

small children are among the longest working people in the country. If they also happen to be employed, clock time fails utterly to grasp the extent of their labours.

The major change in the distribution of work in recent generations has been the massive increase in the participation of married women with children in the paid labour force. This change has put growing pressure on households to reorganize domestic labour to ensure it gets done. The growing reliance on machinery in paid jobs has put an increasing premium on workers' active use of their minds in tending machines and made it more difficult for many workers to turn off their 'job minds' when not officially on the job clock (Rikowski, 2004). Longer and less defined paid work hours and the consequent time squeeze on unpaid work mean work intensification in both spheres.

Learning

A generic definition of *learning* involves the gaining of knowledge, skill or understanding anytime and anywhere through individual and group processes. Learning occurs throughout our lives. The sites of learning make up a continuum ranging from spontaneous responses to everyday life to highly organized participation in formal education programs. The dominant tendency in contemporary thought has been to equate learning with the provision of learning opportunities in settings organized by institutional authorities and led by teachers approved by these authorities. *Formal schooling* has frequently been identified with continuous enrolment in age-graded, bureaucratically-structured institutions of formal schooling from early childhood to tertiary levels (Illich, 1971), ignoring other types of instruction in bodies of traditional knowledge in subordinate groups. In addition, *further or continuing adult education* includes a diverse array of further education courses and workshops in many institutionally organized settings, from schools to workplaces and community centres. Such continuing education is the most evident site of lifelong learning for adults past the initial cycle of schooling.

But we also continually engage, as we always have, in intrinsic informal learning activities to acquire knowledge or skill outside of the curricula of institutions providing educational programs, courses or workshops. *Informal education or training* occurs when mentors take responsibility for instructing others without sustained reference to a pre-established curriculum in more incidental or spontaneous situations, such as guiding them in learning job skills or in community development activities. Finally, all other forms of explicit or tacit learning in which we engage either individually or collectively without direct reliance on a teacher/mentor or an externally-organized curriculum can be termed *non-taught self-directed or collective informal learning*. As my colleague Allen Tough (1978) has observed, informal learning is the submerged part of the iceberg of adult learning activities. It is likely that, for most adults, informal learning (including both informal training and non-taught learning activities) continues to represent our most important learning for coping with our changing environment. No account of lifelong learning can be complete without considering peoples' informal learning activities as well as their initial formal schooling and further adult education courses through the life course.

Formal Education

Canada has had one of the highest formal educational attainment levels in the world. But recent post-secondary growth rates remain impressive. The proportion of the age 25-to-29 cohort that had completed a university degree was about 4% in 1961 (Statistics Canada, 2003). The completion rate had quadrupled by 1990 to 17% and continued to grow rapidly up to 1998, when 26% of this age group had received degrees (Statistics Canada, 2003). Growth of community college completion has been even greater. Most comprehensive community colleges were created after 1960. By the 1990s, comparable proportions of young people had completed college diplomas as university degrees. While the US and Norway have higher proportions of their adult populations with university degrees, Canada now leads the world in the proportion with either university or college completion. Over 40% of Canadian adults 25 to 64 had college or university qualifications in 2000. Other trade-vocational programs including registered apprenticeships have been chronically underdeveloped in Canada, but in the early 1990s over 10% of those 25 to 64 had some such qualifications; this proportion has since declined. University and college qualifications levels have continued to grow and now the majority of adult Canadians have some form of post-secondary certification (Statistics Canada, 2003, pp. 135–144), compared to a very small minority just two generations ago.

But before applauding Canada as world leader in higher education, note two major limitations. First, Canada continues to trail most OECD countries in the provision of early childhood education. Less than half of all 3-to-5 year-olds attend pre-elementary programs, and only marginal increases have taken place over the past decade (Statistics Canada, 2000, p. 37). In light of the massive amount of research documenting the multiple benefits of early participation (McCain & Mustard, 1999), significant future increases in junior kindergarten programs may be anticipated.

Secondly, previous general increases in post-secondary enrolment mask persistent and now increasing inequities of access by economic background. Youths from poorer economic origins have always been under-represented in post-secondary institutions. Tuition fees and average student debt loads have more than doubled during the past decade (Statistics Canada, 2000, p. 67) while average family income has remained the same in real dollar terms. Recent studies indicate that those from low socio-economic status backgrounds were significantly less likely to attend university in the late 1990s than their counterparts of a decade earlier (Livingstone & Stowe, 2001). Aggregate increases in formal educational attainment are not now reducing *relative* educational inequalities by economic origin.

Further or continuing adult education participation in courses and workshops can include, for example, courses in job retraining or upgrading, second language training, courses to complete a diploma or degree program, and a wide array of general interest courses of different durations ranging from accounting processes to zoo-keeping. In light of the growth of post-secondary education, recent surveys have found it increasingly difficult to distinguish adult course participation from completion of the initial cycle of schooling.³ The simplest solution is to count all

forms of adult (i.e. over 18) participation in organized educational programs, and note those who are also registered as students in school certification programs.

National surveys have found that participation in adult education underwent very rapid growth from 1960 to the early 1990s. In 1960, the first known government survey found about 4% of all Canadians over 17 years of age were estimated to be enrolled in any sort of educational institution course (Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1963). By the early 1980s about 20% were enrolled annually (Devereaux, 1985). By the early 1990s, the rate exceeded 30% (Statistics Canada, 1997). During the 1990s, adult education participation appeared to decline somewhat according to official government statistics (Statistics Canada, 2001). Various reasons have been suggested for this apparent decline, but it may well be largely an artefact of excluding those young adults who prolonged or returned to their schooling in the face of poor job markets. In any case, our recent surveys have found that participation in formal training courses has grown to over 43% in 1998 and nearly 45% in 2004. If all of those over 18 registered in school programs are excluded, this still amounts to around 35% of all adults participating in some form of course annually. Canadian adult education participation has grown very rapidly over the past two generations. But it remains significantly lower than that of various other areas, notably Scandinavia (Statistics Canada, 1997).

Informal Learning

Informal learning activities are much more difficult to estimate than adult educational participation. Informal learning includes virtually any non-institutionalized learning in which adults choose to engage. *Intentional informal learning* is distinguished from more *tacit informal learning*, as well as from everyday perceptions and general socialization, by peoples' own conscious identification of the activity as significant learning (Eraut, 1999). To study informal learning empirically, most researchers have focused on those things that people can identify for themselves as actual learning projects or deliberate learning activities beyond educational institutions. There are numerous obstacles to studying informal learning but there is a growing consensus that any discussion of lifelong learning of adults beyond their initial cycle of schooling requires at least some address to informal learning.

The NALL and WALL national surveys of learning and work in 1998 and 2004 had a primary focus on informal learning (for further information on these research networks, full interview schedules and detailed reports, see the linked NALL website: www.nall.ca and WALL website: www.wallnetwork.ca). These surveys address all four basic forms of learning, but with a special focus on intentional informal learning, as well as all three forms of work and a variety of social background factors. The survey respondents were first given a definition of informal learning as including anything people do to gain knowledge, skill or understanding. They were then asked to indicate their participation in four spheres of informal learning: employment-related; community volunteer work-related; household work-related; and other general interest-related. In each case, a list of possible

Table 1. Work and general interest-related informal learning (average hours per week), Canadian Adults, 1998–2004.

Year	Job	Housework	Volunteer Work	General Interest	Total
1998	6.7	5.9	4.2	6.1	14.7
2004	5.3	5.8	4.0	5.0	13.9

Sources: NALL Survey, 1998 (total $N = 1562$); WALL Survey, 2004 (total $N = 9063$).

learning topics was read. The basic findings follow, with reference to prior studies where relevant for comparative purposes.⁴

It should be noted here that the 2004 WALL survey also asked employed workers about informal *education*, in terms of the frequency of mentoring. It was found that over a third of all workers had sought advice within the past month from other knowledgeable colleagues to develop their job skills. These responses at least hint at the general importance of mentoring but it is very difficult to estimate the actual extent of mentoring or to distinguish it from non-taught informal learning by survey methods.

Paid Work-Related Informal Learning

Over 60% of the adult population who were employed during the prior year and over 85% reported that they were involved in some form of job-related informal learning, both in 1998 and in 2004. The average number of hours devoted to such job-based learning was over 6 hours per week in 1998, dropping to 5 hours in 2004. Around 15% were estimated to spend less than an hour per week in employment-related informal learning activities, including those who found it too difficult to provide a specific estimate. Less than 10% estimated that they spent more than 20 hours per week, suggesting that even when respondents are given extensive opportunities to identify job-related informal learning, they try to distinguish explicit informal learning from other activities, recognize both the time constraints of multiple other activities in the 168-hour week, and are very unlikely to regard learning as a ‘seamless web’ occupying most of their paid work time.

Household Work-Related Informal Learning

While learning related to the household work we all do is generally as too mundane to even think about, Canadian adults report an average of about 6 hours per week in informal learning related to their household work in both years. Again, there are small numbers at the extremes, with around 10% indicating they devote less than an hour per week to housework-related informal learning and about 5% saying they spend more than 20 hours per week in such learning. Given the greater proportion of Canadians involved in housework than in paid employment, and the similar average hours devoted to informal learning related to employment, it appears that we now devote as much aggregate time to informal learning related to housework as to paid employment.

Community Volunteer Work-Related Informal Learning

Those involved in organized community work over prior year (over 40% in 1998, declining to about one-third in 2004) devoted an average of about 4 hours a week to community-related informal learning. The majority of those who participate in community work indicate that they devote no more than 2 hours per week to related informal learning activities, while less than 10% devote more than 10 hours per week. The relatively low levels of participation in community volunteer work and related informal learning are consistent with the fact that this is the most discretionary type of work in advanced industrial societies, and many people simply choose to opt out.

Other General Interest Informal Learning

Most people engage in some other types of informal learning related to their general interests and not directly connected to any of the three forms of work. Those who do so (around 90%) spent on average almost 6 hours a week on these learning activities in 1998, declining to less than 5 hours in 2004. Around a third of respondents spend an hour or less per week in informal learning related to all of these general interests. The majority spend no more than three hours, while less than 10% devote more than 10 hours a week to such general interest learning. While there is evidently very wide participation in informal learning related to diverse interests, the incidence of work-related informal learning appears to be considerably greater – if learning related to both paid and unpaid work is included.

Total Involvement in Informal Learning

Nearly all Canadian adults (over 95%) are involved in some form of informal learning activities that they identify as significant. These surveys provides estimates of the amount of time that all Canadians, including those who say they do no informal learning at all, are spending in all four areas (employment, community, household, and general interest). The average number of hours devoted to informal learning activities by all Canadian adults during 1998 was over 14 hours per week. In 2004, the average dropped slightly to under 14 hours. These average estimates emanate from surveys devoted primarily to identifying the existence of intentional informal learning on multiple topics in several spheres of life activities. Virtually all prior empirical studies of informal learning found considerable initial reluctance among respondents to identify their learning outside educational institutions as legitimate learning.⁵ It is only when people had an opportunity to reflect on actual learning practices in the context of their daily lives that much intentional informal learning was recognized as such by the learners themselves. Intentional informal learning activities often also occur in combination with work or other social activities. While this makes time estimates more difficult and less exact, it is no grounds to either devalue or ignore informal learning processes.

Most other international surveys that have attempted to estimate the incidence of informal learning have found similar magnitudes of these learning activities (see Livingstone, 2005, for a summary). Generally, the average estimated time devoted to informal learning has been found to exceed significantly the time devoted to

formal educational activities. About three-quarters of Canadian adults now say they are spending 6 hours or more each week in some kind of intentional informal learning activities, most of it related to paid or unpaid work.

When we asked which of these learning activities are *most important* in the respective spheres of activity, the most common responses were about computer skills related to employment, home renovations and household cooking skills, communications skills through community volunteer work, and general interest learning about health issues. Clearly, the overwhelming majority of Canadian adults now regularly spend substantial amounts of time in these pursuits, and they recognize this intentional informal learning as a significant aspect of their daily lives.

Relations between Schooling, Adult Education and Informal Learning

Schooling and adult education continue to be mutually reinforcing: the more schooling people have obtained, the more likely they are to participate in continuing education courses, as Table 2 indicates. While this basic relationship has been widely documented (Cross, 1981; Devereaux, 1985; Tuijnman, 1989; Courtney, 1992), the major gap is now between school dropouts and the rest. Most of those who have completed high school or higher levels of schooling took some form of adult education during the past year, while around 20% of school dropouts did so. The higher the level of school attainment, the more likely they were to participate. A similar pattern occurs for plans to take more education in the future, with only about a quarter of school dropouts planning to take future courses. While both school attainments and adult education made very impressive aggregate gains in recent generations, participation in adult education courses still tends to reproduce prior differences in educational attainments and to increase the relative gap in formal education between those with prior school credentials and those without any.

As Table 2 also shows, informal learning is not strongly associated with either level of schooling or continuing adult education. School dropouts are almost as likely to participate in informal learning activities as those with higher levels of education and those who do so spend as much time as on them as university graduates. Lack of motivation to learn per se is not a major factor in their non-participation in adult education courses. Our longitudinal analysis finds that among all Canadians who did not take courses in either 1998 or 2004 there was declining involvement in job-related informal learning (Livingstone & Stowe, 2007). But most adults are generally active learners engaged in a considerable array of different learning activities. In spite of the expansion of schooling and adult courses, most of this activity takes place outside the walls of educational institutions

Any study of lifelong learning should attend to differences in learning through the life course. These surveys have found that young adults are most likely to take further education courses and more likely than older people to value formal courses rather than their own independent informal learning efforts. But younger adults tend to do the most informal learning as well. The findings also confirm the longstanding relationship of declining participation in adult education with aging. The increasing educational attainment of Canadians has led to increased course participation at all

Table 2. Participation in adult education and informal learning by formal educational attainment, all adults, 1998/2004.

Schooling	Taken adult education course or workshop past year (%)	Plan to take course (%)	Informal learning (%)	Informal learning* (hrs/week)
No diploma	18/23	25/20	81/80	16/15
High school diploma	52/48	46/43	97/94	15/15
Community college	58/52	62/49	97/96	14/13
University degree	67/63	70/56	99/96	13/12
TOTAL (%)	44/45	50/40	96/91	15/14

Sources: NALL Survey, 1998; WALL Survey, 2004.

*Average hours are calculated as mean of those reporting any informal learning.

ages. But declining course participation in the later years remains pronounced. In contrast, those over 65 indicate that they still spend almost the national average of about 12 hours per week in various informal learning activities. Aging is not significantly associated with a declining incidence of informal learning beyond the intense learning period of entry into adulthood (Livingstone, 1999). The stereotype that the active interests of older adults rapidly diminish as they approach and enter their retirement years is contradicted by both these survey findings and other recent research (Glendenning & Stuart-Hamilton, 1995). The older we get, the more likely we are to rely on our prior learning experiences rather than formal courses to guide our further learning. The notion that older people do not continue to be active learners should be discarded.

In sum, Canadians are now spending large and unprecedented amounts of time in school attendance, adult education courses, and informal learning activities. Canadians' post-secondary educational attainments, after two generations of extraordinary growth, now lead the world. Participation in adult education appears to have also grown quickly during this period. Around half of Canadian adults plan to take further education courses in the near future. Although there are few available measures of informal learning, the incidence of adults' intentional informal learning activities related to paid work, housework, volunteer work and general interests appears to be far more extensive than participation in formal education. The vast majority of Canadian adults are continually involved in a wide array of activities in pursuit of more knowledge, skills and understanding. Most of these learning activities occur informally beyond the recognition of institutional authorities. Similar learning patterns will likely be found in most other advanced market economies as research on different forms of adult learning continues.

WORK AND LEARNING

Learning, the acquisition of skills and knowledge, is the quintessential human activity to cope with our changing environment, and work is what we do with this knowledge. In these generic terms, learning and work are constantly interactive

and often simultaneous activities. In this sense, the notion of a knowledge-based economy is redundant; all human activities are essentially knowledge-based.

In the much narrower terms of current forms of paid employment, there are many who argue for the necessity of increasing education and training initiatives to respond to the demands of production systems that are increasingly dependent on information and communications technology and competing in increasingly globalized markets. Nobody is against more knowledge, which is always potentially useful and fulfilling. But we have just documented the exceptional gains Canadians have made in formal schooling and adult course participation in recent years, as well as their more extensive engagement in informal learning. There is mounting evidence that increases in required education and skill levels in the job structure of advanced capitalist societies have been growing more gradually in recent years and that, consequently, levels of underemployment (also known as overeducation, overqualification or underutilization) are also growing. Growing numbers of workers have skills and knowledge that they are unable to apply in the jobs available to them (e.g. Green; McIntosh, & Vignoles, 2002; Handel, 2005; Tahlin, 2006; Vaisey, 2006).

Conversely, our almost universal involvement in housework and its relatively low exchange value has generated very little interest in housework-related learning. This is presumed to be mundane work that anybody can do with little learning. There has been virtually no prior research done on learning associated with housework. But as the Eichler chapter begins to show, this work not only is more complex than normally thought but it often involves quite challenging learning activities which may have much broader relevance than to housework alone. Similar insights emerge from the Schugrensky and Slade study of volunteer work.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purportedly low literacy level of many adults, as measured on recent international standardized tests (e.g. Statistics Canada, 1996, 2005) has been of great concern to literacy advocates, policy makers and some employers. The increasing marginalization of school dropouts with functional literacy problems and declining capacity to do paid work is certainly a serious problem and needs immediate attention. The failure to develop a domestic apprenticeship system to produce enough fully trained skilled trades people has also become a chronic problem to be addressed in Canada and elsewhere. But the literacy panic has been overblown. The vast majority of workers are adequately qualified for their jobs and increasing numbers are overqualified in terms of their formal education and literacy levels in relation to job demands, not underqualified (Krahn & Lowe, 1998). The recognition of the huge amount of informal learning these workers are doing, most notably through on-the-job training by mentors and their own self-directed pursuit of new knowledge, suggests that even most of those who lack formal qualifications are finding ways to continue to perform their jobs quite adequately in relation changing employment conditions. Housework, on the other hand, is supposed to be so

simple that anyone can do it. In fact, to do it well requires learning some very complex activities that many of us may be underqualified to perform because of poor or limited training. Housework and carework should be validated in their own right as well as appreciated as essential sources of lifelong learning for everyday life, citizenship, health and some of the subtlest forms of understanding needed for sustainability in advanced technological society.

Formal education is now a basic human right. It should be supported generally and unconditionally, subject only to people's actual learning capacities and availability of public resources. Educational programs should be constantly revised to transmit the most accurate accumulated wisdom of human inquiry. But our fundamental problems are not with education per se but with its access and use.

Inequitable access to formal education and consequently to rewarding jobs and lives persists. The lack of access to advanced education in the country with the highest global level of overall post-secondary attainment remains a serious deficiency in terms of the youths of working class origins, visible minorities and aboriginals, those with disabilities, as well as women and older people from particular programs. All of these forms of under-representation signify large waste of talent.

There is serious underemployment of many and growing numbers in the current job structure, especially service and industrial wage workers, as we have documented in detail elsewhere (Livingstone, 2004). The central educational question is not whether we live in a learning society but whether educational institutions and paid workplaces can respond effectively to continuing increases in demand for knowledge and interest in using it.

There is little reason to doubt that similar patterns of learning and work characterize the adult populations of most advanced market economies. If we were to redress some of the inequitable educational access problems and if we were to begin to fathom the extent of many people's unused formal and informal knowledge, the imperative to change current job structures would become more evident. Possible changes include wider stakeholder ownership of enterprises, genuine workplace democracy in terms of decision-making and job design, and redistribution of paid and unpaid work. Such changes could challenge the currently dominant patriarchal form of shareholder, 'free market' capitalism. This may begin to explain why, in spite of pervasive rhetoric about 'lifelong learning in the new economy', there has been very little grounded research on less formal aspects of learning or on most aspects of unpaid work – to say nothing of the imbalances between our different forms and levels of knowledge and our capacities to use them in our paid and unpaid work. In any case, global economic reforms should now be understood as at least somewhat more pertinent than educational ones.

NOTES

¹ *Housework*, including cooking, cleaning, childcare and other often-complex household tasks, has been largely relegated to women and only gained some public recognition as women have gained power through increased participation in paid employment. As community life has become more fragmented with dual-earner commuter households, time devoted to *community work* to sustain and build social life

through local associations and helping neighbours has declined, and the productive importance of this work has been rediscovered as “social capital” (Putnam, 2000).

² All statistics cited in the text, unless otherwise specified, are drawn from the 1998 NALL and 2004 WALL surveys, as reported in Livingstone and Scholtz (2006).

³ Surveys of adult education in Canada usually have *excluded* many adults over 16 who are still involved in their initial cycle of schooling. They have included: adults taking non-credit courses for specific purposes at various locations including schools, paid workplaces and through electronic media; adults who have returned to school *part-time* to complete certification or upgrade through programs of study; adults who have returned to school *full-time if they are supported by their employer*; and initial cycle students taking *supplementary courses* (Devereaux, 1985; Statistics Canada, 1997, p. 10). These inclusions and exclusions appear increasingly arbitrary as the initial cycle of formal schooling has extended further into adulthood and young adults have increasingly combined school completion with employment. The transitions between schooling and employment are now both more frequent and more complex. Many people combine both statuses and it is often unclear which one might be primary at any given time. For example, over 10% of the adult Canadian population were enrolled in certification-based formal education programs during the 1997–98 period, and around half of these adults were enrolled in these programs while also engaged in paid employment (Livingstone, 2002).

⁴ Both the estimates of magnitude and the group differences in intentional informal learning patterns should be treated as preliminary findings. This is because: (1) there are no valid precedents for the specific array and format of items about informal learning used in the NALL and WALL surveys; (2) the prior empirical studies of self-directed learning found no significant group differences; (3) margins of error are nearly as large as the differences noted, especially in the relatively small NALL sample ($N = 1562$); and (4) informal learning is a particularly diffuse phenomenon which is prone to wide subjective differences in personal estimates. Further replication studies are much needed to test the reliability of all of these original estimates as well as to determine trends in the incidence of informal learning.

⁵ Recent attention to the significance of lifelong learning has stimulated government agencies to begin to estimate the extent of informal learning. The 1998 General Social Survey (Statistics Canada, 1999b) contained a few questions on informal learning. About 30% of respondents gave an initial positive response then estimated that they were spending about 19 hours per month on these learning activities, or nearly 5 hours per week. Averaged over the entire sample, this would reduce to about 1.5 hours per week, or about one-tenth of the NALL and WALL estimates. This is very likely a serious underestimate of the actual current extent of intentional informal learning. The initial screening question is posed immediately after a series of questions about initial schooling, adult credit courses and non-credit courses which serve to emphasize the relation between organized education and learning, and provides no opportunity to consider informal learning in relation to any specific learning context. In addition, the question dichotomizes courses and learning on your own, suggesting that you can only do one or the other, which is clearly false. A more recent Statistics Canada survey of job-related informal learning (Peters, 2004) has found participation rates comparable to those in the NALL and WALL surveys. Further survey and case study research is required to provide reliable extent and trend estimates.

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MARGRIT EICHLER

JUST WOMEN'S STUFF: LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH UNPAID HOUSEHOLD WORK *

INTRODUCTION

One of the premises of lifelong learning is that it deals with 'learning for life' and through and about one's lifeworld (Collins, 1998, 1996; Welton, 1998; Williamson, 1998). This would suggest that unpaid household work is of primary importance for lifelong learning, given that it constitutes an important part of our lifeworlds. In fact, it is almost completely ignored.

There are a few theoretical arguments that suggest that it is important to include consideration of household work when dealing with lifelong learning. Hart (1992) uses the concept of subsistence work (Mies & Shiva, 1993) in order to argue that the ultimate purpose of subsistence work is "to maintain and improve life" (Hart, 1992, p. 178) and that education needs to focus on issues that are life-enhancing rather than profit-driven. Gouthro (2000) argues that rather than focussing on the market place, adult education theory should focus on civil society and that this concept should be broadened to include the homeplace as a site of work and learning. This, she suggests, may lead us to:

find an alternative focus for the development of a global civil society. This would be a type of global civil society built on concerns that cross cultures and nation-states [sic]; concerns that impact on each of us in our everyday lives. (Gouthro, 2000).

A number of scholars add 'family' (which is not the same as household work but can be taken as a reasonable substitute here) as an area within which learning occurs (Clayton, 2005; Dyke, 2006, pp. 109, 118; Olesen, 2006, p. 248). Armsby et al. (2006) make a strong case for including unpaid as well as paid work when using Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), but do not provide any example of this.

I found only three instances where learning that takes place within the family is actually studied in some detail. Stehlik (2003) looks at parenting as an occasion for learning, although this learning is set in a somewhat exceptional situation by studying parents who have a child in a Waldorf School. Part of the philosophy of this school is to engage parents in the education of their children. To this end, concrete programmes to facilitate such engagement are provided.

* I would like to thank Patrizia Albanese, Ute Carl and David Livingstone for helpful comments on this paper.

Hasselkus and Ray (1988) have demonstrated how people providing care for frail elderly in the community learn through their unpaid work about their sense of self, of managing, of the future, of fear/risk and of change in customary relationships.

The third is a study by Schugurensky and Myers (2003) in which they consider how civics teachers learn about civics. They found, with some surprise, that family socialization was cited as the most powerful influence on the civic learning of civics teachers. While this underlines the importance of the family as a place for learning, in this case the focus is on the socialization of the child (as remembered by the adult), rather than the ongoing learning of the adult through her or his family work.

Lifelong learning theory and practice fails to see the work component in the family – in spite of a vast sociological literature on the topic (for a small sampling, see Benéria & Roldán, 1987; Bittman et al., 2003; Bond & Sales, 2001; Chandler, 1994; Coverman, 1989; Folbre, 2001; Hersch & Stratton, 1997; Hochschild, 1989; Ironmonger, 1996; Kamo, 2000; Kitterod, 2002; Lopata, 1971; Luxton, 1980; Meleis & Lindgren, 2002; Oakley, 1974a, 1974b). While there are some problems with the housework literature, briefly discussed below, it is clear that work performed for the family and within private households, with and especially without pay, is serious work that is socially of the highest importance.

Nevertheless, the private household is generally not included as a workplace when looking at work-based learning, in spite of Hart's and Gouthro's pleas to the contrary. I did find three empirical studies that look at learning through household work: Butler (1993) has identified many of the skills that can be acquired through household work, and Livingstone (2000, 2002) has collected empirical data demonstrating that much learning does occur through household work, but the data are quantitative and tell us more about the extent of the learning rather than its nature.

A recent European Union study focused particularly on competencies acquired through household work and argued that many of the skills that are learned through household work are directly important for and transferable to the paid work force (Gerzer-Sass, 2004).¹ While acknowledging these exceptions, it still remains true that by and large life-long learning theory and practice fail to understand household work as a form of work, consequently ignore the homeplace as a site of work and the person who does unpaid household work as a worker, and therefore fail to focus on the learning that can take place through the performance of household work. I found no example of work-based learning which used unpaid household work as its subject matter.

The problem is twofold. In general, household work is largely invisible, even though it maintains our lives. Like the air we breathe, we become aware of it only when there is a problem. Even the people who perform the household work tend not to be aware of the extent of the work they actually engage in.

In this paper, I will therefore briefly examine the nature of household work and identify four dimensions of this work – the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions. This significantly increases the scope of what is currently considered household work in empirical studies. The physical dimension is generally recognized. The housework literature tends to list tasks, which are primarily physical –

cleaning, washing dishes, and doing laundry. However, there is also some literature which recognizes the mental aspects of work (DeVault, 1987, 1991; Hessing, 1994). Hochschild (1983, 1989) drew attention to the emotion work involved. However, in empirical studies it is very rare that these three dimensions are given attention simultaneously, and we found no literature at all that draws attention to the spiritual dimension (Eichler & Albanese, 2007). As a rule, then, two or three of these dimensions of household work are invisible. In this paper, I will examine the four dimensions of household work and the learning that can be derived from them.

I will draw on data from a Canadian empirical study on unpaid household work and lifelong learning.

THE HOUSEHOLD AND LIFELONG LEARNING STUDY

This study is part of a large-scale set of Canadian studies on Work and Lifelong Learning (WALL).² The overall study consists of a large-scale national survey ($n = 9,063$) and 12 case studies. Ours is one of only two case studies in the larger WALL study that look at unpaid work.³ We structured our research into four distinct phases of data collection. Each phase built on the foregoing one.⁴

Phase 1 involved a mailed questionnaire to members of Canadian women's groups, asking them what housework and care work they perform and what they learn from it. 815 surveys were mailed out, and 254 were completed and returned (31% response rate). In the case of MAW (Mothers Are Women), the project's community partner, we asked members to give their husbands/partners a copy of the questionnaire.

This part of the study was intended to examine whether or not the unpaid household work was, indeed, largely invisible to the people who answered the questionnaire. We therefore asked a series of open-ended questions about the nature of the housework and care work that people performed. As we expected, the degree to which people perceived the household work they performed varied, but the vast majority saw it as much smaller than its actual scope.

In the second phase, we addressed the nature of household work by asking participants whether indeed they performed various tasks. To examine this, we held 11 focus groups (9 with women and 2 with men), involving a total of 66 participants (57 women and 9 men), in three Canadian cities. Three groups consisted of white women only, diverse in age and socio-economic status, 2 of black women, 1 of Aboriginal women, 1 of white disabled women, 1 of disabled women of colour (except for one who was not disabled), 1 of Chinese women who recently immigrated to Canada, and 2 of men, all of whom were white except for 1 Chinese man. Our aim, in this phase, was to get as diverse a sample as possible. One of the focus groups was so interested in the subject matter that one member⁵ organized an on-line discussion group following the same format.

We started out by asking people, as an icebreaker, what housework they had done in the past week, and got the usual list of mainly physical tasks – with the exception of the group of Aboriginal women, who spontaneously listed all of the

activities we asked about later. We then asked participants if they did any of the following tasks:

- Provide emotional support to someone (comfort, console, counsel, give advice, listen to);
- Organize, plan, manage or arrange matters (e.g. family events or schedules, arrange repair people, tutors, play dates for children);
- Deal with crises;
- Maintain contact with family members or friends through telephoning, writing letters or visiting;
- Take care of yourself; and
- Resolve conflicts.

Uniformly, people agreed that they did these things. In other words, they do perform a much larger range of activities in their household work than they are usually aware of themselves.

Phase 3 shifted the attention to learning and followed up with 70 people⁶ who were part of the large national WALL survey. We chose respondents who had experienced a major life change within the past five years, assuming that such changes would result in changes in their unpaid housework and care work and hence require new learning. The respondents had all indicated in the prior WALL survey that they had either lost a partner, found a new partner, lost a job, found a new job, were disabled, or had immigrated from China within the past five years. We focused on whether they had learned anything new in their household work and presented them with a list of how people learn that was derived from the answers in phases 1 and 2.

Phase 4 involved interviews with 10 female housecleaners and 10 nannies who do similar work for pay and without pay. These participants were questioned if and how the work – and therefore the learning – shifts when it is performed with or without pay. I will not draw on this phase of the research in this paper.

LIFTING THE INVISIBILITY CLOAK FROM UNPAID HOUSEHOLD WORK

There is a large sociological literature that deals with unpaid housework that is performed by wives and husbands or by women and men, within their own home. Obviously, then, part of the household work is quite clearly visible to the people who perform it as well as within the sociological literature, although it is largely absent, even in its most restricted version, from the lifelong learning literature (Eichler, 2005).

The parts that are clearly visible within the sociological literature – and for the people who do the work – have to do with repetitive, mundane tasks, such as cleaning, cooking, doing the laundry, etc. These tasks are usually perceived as largely physical (although they do have other aspects) and they did play an important role in the data we collected. Since our approach to the subject matter was informed by a critical perspective to the sociological literature on housework, we specifically looked (in phase 2) for information on the mental and emotional

aspects of housework, and integrated carework into the larger term of household work. We found with surprise a fourth dimension, about which we had originally not asked any questions, but which emerged from the data in phase 2: a spiritual dimension of the household work. This being the case, we then integrated questions on this issue into phases 3 and 4.

Physical Work

As expected, we did find evidence of a lot of repetitive, mundane physical work: cleaning, transporting people to and from places, doing dishes, gardening, snow shoveling, doing laundry, ironing, etc. On closer investigation, however, it became obvious that such routine tasks form part of a complex and intricate web of activities that involve a lot of cognitive, emotional and spiritual aspects.

Mental Work

Mederer (1993, p. 135) has commented on the “invisible orchestration” that lies behind the task accomplishments of housework and Hessing (1994) argues that “women’s time management is constructed by them to connect and carry out their workload, while it also creates, sustains, and perpetuates the household and the workplace” (p. 614).⁷

DeVault (1987, 1991) has provided an intricate analysis of the amount of mental work that lurks behind the preparation of meals. It is not only planning for the meal itself that is involved, but also taking into account the allergies, food likes and dislikes of various family members, timing of the meal so that it fits into a complex set of often conflicting time tables, the way food is presented, and much more. She draws our attention to the fact that ‘the social experience of eating together may be more important than the food itself’, which means that “social interactions, and even one’s own eating, become part of the work that contributes to the production of a family meal” (DeVault, 1991, p. 51).

When we asked people to discuss the mental work involved in housework, including organizing, planning, management and making arrangements with people, the examples provided by the women were overflowing. Women manage men’s and children’s health issues, arrange for repair people, day care, play dates, transportation, they create and maintain family routines, plan the garden, prepare and monitor family schedules for ordinary days and extraordinary events such as weddings, house moves (their own or someone else’s), parties, holidays and associated travels and much more.

An Aboriginal woman commented:

My organizing, planning, I do that everyday . . . there’s not a point where it stops and starts. Like in the morning, you have to make sure the kids are up and they’re dressed and fed and they brush their teeth, and you get them on the bus. I run to work, you get home, and all day, right now, I’m thinking, what are we going to have for supper?

This comment was typical. Women talked about the seamlessness of their planning activities, and how they constantly deal with multiple issues simultaneously.

Emotion Work

The emotion work that is performed within families and also among friends is even more invisible than the mental work. Hochschild (1983, 1989) drew our attention to emotion work first within paid work, and then within the family. We heard of many examples of emotion work in our focus groups. Again, women almost overflow with stories of emotion work, once they are asked the question. It's a big thing. They provide support not only to their partners and children, but also to friends and extended family, in Canada and often also abroad.

One woman said, "I provide emotional support for a 24-year old who doesn't live at home, but is suffering from post traumatic stress disorder, and often times he can see it coming back".⁸ Another recounted:

Well, I offer emotional support to a mentally challenged brother I have. He's 43, and he constantly gets himself into debt or can't figure out problems with ladies or friends. I have another brother who has a 4-year-old and he raises him 24/7 on his own. So I try to keep emotionally in touch with him, and keep him calmed down, from throwing fits at the education system, because his son is not coming through it the way he should be.

Another woman told us:

For about 4 months, I was the only emotional support for my brother, because he knew he was facing major surgery. And he wouldn't tell any of the others. So I was dealing with him on that issue. Thank God the growth turned out to be benign. Uh, but then when the rest of our family found out, then of course they flipped. And they're all phoning me and email me, oh my god! So, I, I've been doing the emotional support thing, but long distance: e-mail and chat.

When asked why they did not list the emotion work they performed in the questionnaire (every person who participated in a focus groups also filled out the questionnaire of phase 1) one woman said, "Just women's stuff. Just women's stuff". Another noted, "It's so much a part of our relationship, especially since my husband's accident that I didn't even think to write that down". It is in these comments that the gendered nature of emotion work becomes visible – as well as by comparing the women's answers to the men's answers in the men's focus groups. The men also claimed to provide emotional support, particularly to their spouses, but the examples are much less wide-ranging, and sometimes debatable. One man, for instance, claimed he was supporting his *wife* (rather than his son) by providing some care for their son, "just to give my wife a break". This suggests that he saw the care for their child as his wife's task (rather than a shared one) and an inability to think about emotional support he might render his wife directly. He identified himself as the "minority care giver". However, other men do provide some emotional support. One stated, "My wife took on new responsibilities at work, so she comes home with a bunch of headaches, and I'm an ear to chew on for a

while". He also went and visited his mother who is in a hospital, to just spend time with her.

Nevertheless, overall, there is a distinct difference in the way in which women and men talk about the emotional support they provide, as well as other aspects of emotion work, which includes the presentation and management of self to others, in order to obtain a desired result. As one Aboriginal woman said, "One thing I will say that I have the hardest time with is not being able to really express how I really feel. It always has to be reinvented to be presentable to him [her husband]". Similarly, a young white mother talked about how she monitors her language around her children.

Spiritual Work

In the focus groups, we asked explicitly about emotion work and mental work. However, another type of work emerged that we did *not* ask about: spiritual work. As a consequence, we did include a question on this issue in the subsequent phases 3. We define spirituality, with Lois Wilson,⁹ as anything that gives meaning to life. The spiritual work emerged when I asked focus group participants how they learned to cope with the – sometimes very dramatic – changes they had gone through within the past five years. Spiritual work was especially hard but of crucial importance for women who are socially marginalized and discriminated against: women with disabilities, black women and Aboriginal women, although others also talked about it.

A woman battling severe depression talked about what it takes for her to recognize her intrinsic value as a human being, even though she no longer has a paying job. She said:

I beat myself up mentally. I just kept beating myself up. No, you can't do that. I used a lot of biofeedback. When I could feel myself starting to – you know when you've fallen into the pit, right? And you grab yourself out and say, no, I can't allow myself to feel that way today.

Another woman made a commitment at a Buddhist retreat she attended to live a life of compassion. "Also to become extremely strong spiritually. And then all hell broke loose, and I had to learn to cope with incredibly difficult situations". She uses what she has learned in the way she relates to other people:

Whenever I have an issue with anybody that's difficult for me, I use that practice. Like for instance, my brother was really hard on me. 'May Doug be happy, may he be healthy, may he be peaceful, may he prosper, may he live with ease. May I be happy, may I be healthy . . .' and then back and forth. And the minute you keep doing it and doing it, you can feel the muscles relaxing.

A man mentioned that he decided to treat dishwashing as a meditative exercise, and that that changed a despised activity into one that is simply a part of his life.

Others mention prayer and meditation as means to make sense out of their lives. One of the questions we asked was whether participants did or did not regard

the various activities they engaged in as work, and why. Some of them explicitly included prayer as work, because it requires energy, others did not.

A New Definition of Household Work

As a result of lifting the cloak of invisibility from the hidden aspects of household work,¹⁰ we identified four dimensions of housework and care work: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. We devised the following definition of household work, which incorporates the types of invisible work described above: Household work consists of the sum of all physical, mental, emotional and spiritual tasks that are performed for one's own or someone else's household and that maintain the daily life of those for whom one has responsibility.

This definition includes the four dimensions of housework, integrates housework and care work (hence we use the term household work to indicate the sum of both housework and care work) and is not restricted to being performed within one's own household, thus incorporating household work performed outside of one's own household. It also includes self care as well as care for others.

We are now ready to ask ourselves how lifelong learning theory applies to unpaid housework and those who perform this work.

Lifelong Learning Theory and Unpaid Household Work

Having lifted the invisibility cloak off previously hidden aspects of household work, we can now turn to the person who is performing this work. As noted above, lifelong learning theory does not pay attention to household work and those who do it, but there are many indications that studying household work is in line with what is seen as important in life long learning approaches. English interprets Hasselkus' and Ray's (1988) study as suggesting that "informal learning must be studied in its social context, specifically within the context of daily life. In other words, it is only within the minutiae of the every day that we can understand adult learning that is occurring" (English, 1999, p. 386) There is probably nothing that fits this description better than household work. Watkins and Marsick (1990) according to English (1999, p. 391), identify the presence of non-routine conditions as one of the factors that lead to learning. Housework presents an interesting combination of routine with non-routine factors. While some aspects remain stable (making one's bed, tidying up, cleaning, etc., tend to be constants in people's – especially women's – lives), nevertheless, there is also constant change – people join a household (as visitors, a new baby, a new partner, an adult child introduces a partner) and people leave – the visitor departs, the child grows up and leaves home, a marriage ends through separation, divorce, or death, etc. Even in a one-person household there is on-going change – we all age, as do our friends and family members, and with it, our needs and preferences change, resulting in a change of lifestyle and hence of household work.

Schugurensky and Meyers make a distinction between looking at lifelong learning in a normative or an ontological manner. I am here applying an ontological

approach, which is concerned with “the simple fact that people learn many things in a variety of spaces throughout their lives” (Schugurensky & Myers, 2003, p. 328).

The type of learning we are concerned with here is informal, self-directed, and incidental. Like studying how civics teachers learn civics, we are dealing with a process that is “lifelong and lifewide . . . [and] that in great part remains tacit and unconscious” (Schugurensky & Myers, 2003, p. 347).

It is a well established fact that much adult learning occurs because of some significant change in people’s lives (for an overview of the relevant literature, see Dyke, 2006, p. 114; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, pp. 107–119).

Consequently, in our study, we selected respondents for phase 3 who had undergone a major life change within the past five years – they had either lost a partner, lost a job, found a new job, had a child, were disabled or had recently immigrated into Canada from China. As noted above, these respondents had previously been part of a national survey and had agreed to a follow-up interview. This meant that another year had passed, and the event for which we selected them for could have happened as long as six years before. That is a long time, and for many people other significant events had meanwhile taken place. We therefore asked each person what major events had happened to them within the past five years. Sometimes they mentioned the event for which they had been selected and at other times they mentioned some other event(s), such as moving and living alone or with roommates, unemployment, a family member developing a disability. We tailored our questions around the event that was most salient for them. In any case, we were guaranteed that they had experienced some major life change in the not too distant past. Often, changes were cumulative.

For instance, we selected Alice because she had lost a job. She had since moved from one province to another, finished school and started her own business. She selected the loss of her job as the major event affecting her household work, but in effect ended up referring to all three. Jimmy had been selected because he had lost a partner, but he had since married someone else. However, he did not yet live together with his wife, because she is of a different religious tradition and her family wanted a second ceremony in their faith before they could move together. Victoria, who had been selected because she had a new child, also experienced within the past year the death of her husband’s grandfather (which was expected) and of her father (which was unexpected); her stepmother, to whom she was very close, had a stroke, and her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. She selected as the most important event the birth of her son who is “the glue that’s held the family together”, more important than her preceding marriage and buying a house.

We then asked them how this event had affected their household work, which we broke down into housework and care work. In all instances, their household work had been affected. We asked what they had learned by having to do some aspect of their household work differently, including, towards the end, whether it had changed the way they thought about themselves and about the meaning of their lives. We also asked how they had learned what they had learned.

Our data make it clear that respondents learned about the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of their work. As Billet has noted, there is no sepa-

ration between thinking, learning and identity transformation (Billet, 2004, p. 313). Similarly, although we can make an analytical distinction between the content and the process of learning, in real life the two are inextricably linked. I will therefore deal with the content and the process of learning that occurred simultaneously.

Learning to Do Physical Tasks Differently – Learning in an Embodied Manner

Most people stated that they had learned some physical tasks, such as cooking (which has, of course, many non-physical aspects as well). Physical learning is most dramatic, however, for people who have acquired a physical impairment.

Charles, for instance, is a professional man who was the victim of a shooting that left him, among other things, with a severely weakened right arm and hand (his dominant hand), and very little fine motor skills in that hand. The injury was severe enough to be classified as an amputation, and he is in constant pain. He talked about some of the physical things he had to re-learn: how to tie his shoelaces, clean himself with his non-dominant hand, how to chop tomatoes.

Sophie, an 82-year-old woman with diabetes and a bad knee had to give up some of the work she used to do, and re-learn other parts. For instance, when she vacuums, she has to be careful, “one arm on here and one on the vacuum”. Narcissa, a 57-year-old woman with a vision and hearing impairment had to re-learn how to cook by switching from seeing things to feeling things. She feels, rather than sees, whether she has picked up celery or a tomato. Maria, a young mother of a 4-year old son, has Hodgkin’s disease. Her legs became paralyzed after the birth of her son and her hands are frequently numb. This means that she can no longer chop when she cooks. She learned to use the food processor instead.

Every person with a disability had to make different adaptations – and they do not remain stable, as conditions go into remission, worsen, or change otherwise. The changes in how housework is performed are therefore ongoing.

Changes in the physical aspects of household work are, of course, not restricted to people with disabilities. For instance, some men who lost their partner had to deal with their own household work for the first time. In such cases, we are not only dealing with an adaptation, but with the acquisition of brand-new skills. Indeed, we selected this event specifically because of its importance for men with respect to household work.

For instance, after Nzanzi, a young man from the Congo, broke up with his girlfriend, he found that he “wasn’t really aware of how things work around the house”. After the break-up, “I had to do everything on my own, cooking, cleaning the house and make sure that my clothes are clean, so I think that was also an eye-opener for me, just to understand work around the house, to care for myself”.

The degree to which we depend on our bodies becomes dramatically obvious when people with non-normative bodies or minds are included into reflections of daily life. Normativity is disrupted, what is often unseen becomes visible. All learning has a physical dimension for everybody, given that the brain has physicality, therefore even thought is mediated through our body. Besides, it is a lot easier to think when we do not have a severe headache or, for that matter, any other serious

pain, when we sit, lie, stand or walk comfortably, etc. Jackson has provided graphic evidence of how ill health can affect learning (Jackson, 2006).

The body is thus an “absent presence” (Schilling, 2003), of which we become aware consciously either through a process of reflexivity or because the normativity of a two-handed, two-legged etc. body is disrupted. This presents an opportunity for realizing that “bodies are a way of perceiving, proceeding into and appearing in social space” (Tichkosky, 2005, p. 664). When people become disabled, they typically have to re-learn how to engage in household work. This will, of course, take very different forms depending on the nature of their disability.

Learning is therefore intertwined with the body in multiple ways: all learning is mediated through the body, and changes within the body itself (such as getting older) may require us to discard old ways of doing things and learn new ways of doing them. Overboe (n.d.) has made a compelling case about recognizing and validating embodied wisdom. The body may be explicitly used as a tool in teaching (Ng, 2000), or it may be something we observe – which is a problematic statement, since the ‘we’ in this instance refers to the mind which is, of course, also mediated through the body. We observe differently depending on whether we are tired, alert, ill or healthy, etc. As Schilling notes, we both *have* and *are* a body (Schilling, 2003, p. 20).

Concerning self-observation, Anna, a young mother of two children, elaborated in one of the focus groups on what she meant by ‘self-awareness’, why it was part of self care, and why self care is work. The question she addressed thus was not about learning, but about work, but the learning process is front and center as she argues that self-care is work.

M.E.: Anna, you ... came out very spontaneously with self-awareness. How did you learn this?

Anna: Well, I crashed. In terms of specifics, hmm. Trial and error. ... I wasn't sure if I wanted to have another child, because it's a lot of work, and it hurts. And, my first daughter, I had a lot of health problems related to having a baby. And so, I had to learn ... like, learn literally about my body. When I say ‘self-awareness’, I mean every aspect, because I had to learn.

M.E.: And how did you do that? Did you read? Did you go to classes? Did you see something on TV? Did you talk with people? *Anna*: I just got used to myself. ... Like, in terms of what changes my body went through, I had sudden allergies that were death-related allergies, and so, I had to figure out what I was allergic to. I went to an allergist for that. But other things, you know, like, you eat and you get a different reaction. So, I just – it's more self-observation, I guess.

Anna learns about, through and with her body because she has life-threatening allergies. Other people in the phase 3 interviews also recounted how they learned with and through their bodies. It is only in the absence of serious health conditions or disabilities that we can ignore our bodies (see also Stehlik, 2003).

Learning New Mental Skills

Respondents reported that they had learned a multitude of mental skills: budgeting much more carefully and systematically if they had a loss of income through disability, going back to studying as a student, loss of a job or for other reasons, organizing themselves and their family routines differently when the necessity for that arose, learning to plan by using a calendar when having immigrated from a culture where this is not the usual practice, learning to prioritize better and more consciously when their life became more complicated for various reasons, and much more.

For instance, Ardea is a young mother with two small children, two and five years old, and a husband who has a progressive disability. "He was walking and dancing at our wedding seven years ago, and now he's in a wheelchair". A teacher, she is the main breadwinner, and she had to take over a number of the roles her husband used to play.

She learned to plan her days meticulously, and still leaves room for some spontaneity by being perpetually prepared for impromptu outings. She keeps a backpack with toys, wipes, diapers etc. always in the car. She also learned not to waste time and to "do things quickly, more efficiently, you just become efficient at what you do. And you ignore the things that aren't that important". In other words, she learned to prioritize various aspects of her household work differently.

Learning to Do Emotional Tasks Differently

As Jarvis (2006, p. 204) notes, emotions have to be learned just like knowledge, beliefs and values. Most respondents claimed that they had learned to provide emotional support differently – better – especially if they themselves had undergone some traumatic experience. Even some people who did not undergo dramatic changes told us that they had learned to provide emotional support better.

For instance, John is a young man who within the past five years broke up with his girl friend, moved away from his parents, was accepted into dentistry school, and now lives with roommates. When asked whether he now provides emotional support in a different way, he said: "I used to be terrible at it". He used to think that he had to "say something or fill the silence". Since that time he learned that "you don't have to say anything . . . or you don't have to say much", and instead let people know that you hear and "understand to some degree, what they're going through". He learned this through the change in his own life circumstances, and now finds that he applies this new skill to his dentistry patients.

Many of the immigrants commented that they changed the way they relate to their children, as well as to their spouses. Chinese immigrants come from a culture that permits physical discipline of children, and which sees the parental role as telling children what to do, whereas in general Canadians frown upon physical disciplining and parents are expected to advise, or counsel, their children, rather than impose particular ways of behaviour on them.

Ming, for instance, talked about the challenges she faced in educating her children. She mentioned the danger that someone would introduce them to smoking or

drugs in high school. "Here you cannot – in China we can do something to stop [this]. But here everything is free. I mean the freedom, right? I do not agree with this freedom". Fang describes how she has learned to express her concern for her husband differently. She says:

In my family, in the past, we were not used to say anything like 'you must have had a hard day', warm words like this. We thought we didn't need to say that, as we are an old couple. Now I learned to show my concern for him. I would say 'Drive carefully' when he was to drive, and 'How was your day today?' when he comes back. Remind him to go to bed earlier as he likes to stay on the internet late. Anyway, I show more concern for him now than before.

I have here looked at emotions primarily as they are learned with respect to relating to significant others, but of course, there is always "an emotional context that must be considered when examining self-directed learning" (Rager, 2004, p. 106).

Learning about the Meaning of Life

In phase 3 of our study we asked people explicitly whether the learning they had achieved and that had been triggered through a life change also changed the way they thought about themselves and the meaning of their own lives. Notwithstanding the advice of some of our colleagues who suggested that it was meaningless to ask about the meaning of life, we received thoughtful answers from almost all of our respondents. Only a very few stated that there had been no change or that there must be a meaning but they do not know what it is. Even more interesting, the issue of spirituality came up in some places where we did *not* ask about it, particularly when we asked what challenges they experienced in their household work because of the life event they had identified and how they overcame these challenges.

Most of the respondents indicated that they had learned something through their past experiences about the meaning of their life. Women and men who had become parents, for instance, generally said about themselves that they had become more responsible, less selfish, more caring, more invested in the future of their children than in their own personal lives.

For instance, Garfield is a man, almost 50, originally from Jamaica, who had, together with his wife, adopted a daughter, which transformed his life. He learned to do a lot of housework and care work he had never done before, and his life is "much more fulfilled". It now revolves around his daughter. "She is my life!" He adds, "I think of myself as much more responsible, so much more caring and she brings out the best things in me. . . . it's not about anything else anymore. My entire life is her life now and you sometimes sit back and think about that and you tell yourself whoosh! This is incredible".

Others, for instance some who had lost a partner, or else had witnessed the death of some other person significant to them said that they had learned to enjoy life more, to live day by day.

In many ways, spiritual learning is another absent presence. Since we define spirituality as anything that gives meaning to life, meaning making is clearly a

central aspect of lifelong learning theory, yet it is not commonly referred to as spiritual.

A number of people talked about materialistic values versus other values. In particular, the Chinese immigrants who all held professional jobs and were relatively well-to-do in China experienced significant downward social mobility in Canada. None of them held jobs at the previous professional level and most of them had to cope, among other things, with restricted financial resources. Liu described the change-over as follows, “While in China, I am adult, middle-aged, quite well-educated, but here I am nothing. You know the PhD. That’s a joke. PhD means Pizza Hut Delivery. That’s nothing”.

Instead of seeking meaning through social status and excellent performance in their jobs, family relationships took on a greater importance for many. Xu, for instance, told us that with the birth of her son the meaning of her life changed from being focussed on herself to seeing herself as an influence on her son’s life. Xiaoming noted that in China she strove after money and fame, but in Canada she found that enjoying life is more important. Wei Wei learned to place more importance on diverse experiences rather than stability. “I now have a more philosophical view of money. I don’t think it’s very good if you have money or very bad if you don’t have any. It all depends . . . I value more of what I have experienced now”.

Spiritual learning, then, was explicitly present for most of the people we interviewed. From a lifelong learning perspective, this is of course in no way surprising. Meaning-making (Rager, 2004) or sense-making (Taylor, 2000) are front and center in lifelong learning, although this is usually not identified as a spiritual dimension. An exception would be Stehlik (2003, p. 376) who sees parenting as a spiritual task – and interestingly, this is an observation that also comes from a study on unpaid household work, since parenting is – for parents – an important aspect of this type of work. Foley (2001) calls the “learning that enables people to make sense of and act on their environment, and to come to understand themselves as knowledge-creating, acting beings . . . [as] the most significant sort of human learning” (p. 78). Our data certainly support this statement.

The Intersections of the Various Dimensions

It is clear that learning occurs along all four dimensions of housework we identified. However, although it is possible to identify and separate the four dimensions of learning, in reality they are not as neatly separated as they have been presented so far. It is much more likely that two, three or all four of the dimensions are involved simultaneously. As Jarvis (2006) suggests,

... human learning is the combination of processes whereby the whole person – body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) – experiences a social situation, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively and practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the person’s individual biography resulting in a changed (or more experienced) person. (p. 206)

This complex and intertwined process is obvious in our data. I will provide just one example by going back to the case of Charles, who had to learn to live as a one-handed person in a two-handed society.

When Charles talked about what he had to learn when he became one-handed, all four dimensions are intermixed. For instance, he trained his family “through many hours of gentle discussion, sometimes not so gentle, that when they park the car they turn the steering wheel so the large open part is on the right-hand side”.

If we look at this statement within its context we can see that even this one act involved all four dimensions of learning. First, he had to mentally figure out that he would still be able to start and then drive a car if the steering wheel is turned a particular way. He had to accept emotionally that his hand and arm would not improve, even with constant exercise to keep them from deteriorating. He had to work with his family to get them to change their own ways in order to accommodate his impairment, which involved both cognitive and emotional work. He had to train himself physically to use his left hand for operations he did not use to perform with his left hand, and, of course, it required spiritual work to be able to continue to live positively and productively.

CONCLUSION

This paper represents a journey of grappling with some of the issues of lifelong learning through unpaid household work. By removing the cloak of invisibility from this type of work, a picture emerges that shows that looking at household work is a fruitful and important aspect of understanding lifelong learning. While lip service is given to looking at the whole person, the lifelong and lifewide (Schugurensky & Myers, 2003) experience of a person, there is very little research that actually studies unpaid household work as a fruitful area of learning for people.

It is not an easy area to explore, because much of the knowledge gained is pre-conscious (Jarvis, 2006, p. 207), which means that before being able to study the learning the worker must first be made aware of the full range of work she or he actually performs before one can explore the learning that takes place.

Solomon et al. (2006) have argued that much learning occurs in in-between spaces. In their instance, they examined learning that takes place in hybrid spaces, such as refreshment breaks when workers are not solely workers, or in a car while driving home from work. They found that much learning took place in such spaces where workers both were and were not present as workers. Household activities similarly constitute both work and non-work. Different people define the same household activities as work or as non-work (Eichler & Matthews, 2005, 2007). The homeplace is both a space of work as well as a home. As in the case of the ‘third space’ studied by Solomon et al. it is important not to romanticize it – much of the work *is* repetitive, physically tiring, and boring – while at the same time there is also constant change, and cognitive, emotional, physical and spiritual engagement with the work.

Many of the current critiques of lifelong learning do not apply when we study unpaid household work. Learning through unpaid household work is certainly not

part of a dominant discourse that is a mode of social control (Crowther, 2004) nor is it part of a political ideology (Martin, 2003). Learning through this type of work is learner driven, experiential (Burnard, 1988) and self-directed (Chovanec, 1998) and it is certainly not the focus of educational policy! Much of it is unconscious or tacit knowledge – and tacit knowledge has been described as the Holy Grail of knowledge management (Manafy, 2005). Learning through unpaid household work is truly learning for life rather than learning for profit (Gouthro, 2005, p. 14). It might make sense, then, to start looking at household work as an important sphere of work that has the potential to teach us much about lifelong learning and work – and maybe even to look at paid work through the lens of unpaid household work.

NOTES

¹ I would like to thank Bernd Overwien for drawing my attention to this study and in fact, giving me the book in which it was published.

² The data reported on here were gathered as part of the research network on The Changing Nature of Work and Lifelong Learning (WALL) funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) from 2002 through 2007 as a Collaborative Research Initiative on the New Economy (Project No. 512-2002-1011). This network is composed of a large national survey and 12 case study projects. For further information, see the network website: www.wallnetwork.ca. I thank David Livingstone for inviting me to take part in the study. A large number of students were involved in our project at various points of time as coders, interviewers, transcribers, data analysts and collaborators in a broader sense. I want to thank them cordially for the contributions they made. They are: Robyn Bourgeois, Alexia Dyer, Lingqin Feng, Susan Ferguson, Young-Hwa Hong, Lichun Willa Liu, Gada Mahrouse, Carly Manion, Ann Matthews, Tracey Matthews, Gayle McIntyre, Thara Mohanathas, Sam Rahimi, Susan Stowe, Carole Trainor, Natalie ZurNedden. Lichun Willa Liu and Ann Matthews are both writing their PhD theses on this project, and their contribution is consequently considerably more substantial than that of other students who were involved for shorter periods of time. Susan Ferguson coded 40 of the interviews of phase 3 into N6 and thus contributed substantially to the analysis. She also provided research assistance for this paper. Patrizia Albanese is co-investigator of the project.

³ The other case study examines unpaid community work.

⁴ More details about this study can be found in Eichler and Albanese (2007).

⁵ We thank Barbara Anello for this initiative.

⁶ We added 7 Chinese immigrants through snowball sampling since there were not enough Chinese people who had immigrated within the past 5 years in the WALL sample within our geographic area.

⁷ See also Zick (1996).

⁸ I have done minor editing of quotes to make them more readable or to protect anonymity and any names cited are fictitious.

⁹ We interviewed the Very Reverent Lois Wilson, former Moderator of the United Church of Canada, and former President of the World Council of Churches, as well as current member of the Senate of Canada, on this issue.

¹⁰ There are at least two other aspects that are usually invisible: the fact that much household work is performed outside of one's own household (Eichler & Albanese, 2007) and that care for adults is generally excluded, while childcare is included (Eichler, 2006).

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