

Critical Engagement Project

A Manual

This manual is a collaborative project involving faculty and students in the Adult Education Doctoral Program at National-Louis University. It is subject to ongoing revision as we reflect on the insights and discoveries of current and future cohorts.

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Working Document—Not for Distribution
National-Louis University

September 18, 1997

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1. Growing Knowledge*

*THESE DAYS
whatever you have to say, leave
the roots on, let them
dangle*

*And the dirt
Just to make clear
where they came from.*

C. Olsen • “Streetfare Journal”

Preparing the Ground

The Adult Education Doctoral Program aims to provide a context and climate of inquiry which supports the development of your own identity as an adult education practitioner and researcher. The Critical Engagement Project (CEP) embodies this most fully and represents the culmination of your own original work. It is an activity which builds on and grows out of the ground of all you have learned from life, from work, from academic study. This introductory chapter will give you an overview of the process—what you might anticipate and hope to accomplish.

Begin with your own innate sense of curiosity and wonder. What do you feel passionate about? What disturbs you? Rilke, the poet, spoke of learning to love the questions. What are your questions? What were the hopes that first brought you to the doctoral program? What are your unique gifts, talents, and energies, your “original medicine?” Return to all the materials you have written for the program thus far—including your application essay—for possible clues.

In the first stage of the creative process, notice what you attend to, use everything in your environment. Create a vessel for your alchemical creative process. Buy a blank book, open a computer file, get a spiral notebook that is just for this purpose—your research ideas. Begin writing as soon as possible—phrases, fragments, hunches, memories. Begin collecting—quotes,

* This chapter is adapted with permission from materials created by the Organizational Development and Transformation Program of the California Institute of Integral Studies, 765 Ashbury Street, San Francisco, California 94117.

dreams, speeches, conversations with friends, poems, sketches, meditations. Track and utilize information from all your multiple intelligences—your bodily knowing, your memories, analytic and theoretical pieces you have developed over time in various contexts.

One research scholar has a woven basket with 3x5 cards beside it. She tosses them in—blue for quotes, green for dreams, red for original phrases—and then collects them at the end of the week to assimilate in her computer journal. Another works visually—tearing out pictures, words, colors which he assembles in idea collages. One colleague maintains a file folder of work experiences and organizational issues that lie outside the margins of her specific project but are intriguing issues, or perplexing dimensions of her work. She thinks of it as a sketch book for works in progress. This is the stage of seeking the pattern which connects.

Planting Seeds

Cultivate a sense of your own Work, capital *W*. Take time to review the kernels you have gathered from your academic studies, your experience as a practitioner, your journal reflections, and the idea-catchers referred to in the previous section. Speak and write about these ideas. Talk them over with the cohort, and with your family and friends. Set “idea exploration” time with faculty and work colleagues. Plant and water the seed-thoughts you are generating. Give them time to germinate—underground, without the pressure of product.



You are the spider weaving this project out of your own body, your own history, your own engagement with literature, with the field. Although the CEP is required for completion of the doctoral program, it is also an opportunity to pursue, in depth, an area with intensity and thoroughness that is a rare privilege in the span of most human lives.

For many the CEP will take on a mythic dimension. It is a rite of passage, a time of discovering one’s self, reclaiming identity, and discerning the meaning of life at new, unexplored levels. For some it will be the hero/heroine’s journey. For others it will be an Odyssey, a pearl of great price, a shaman’s initiation, or a journey into the unexplored reaches of space. However you give meaning to the process, the CEP stands as an invitation to take up your Work in the world.

Timing

Some hints on timing. Begin now. In your first year of the doctoral program take time to consolidate your history. The second chapter of this manual will provide you with some questions aimed at revealing this history to you. What

are you leaving behind? What are you moving towards? What research have you done in the past that is part of that underground river of inquiry that is guiding your lifework and will be shaping your CEP? What is your song?

In your early coursework, ask what theorists and ideas capture you? Let your coursework help you to expand your ways of knowing and ways of looking at the world and your experience of it. Talk with others who are more advanced—volunteer to help on one of their projects. Every mode of knowing has its own moral trajectory. It is important to consider early on the process of inquiry, the how, as well as the what. You will find further fodder for your imagination in the many resources listed in the bibliography at the end of this manual.

If finding your voice and expressing that in clear written form is difficult for you, consider taking a writing class. Utilize all class writing assignments to improve your writing skills and to move your sense of Work, capital *W*, further. Look for potential research areas in all your coursework. Find out what others have done in areas of interest to you. Explore the library and the growing resources of the Web. Undertake literature reviews in topics that really concern you. Go beyond the assigned or required readings, let yourself become possessed or captured by a topic. Find the life force in the field of adult education *for you*.

As you near the completion of your first year's coursework, step back. What has been most satisfying for you in your learning expedition? What disappointments or peak experiences did the work offer that you might take further or resolve in a CEP? Is the person you are becoming experiencing "jet lag" in relation to your self-concept? If so, the CEP is an opportunity to close the gap. What is the future which is calling to you? How can this project provide the structure to acquire certain skills, knowledge, or technical expertise that you want to cultivate at this time? As you begin refining the focus of your study, what approaches to research are a good fit for your project and your mode of inquiry? Take responsibility for your learning.

Collaboration

Create a support system early. Find the composition that works for you. Include significant relationships and family in your early configuration, invite their participation in creating the support structures. Consider how this project may impact their lives and plan for that. Create peer support groups, especially within the cohort, for early and all stages of the project. Consider other special relationships that might be part of your research circle—potential consumers of your research, colleagues or senior practitioners. Do you need technical support or skills: computer, writing, editing, graphics, statistics consultation? Think of whom you know that could help with those skills. Begin talking about your ideas with mentors and others whose thought and work you admire. It is from these relationships, begun informally, that you will later develop a project team to support your work. These collaborators will be discussed more fully in chapter three.

Identify the faculty who are most helpful to you, most grounded in your own areas of interest and will be able to assist you in an experiential learning project where you are self-initiating and self-directing. Think of the skills or qualities each potential project team member can bring, whether faculty, peers, or outside resource persons—knowledge of content, method, inspiration, etc. It is your responsibility to make clear what you need from each member of your team. Take charge of your team and your research project! Begin conversations early about your topic and ways you might work together. The doctoral program replicates an adult education practice. While faculty can offer support and challenge at various points, you are the primary navigator of this adventure. There is no way to anticipate the turns and bends in the river until you commit to the process. Once you commit there is genius, boldness, power in it!

Finding a topic

Every stage in the CEP calls forth its own lessons. The lessons of this first stage are those of soul searching and exploring. We have been focusing on an inward exploration up to this point, building on your own experiences as educator, as friend, as citizen, as nurturer of your peers—and will return to this in the next two chapters. Parallel to the process of “going in” (examining your history, noticing what and who is calling to you) is the process of “going out.” The exploration and adventure components of this stage include the substance of your discourse with colleagues and faculty, as you undertake your own environmental scan. The possibilities are infinite. Think of the communities of practice to which you belong—overlapping circles of family, college, church, city, nation, and world. There are opportunities for questioning—action research, collaborative projects, program evaluation—in every system, context, and network of which you are a participant.

Carefully chosen, the CEP can be a bridge to a paid position, a publication, an entrepreneurial venture you have wanted to launch, or a social change mission that will focus your energy for the next decade. Whatever you choose will also choose you and begin to shape and change your horizon of possibility. This is a magical process.

Cultivation

In chapter four, you will examine in greater detail the specific ingredients of your CEP and begin outlining these in a concept paper. Once you have chosen a general topic area, it is like selecting a continent. There are still many levels of refinement to focus in on the specific bio-region and then the specific street address or mountainside which is “home” for your project. At this point you are becoming more intimate with your own process. The following are some filters to consider at this stage. They are a check list of possibilities; use only those that apply.

Do you have a clear purpose? If you do, practice the discipline of describing it in two sentences to someone unfamiliar with the field. Write a one page

prospectus which describes what you have chosen, how you are going to go about it, and why this has heart and meaning for you. Share this one page distillation with friends, colleagues, and faculty who might serve on a project team. It takes dedication, concentration, and commitment to complete a CEP. Does this topic have the juice that can sustain your endeavors—meaning, delight, passion, world-changing, useful, whatever qualities sustain life for you?

Does the process of inquiry you are considering fit the topic? Is it the simplest most direct way to investigate the terrain you have identified as your special home? Have you begun the groundwork to familiarize yourself with alternative approaches—qualitative, action research, program evaluation, case study, phenomenological study, ethnography, etc.? Your approach will need to match your preferred style of learning and take into account your gifts and talents—solo, collaborative, visual thinker, kinesthetic performer, introverted, divergent and philosophical or practical and applied.

Take stock of your resources, both time and money. Review your timeline, weekly schedule, money, grant possibilities. Do you have access to data, adult learners or materials that you have overlooked? Are there people you know or opportunities you have access to that are not yet connected to this project?

Create a support structure, a container for your project. Find a place to work: a room, an alcove, a place in the library. Create a time to work: clear your schedule, find a work rhythm that is appropriate to your life situation.

Evaluating as You Go

In the fifth chapter you will ask yourself, “how can I know I am doing good work?” Begin now to name the criteria by which your work is to be judged. There are qualities you would expect to find in any project which is both *critical* and *engaged*—qualities embedded in all your doctoral work. The CEP is a challenge to the taken-for-granted world of your experience. You seek to dive beneath the surface, probe the depths, and reveal hidden dimensions of assumptions—your own and those of others—about “the way things are.” Your inquiry is grounded in your practice, both in the work you do and in the work you are preparing to do through your research.

Your collaborators can help hold you to the task, keep your attention from wandering, remind you of the criteria you have set for your “good work.” They will also judge your accomplishments, determine the extent to which you have remained true to your project and to your collaborators as well.

The CEP is a journey unlike any other you will undertake in your lifetime. You will travel new and unmarked roads, encounter barriers and unexpected oases along the way. Each story is different, as you will discover in the “allegories” of chapter six. You will not find your story here; it is yet to be written. Hopefully, you will add it later at journey’s end.

It is always good to anticipate the end, and so you will in chapter seven. You have the rituals of completion to look forward to, the celebration of all you have accomplished and a new beginning as you start now to live out the real product of your research—your practice as an adult educator.

A Quest Grounded in Practice

The CEP, grounded in a process of collaborative and sustained inquiry and discovery, is the flowering of your work in this doctoral program. You begin with fundamental questions about yourself, about your commitments, and about the world you hope to help construct. Embedded within these questions is your life story, your values, and your vision for the future. You approach these engaging questions looking for a better way, a more holistic way, one that is more attuned to psycho-spiritual and multi-cultural views of the world, and one that promotes the interplay of creative, intuitive knowledge with rational and reflective praxis. The aim of your work is to advance your inquiry in a thoughtful, critical, and reflective way so that understanding deepens and matures. With this project—your CEP—you develop not only knowledge and skill, but *the Art* of naming the world and making history.

2. Three Engagements

Everything is autobiography, even if one writes something that is 'totally objective.' The fact that it's a subject that seizes you makes it autobiographical.

Lisel Mueller, Pulitzer poet

*Who was that CEP I saw you with last night?
That was no CEP, that was my life!*

Anonymous

Beginning with a Question

In traditional doctoral programs a dissertation is frequently the final academic hurdle unrelated to coursework, unrelated to practice as a lived experience, and expressed in a highly academic and frequently abstract style. In this doctoral program, however, the dissertation has been recast as sustained intellectual inquiry across the curriculum. To emphasize its radical refocusing of doctoral research on practice, this activity has been named the “Critical Engagement Project.” All research is a reflection on practice, but often practice is viewed abstractly, commodified, objectified without reference to social, cultural, or political context. The Critical Engagement Project will ground research in critical reflection on your life—day-to-day experience—and foster significant engagement with the world.

Your Critical Engagement Project will be undertaken throughout the curriculum and linked directly with your coursework. It will result in the production of knowledge related to practice, grounded in your life experiences. Its modes of expression can be varied both in terms of format (not limited to text, but using a variety of media) and in terms of organization (ranging from a number of smaller, interrelated works to a larger, integral text).

Three engagements, each expressed in a question, undergird this research. *Who am I? What are the commitments embedded in my current practice? Who am I becoming?* The first two engage you with your present and your past. In the first you seek to understand yourself and the forces that have helped to shape your present identity. In the second, you try to understand your practice—what you currently do, the forces that have shaped your work, and

the values that underlie your practice. These two engagements are dialectical—each informing the other. In the third engagement, you look toward the future, the goal being to forge a new and/or expanded identity and practice.

Who am I?

Here, with the first question, you focus on the ways your personal history and professional activities inevitably intertwine to shape your identity—who are you as a person, as an educator, as a researcher. You build on your work in the “life history” course (ACE 602) in which you study your formation as a person and as an educator. What cultural and psychological forces shaped your identity, ideology and practice? How did your interactions with family, peers, culture, religion, class, ethnicity shape your foundational values as an educator? What was the role of gender in your identity formation? What moments along your life history trajectory were transformative for you—helped you see yourself and the world in a new way and suggested new possibilities for you? What kinds of critically reflective episodes did you experience?

In your coursework, you will explore biographical and ideological analysis, as well as perspectives drawn from the literature of developmental psychology and critical social theory; hopefully these will inform your autobiographical analysis. These perspectives now help you to explore a particular dialectic—how your autobiography represents the working out of social and cultural processes while at the same time representing your own existential uniqueness. Identity formation must be studied as an interconnected social and psychological process. In asking “who am I?” the role of history, culture, ethnicity, class and gender is investigated in the context of my life. You also interrogate your development of moral, ethical and political consciousness and capabilities. In this, individual identity formation is understood as a social, as much as an individual process.

You also look at how your life and experiences as a learner shaped your engagement with the field of adult education. You might focus specifically on your decision to join this doctoral program, what led up to that choice, and then study your own engagement in the program through a critically reflective process.

What are the commitments embedded in my current practice?

In this question, you examine your current practice, especially as an educator, with a view to illuminating the personal and societal values your practice preserves, nourishes, impedes, or openly challenges. You analyze how your practice springs from, and connects to, your personal history and identity. You clarify the key assumptions and organizing visions on which your practice is built and trace how these were autobiographically formed. What were the sources of these assumptions and visions—experience, authority, theory, or something else? You examine the extent to which your

assumptions and visions were culturally and politically sculpted, and the extent to which they might have been framed by formal theory and philosophy in the field? How were these assumptions and visions tested, altered, disbanded or enlarged over time?

You come to analyze your practice as a political activity—how issues of power pervaded and influenced what you have done, how your practice promoted democratic processes, whose interests your practice served, and so on. You learn to focus particularly on uncovering assumptions of power and hegemony in your own practice and document the distortions these assumptions have produced.

You identify ethical dilemmas you have faced, or are facing, in your practice and you illuminate how you analyzed and tried to work through these. You also examine and, where necessary, critique the false dichotomy that is frequently made between personal and professional life. Some of you will have already bridged the gap. For others, a clear demarcation would exist between what you see as your life as a practitioner and your life as partner, parent, and citizen. Building on the work done in addressing the first question concerning your “engagement with self,” you probe the accuracy of this separation. How can an educator leave one identity at the college, corporation or community center at the end of the day and assume another identity elsewhere, and what are the costs of this attempted separation?

You have begun to analyze how your practice embodies, reflects, contradicts and challenges key adult educational principles and values (social responsibility, critical reflection, collaborative work etc.). Through your coursework you will study formal histories and theories of adult education to determine the extent to which these illuminate and explain your own unique practice. This coursework allows you to review the literature in the field of adult education, with special attention to ethical and political issues. You will come to understand assumptions and ideologies underlying different models of adult education practice and how these have acted to promote or impede democratic values and processes.

With this question you will recall and document your learning about practice—the kinds of practical, emotional, ontological, epistemological, and political learning about practice in which you have engaged throughout your life as an adult educator. You will analyze how this learning about practice had occurred, comparing and contrasting this to different models of adult learning in the literature.

Who am I becoming?

In this question you seek to forge a new identity and to reformulate your practice. Fortified with a better understanding of self, knowledge of the ethical and political import of your current practice, knowledge of alternative visions and practices within the field of adult education, and constrained by the material conditions of your life, you seek to refashion yourself, remake your practice, and provide rationale and justification for such reformulation.

What new identities are you forging? What sources (factors) have contributed to this reformulation—for example, colleagues, literature, an examination of self, or the exploration of practice.

What aspects of your practice would you retain, fortify, or change? What new practices would you incorporate? To aid in this process, in the Reflective Practice Seminars (ACE 605) you might examine areas of practice outside your immediate context or undertake an in-depth analysis of your own or an allied area of practice. This would involve you in an exploration of relevant literature. You would document how your own thinking and practice changed, or could be changed, as a result of this analysis.

This question urges you to examine other sources (factors) that could have contributed to this reformulation. How does this reformulation reflect changing and/or expanding ethical and political commitments? How does this reformulation reflect new and/or expanding visions and assumptions about adult education?

CEP and Dissertation

The Critical Engagement Project is a serious, sustained, thoughtful and coordinated engagement by doctoral students with a particular theme, idea or project which they wish to study in depth. This sustained engagement is not called a dissertation, since that word carries much baggage—troubling associations with “establishing distance” and “objectivity,” neither of which are consistent with the three engagements. On the other hand, some doctoral students, past and present, have produced Critical Engagement Projects without so identifying their work. They have infused their dissertations with a critical sense of self, their commitments, and their vision of both self and the world they seek to build through their inquiries. *Who am I? What are the commitments embedded in my current practice? Who am I becoming?*

Not all dissertations—in fact, few—reflect concern for such questions. Many, fearing that self, commitment, and vision would “bias” their research, deny the relevance of the three engagements. They affect a neutral stance before an empirically “given” world, and seek to understand that world without commitment, without altering what they see by their presence.

The CEP and dissertation differ primarily in that the former demands engagement—whereas the later does not. The CEP demands more, not less.

The CEP *may* also differ from a dissertation in its form. As a project, the CEP certainly reflects the same sustained, rigorous and systematic inquiry. The resulting product might be a document resembling a traditional doctoral thesis. However, a CEP is as likely to take the form of a series of articles for publication, a media production—film, CD-ROM, web site—or a journalistic narrative which describes and critically evaluates significant actions taken—development of a community learning center, organization of a broad-based network of educators working for social change, nurturing a learning organization.

In each instance, the CEP *is* a dissertation—scholarship with commitment.

3. Collaborators

A true human inquiry needs to be based firmly in the experience of those it purports to understand, to involve a collaboration between 'researcher' and 'subjects' so that they may work together as co-researchers.

John Rowan and Peter Reason • *Human Inquiry*

The Journey

You have begun the journey, and you are not alone. You seek to understand self, the commitments of your current practice and the possible worlds you might bring into being through your work. Your engagement with a vision of self and the world you seek to build requires the nurturing and sustaining support of others. It is a world socially produced and your engagements emerge only through discourse.

To engage in sustained inquiry is to become a partner in discourse. You have entered into multiple communities of inquirers, not only in the midst of fellow research scholars, but equally among the communities in which you live and work. Collaboration—finding common cause, identifying mutually supportive commitments, providing support through critique as well as affirmation—is essential to a Critical Engagement Project.

Forms of Collaboration

Collaboration has been a core element in all your inquiries and studies thus far, not merely as a pedagogical process, but as the quintessential heuristic in critically engaged social research. You have realized this collaboration in many ways and on multiple levels, with peers, with faculty, with the communities of practice in which you are engaged. This collaboration now continues into your CEP. The following are three potentially different ways you might think about a project in collaboration with your peers.

▲ *Fully Integrated Project*

You might decide to work together with a group of two or more research scholars on a single project. The project emerges slowly through mutual and critical dialogue over many months. An evolving sense of shared purpose and

vision suggests a common project—one which can sustain you and your collaborators over time. Each of you accepts responsibility for the whole, attending to each detail as your own. You might discuss each element of your project in depth before ever setting pen to paper. You might begin with individual drafts which are subsequently critiqued, perhaps with a redaction prepared by another member of the group. You find your own rhythm and style of collaboration in planning and implementing your work, whether your final product is a document or not.

▲ *Linked Project*

A group of two or more might decide to work on related parts of a project that together make up a whole—somewhat like authors contributing chapters to a book. Instead of an editor connecting the pieces to make a unified whole, you would meet with your fellow contributors to discuss the themes emerging in your work, find areas of overlap, identify unexplored areas needing further work and discover connections and contradictions.

▲ *Mutually Supportive Projects*

You might find that your commitments and vision are insufficiently congruent with those of your fellow research scholars. Therefore you decide to work on your own individual project. Even here collaboration at multiple levels is required and the level of commitment and mutual support is the same as in the *fully integrated* and the *linked* projects. You will need to identify those with whom you have found common cause. Your inquiry and the inquiries of one or two other peers would be supported by a mutual commitment to support one another's work. You would meet regularly, share emergent ideas, raise critical questions, review drafts, support each other through the process and “kick butt” when needed. The team's projects are not necessarily related, but in the mutual self-selection of collaborators you seek to create a group with with broadly common interests.

In each of these instances—*fully integrated project*, *linked project*, and *mutually supportive projects*—you should keep a journal of your collaboration. What did you contribute to the project(s) of others? How did others support and nurture your work? Your journal will record an emerging shared history which, if it comes to full flower, will transform the three questions of engagement: Who are *we*? What are *our* commitments? What are *we* becoming? This record of your shared journey becomes part of the documentation for evaluating a CEP.

The Project Team

Peer collaboration is a structural element of the adult education doctoral program. It consistently informs the rhythm of course work as well as the CEP. The level of support which this structured collaboration provides will be greater for some, less for others. Nonetheless, you are expected to seek out collaborators in your inquiry—not only among peers, but also from resource

persons in other institutions and in the community. In order to emphasize the collaborative nature of the CEP, the doctoral committee of a traditional dissertation is here called a “project team”—collaborators who will sustain you on your journey, provide needed expertise, and critique your work. If you are engaged in a *fully integrated project*, you would be well served by a single project team. If you are engaged in a *linked project*, you also might prefer one project team to support your work and the work of your colleagues. In any case, it is your responsibility to identify and establish the rationale for the members of your project team. There are some guidelines that inform this selection.

▲ *Core Faculty*

First, your team must include two of the core faculty members in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education. One of these persons will be primary and will work most closely with you throughout your project, meeting with you (individually or as a group) regularly, providing ongoing critique and assessment of your work. The second faculty member would review all the products of your inquiry, make recommendations to you and the primary core faculty in writing, and participate in meetings of the full project team.

You will participate fully in the selection of these core faculty, negotiating your preferences with the faculty as a whole.

It is the responsibility of the core faculty on your team to determine when or whether a Critical Engagement Project is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation. Other members of the project team will both support and critique your work, but are advisory to the core faculty in this final evaluation.

▲ *Peers*

If you are working on a project that is *fully integrated*, you would include the peers involved in the project itself on the project team. Similarly, if you are working on a *linked project*, whether you chose one project team or separate teams, you would include your co-researchers as team members. If you are doing your own project and are supported by a group of peers, you may want to include one or more of these peers on your project team.

Peer members would provide you with support and advice as requested, especially as related to the CEP process.

In addition to core faculty and peers, each project team should also include members selected from either or both of the two groups below.

▲ *Outside Faculty*

Optionally, external faculty members or experts may be chosen from other academic institutions or areas of practice (or from other departments of

National-Louis University). Such team members, if selected, would provide you with support and advice, especially as related to their own areas of expertise.

▲ *Community*

Mindful that collaboration in research embraces the “subjects” of our inquiry as co-researchers, you will probably find it helpful to include one or two representatives of the communities with which you are engaged both as practitioner and researcher. These team members will provide you with support and advice, especially as related to the community’s interest in an endogenous research project. Their collaboration in both “thinking through” and implementing your project will greatly strengthen confidence in the usefulness of your work.

Preparing for the Long Haul

Collaborative inquiry takes a great deal of time and commitment. You are about to begin a long and difficult journey, but the presence of others—your collaborators—will sustain you and give you the strength you need. Use your project team frequently and well. Make clear to each member of the team what you need and what you expect from them. Hold the team to its commitments, even as the team will hold you to yours.

It will be your decision as to how often your project team will meet. You might prefer to work with individual members of the team, relying on each person’s special strength. At times the dialogue and exchange—point and counterpoint—among your team members will be needed to sustain you. Meetings can be arranged by teleconference. Between such times, you will want to find a way to stay in touch with all the members of the team, letting them know your progress or where you need assistance—perhaps through a monthly newsletter, a cumulative journal of your journey, or some other means.

Your strength in this collaborative venture lies in knowing that you are not traveling alone.

4. The Concept Paper

I wouldn't want what I may have said or written to be seen as laying any claims to totality. I don't try to universalize what I say; conversely what I don't say isn't meant to be thereby disqualified as being of no importance. My work takes place between unfinished abutments and anticipatory strings of dots.

Michel Foucault • *Questions of Method*

A Plan of Action

You continue honing your ability to focus on research into self and into varied fields of practice by preparing a provisional plan of action. This is the purpose of your CEP concept paper. By further engaging in communities of practice, you will inquire more deeply into the three questions. *Who am I? What are the commitments embedded in my current practice? Who am I becoming?*

During this engagement process you will uncover areas within practice that are perplexing, intriguing, or very troubling to you, while other areas provide you with significant energy. Some areas you may pursue in depth while others not at all, depending on your own determination of priority. You are likely to find a number of methods of research are required to carry out your study, as well as methods for examining your practice. The concept paper will guide your decisions and assist those collaborators who join you on this journey.

A Rationale for Continuing

You started the CEP when you attended the Doctoral Admissions weekend, or maybe earlier—as you read program materials, both printed and on the Web site. The first Summer Institute formally will have introduced the CEP process and each subsequent term will have provided additional frameworks and materials that may be used or included. Thus work on a CEP has been integrated into your courses of study.

In preparation for the second Summer Institute, you will want to re-visit your own works-in-progress. Re-read your writings, noting undeveloped areas, questions asked but not answered well enough, insights gained. Note areas of

frustration, times when your energy was high, feelings of satisfaction, feelings of dissatisfaction. Involve others in this reflective process. Begin to create energy about what can be, who you may become, what you can accomplish, and what you can contribute to your field. Remember and reflect on why you enrolled in this adult education doctoral program. How can these intensive years of study assist you in attaining clarity of vision, accomplishing your goals, establishing new goals and refining the purpose of your work?

To prepare for your concept paper, first reflect on your rationale for continuing with the CEP, indeed continuing with the doctoral program. Again, reference earlier work, critique your work, cut and paste, or append to it as “mostly” completed pieces that may be later incorporated into the CEP. These are some of the questions that might inform your rationale for continuing:

- What is your vision? How do you view yourself in relation to your work, study, beliefs, aspirations and the role(s) you have assumed in society and in the world. You prepared a narrative which included your vision when you entered the program. How has your vision changed? *Who am I becoming?*
- In reviewing your significant writings—those that have challenged you, shaped your thinking about yourself and your practice—, what have you gained in each instance, what have you learned through making mistakes or taking risks? What overall impact has your work had on your current formulations?
- *How am I constructing my practice? How do we construct and use knowledge?* Which of the various frameworks you have studied thus far have been most productive for you, provided a base from which to reflect on self and practice, and opened you to further in-depth work and study.

With answers to these and similar questions firmly in mind you are ready to begin.

Ingredients for a Concept Paper

Your concept paper might be a tool like a microscope, telescope, binoculars, camera, video camera, tape recorder, a periodic table of elements, or a recipe...

Somewhat like a recipe for certain food dishes, at least for some cooks, ingredients may not be added in exactly the same proportions nor in the same order each time it is prepared. Sometimes certain ingredients are left out and others added by the chef, to achieve desired effects. Here are some recommended ingredients for your concept paper:

▲ *Expressing Personal Interests and Concerns*

The concept paper is an expression of you as researcher. *Who am I? What are my commitments? How is the knowledge I seek an expression of my commitments?* Contrary to the age old maxim concerning the pursuit of “knowledge for its own sake,” research scholars are not disinterested. Certainly, your interest in pursuing this project is much more than fulfilling the requirements of a doctoral degree! There is passion in the work you are about to undertake—a “fire in the belly” which drives and inspires you. You begin by taking stock of this compelling interest and then harness the energy inside, make it work for you.

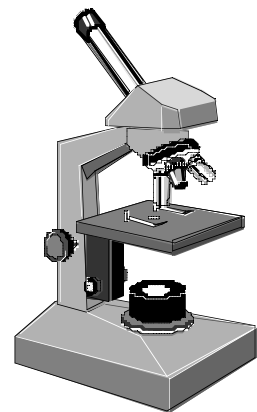
Be clear about your interests—how you and others will benefit from your work. Document as best you can the nature and scope of the experiences or concerns which led to your inquiry. Account for your inquiry’s evolution. Discuss the factors—historical, cultural, psychological, and biological—that may have contributed to its current direction. *Who am I?* You might also discuss also how you have come to identify your interests—how these interests are manifest in your work and life. *What are the commitments embedded in my current practice?*

After careful consideration of these questions, you may discover that you do not see the path you want to travel as clearly as you thought. The destination might be far off or lost in fog. You might be without an adequate map or road signs. Early on you will need to take stock—reflect on the magnitude of the journey and the resources at hand. What do you know and what is unknown to you? In all likelihood, much more will be unknown than known. Your prior understanding of the nature and scope of the terrain and knowing what you *don’t know* will increase the likelihood that you will identify some of the most relevant questions before you start—questions that will guide your initial steps.

▲ *Finding the Focus*

The concept paper is like a microscope, a telescope, a camera—devices which help you to illuminate, enlarge, visualize, amplify, clarify, capture and extend images. In this way, the concept paper is as much a tool for you to deepen your own understanding and knowledge before setting out on a journey as it is a way of communicating with your collaborators.

At times, when you begin a journey, you know clearly where you are headed. You are headed for Chicago or New York or Halifax. At other times you might *think* you are clear about the destination—you are the *Santa Maria* navigating a shorter route to India—, but something unexpected happens along the way that radically alters your focus.



There are still other times when it is the entire forest that invites you, not a particular clearing or brook. You want to wander, explore, let your knowledge of the forest build gradually and cumulatively. You may make your own path or follow one made by others. The path you follow might divide and you decide to follow each path in turn to its final destination until you find not one, but many focuses to your journey. None of this might become clear to you until journey's end.

In your concept paper you will certainly want to identify the forest you wish to explore. Your focus—a clear sense of the destination—might also guide you from the beginning, but it as likely might come at the end of your CEP—like an aerial overview might reveal that the circuitous route of the trails you made and followed were, after all, the shortest distance between two points.

▲ *Joining with Discourse in the Field*

Your CEP is a gateway to discourse within fields of practice and inquiry. You might think of it as your first word spoken in dialogue with so many others—your collaborators in this doctoral program, as well as colleagues and co-workers. Some of these partners in dialogue might be unknown to you, many you will never meet. Nonetheless, you will engage with them in dialogue all the same. You will include their voices in your work by your careful review and critique of the documents they have produced. Eventually, your work will join theirs and be part of the discourse with which future generations will engage.

In examining the writings of others, you will want to look broadly at first—not assuming that all adult education literature is relevant to your journey, and certainly not assuming that work outside the field is irrelevant. Learn to scan libraries, the Internet, your own writings and those of your peers, in the same way a traveler might scan the horizon from a hill-top, learning the terrain before deciding on the most rewarding path to take. Ignore nothing, but attend mainly to those things that speak to you. At such moments you might ask:

- Have others traveled on this journey before me and, if so, what are the unexplored regions I can explore and chart?
- Do the reflections of others help to clear up any of my initial ambiguities or confusions about the journey?
- Do they confirm what, for me, had been merely assumptions?
- What tools and approaches to knowledge creation and development have others used in undertaking similar journeys (research design, methods, and techniques for data collection, analysis, and reporting) that might guide me in the selection of my tools?

Begin including the voices that speak to you now—in your concept paper—, not as a separate section, but interspersed with the flow of your own thought. Preserve the give and take of dialogue in your writing. Be sure you document every contributor to your work—those whose words are quoted or incorporated into your own text here and in the CEP—must be acknowledged

and cited using your preferred referencing style—Chicago Manual of Style, APA, your own format—with consistency.

▲ *Making Sense with a Common Language*

Dialogue is only possible with an agreed-upon common language. Through collaboration and your engagement with discourse in the field you will gather definitions that guide your inquiry and allow you to speak with clarity. Words can be used to conceal, as well as to reveal. Many words are contested—having multiple and contradictory meanings. You must harness the words you use, give them meanings that will take you where you want to go. Your collaborators will help you with this.

▲ *Constructing a Map*

If your destination is known at the beginning of your journey, you will want a map—a conceptual framework to guide you. Your map will tell you a great deal about the journey, its pitfalls and its pleasures. There will always be surprises! Without them what would be the point of this adventure? Nonetheless, the map might help you answer several important questions:

- Can I get there from here? Is my journey feasible?
- Who will I travel with on this journey?
- What are the key signs and landmarks I should look for?
- What is the most direct route to my destination—how can I streamline my approach?
- Are there any uncharted areas which will require special care and attention—gaps in knowledge which might exist, or assumptions or claims that are unsubstantiated?

If your destination is unknown, you will need to construct a map as you go. You might not know where you are in the larger scheme of things, but you do know where you are in relation to where you were yesterday—what sailors would call “dead reckoning.” You are making the road by walking. Your conceptual framework might emerge in a journal of your travels, or it might be constructed at the end—but it is this map, no matter when it is produced, which will tie together the myriad threads of your wanderings and make clear both the depth and the breath of work you have accomplished.

▲ *Valuing the Practical*

You are not pursuing knowledge for its own sake—your passion drives your inquiry... every time! What will be done when the journey is completed? Of what use are the map, the sketches and rubbings, the products of your CEP? Of what use is your work to others and, most importantly, of what use is it to you. *Who am I becoming? How do I intend to live out my evolving commitments?* You should begin asking how you will use the anticipated products of your inquiry to satisfy your interests—the interests you documented earlier.

In most traditional dissertations, this commitment to utility is not required. Operating under the “knowledge-for-its-own-sake” dictum, most traditional dissertations require only that the researcher state the results. Decisions about whether and how results might be used are usually relegated to a section called “recommendations” where the emphasis is on listing what can be done—usually by others—, rather than how it can be accomplished or the author’s role in its accomplishment. In most traditional dissertations, the researcher’s obligation ceases once the final draft is submitted and approved.

The CEP, on the other hand, requires that you accept responsibility for the full flowering of your work in practice. You might not be able to predict the results of your work at the beginning, and so your knowledge of the practical outcomes of the journey will be understandably vague.

The community members on your project team will help you see these outcomes more clearly. Ask them to keep you grounded, to pull you back if you seem to ascend into the ether of merely academic discourse. Find common interests, common cause with them. Question them and yourself frequently with each step you take: What are *we* becoming through this journey? What impact does the journey hold for *our* practice? Even if the answers to these questions are unclear at the beginning, the utility of your work should not be an afterthought. Let these practical questions accompany you each step of the way. It is in your answers to these questions that you will come to articulate and evaluate your engagement.

▲ *Reflecting on Philosophy and Ethics*

There are philosophical and ethical implications for all the choices you make—about how your work will be used as much as about tools (research design, methods, and techniques). Your choices reveal your assumptions about the nature of reality, about knowing and the process of knowing. These choices also reflect how you choose to involve your collaborators—peers, your project team, the “subjects” of your study, those you believe will find your work useful.

Do you objectify the individuals you are studying or do you recognize them as co-researchers, having an active decision-making role in every phase of the journey from map-making to selecting the path to follow? Why have you made these decisions? Recognize that your choice of appropriate tools (research design, methods) will be constrained by the emerging focus of your inquiry. Choices made now will limit choices made later. Each choice requires careful thought, especially in relation to your commitments. *What are the commitments under-girding my practice as a researcher?*

There are so many choices to make, and with each choice you should provide a rationale—the philosophical and ethical reasons for your decision. Discussions in ACE 640 about *Who am I as a Researcher?* should prove helpful here.

Your description of rationale will be sketchy in your concept paper, limited to decisions you are able to make at the beginning of your journey. That rationale has to become fuller and more precise before you begin gathering information and data from the “subjects” of your study (see Appendix I, Human Subjects Review).

▲ *Admitting to Limitations*

There are limitations to every journey. You have selected the forest and not the ocean in which to wander. No matter how wide the horizon that surrounds you, you still occupy a place and time which is unlike any other. You only have the time, resources, and know-how to explore this forest, not the universe—you have the rest of your life for that! Even as you come to identify your focus, you must also admit, as limitations, those areas left uncharted or unexamined—journeys untaken or left to be taken at some future time.

▲ *Gathering Resources*

The most important resource in your travels will be your collaborators. Select them well, especially your project team. Identify those you want on your project team early and write a rationale for their selection. Some members might already be your collaborators in study or in practice. Others you will need to recruit. In negotiating with each potential member, be clear about your expectations of them. You want them to feel as passionately about this journey as you do. You want them to affirm your interests, but you also want them to challenge—to push you to discover what is just beyond your reach, go farther, go deeper.

Looking to the coursework in semesters ahead, reviewing preliminary course work plans and outlines, begin to anticipate how inquiry into those areas will contribute to your CEP. Note questions and needs that you have identified that could be addressed and therefore included in those future courses. There will be a relationship between the your CEP and the modules covered in the coming months.

Know what your journey will cost—in time, in tools, in energy. Develop a graphic timeline, a list of resources you will need—both people and materials—and where they can be found. It's always good to plan ahead, as best you can. You cannot anticipate everything you will need at the onset, but don't let that stop you from trying!

▲ *Seasoning to Taste*

Back to the recipe metaphor... planning menus, following recipes or making as you go, gathering and mixing the ingredients, adding spices and herbs with their varied nuances and combinations—all these can bring joy to preparing a feast. You and your fellow collaborators can stir and blend all these and other ingredients into a dish called the CEP concept paper.

Revisions and Additions

Your concept paper is a working document. You will revise and add to it as the seeds you have planted begin to grow. Certainly the courses on literature review (ACE 650), methods (ACE 660), and data collection and analysis (ACE 670) in subsequent semesters will allow you make more informed choices and to see the road you are making more clearly. Your concept paper is a guide, not a blueprint. Let your concept paper adapt to the journey when your discoveries require it to do so. But as a guide, keep it close at hand as you now begin—until you reach the journey's end.

5. Critique

The predicament of the century is that so long as there is inquiry and so long as it is not the case that any inquiry whatsoever is precisely as good as any other, one must adopt some evaluative attitude toward fields of inquiry and their objects.

M.B. Wiseman • *The Ecstasies of Roland Barthes*

Recognizing Good Work

You are not expected to have said the last word. You *are* expected to have said something important, well worth hearing—something critical and engaged. But what do these high flown words mean? How will you know if your work is good enough?

The doctoral program mirrors the community of discourse you seek to join. This community not only supports your work, encourages you to reach farther and dig deeper, but also judges the value of what you have accomplished. Your work is always evaluated by others—faculty, your peers, community—, measured against prior expectations, weighed in dialogue and critique. This manual has already laid groundwork for evaluating your CEP—a project of sustained, rigorous, and systematic inquiry.

You began the CEP when you entered the program as you thought more and more deeply about your engagements with self, your commitments, and the future you sought to bring into being through those commitments. This work you have undertaken is *sustained* inquiry, linked directly to your coursework, intensifying over the three years of the program, coming to a focus in what, for you, will be the culmination and symbolic expression of your doctoral journey.

The CEP is inquiry that is carefully thought through and clearly presented. It gives serious attention to the meaning of words. All inferences are clearly stated with supporting evidence; all assumptions are laid bare with the grounds informing them laid out for all to see. Omissions of inconvenient evidence, unquestioned assumptions and overlooked ethical issues will all have been acknowledged and addressed. The CEP is *rigorous* research—that is, strenuous, not easily knocked off, intellectually demanding.

From its first articulation in a concept paper, the CEP is thoughtful, carefully planned and implemented according to an articulated rationale. It is a journey in which each step is somehow connected to the previous one—not in a linear sequential way, but in a way defined by the journey as a whole. The CEP is *systematic* study because it is informed by a clear rationale, where each step taken builds upon the last.

From its name, the Critical Engagement Project is both critical and engaged. These two terms together set the standard for your work, the measure against which you and others will determine the value of what you have done—not only at journey’s end, but each step along the way.

Critical Inquiry

What does it mean to infuse your inquiry with a critical spirit? Through your course work and reflection on your life history, you have attempted to make your own worldview explicit. You recognize how *uncritically* accepted and unjust dominant ideologies—sets of values, beliefs, myths, explanations and justifications that appear self-evidently true and morally desirable—are embedded in your own life world. They are “taken for granted” and so they are hard to identify, even harder to challenge. Ideologies manifest themselves in language, social habits and cultural forms. They legitimize certain political structures and educational practices so that these come to be accepted as representing the normal order of things. By undertaking an “ideology critique,” you try to penetrate the givens of everyday life in order to reveal the inequities and oppression that lurks beneath.

Because of their pervasiveness and persuasiveness, ideologies are hard to penetrate. However, by turning logic on its head, looking at situations sideways and making imaginative leaps, you come to realize that things are the way they are for a reason. What strikes you as the normal order of life becomes revealed as *constructed* in ways that protect the interests of the powerful. And if “normal reality” is constructed, it also occurs to you that it can be deconstructed, dismantled and remade through your effort and the efforts of your collaborators.

Your inquiry is critical in three interconnected ways. You approach your CEP with the tools of *social and political critique*, *self critique*, and *critique in action*.

▲ *Social and Political Critique*

First, you attend to the issue of power. In all that you do, you are alert to determining factors that shape way things are and influence your perceptions of “reality.” You examine ways in which certain practices, systems and policies reproduce within adult education unquestioned power relationships and economic and cultural inequities. Reflections on race, gender and class will strengthen your ability to unearth hegemonic assumptions, submerged power inequities and anti-democratic forces.

The ways in which adult educators have thought about and practice their craft is framed in the texts they have written. Therefore, your analysis is extended to the documents you read—books, articles, conference papers, monographs, videos, mission statements of good practice, association bylaws—, all of which embody and perpetuate practices within the field. Your task is to make sure that those texts are critiqued for the ways in which they legitimize and perpetuate unjust practices.

▲ *Self Critique*

When analyzing power it is all too easy to focus on other people's practices and on the texts other people have written. You might work yourself up into a lather of self-righteous anger at the imbecility and bigotry that exists in the field, without ever bringing the process home to focus on the hegemonic aspects of your own practice. The second way in which your CEP is critical is in its attention to your own ideas and actions as you examine how you perpetuate inequities, are discriminatory and anti-democratic.

Focusing on unacknowledged prejudices, bigotries and contradictions in your own thinking and practice is difficult, even wrenching. Part of this difficulty resides in your inability to step outside yourself and see your practice through another's eyes. Remember you are not on this journey alone. Involve your collaborators as critical mirrors who reflect back to you images and interpretations of your practice that are unfamiliar and sometimes unsettling.

However, through your self critique you may also discover hidden strengths, perspectives and assumptions which provide a foundation for ethical dimensions of your project. Look carefully at those attributes within yourself which are not oppressive of self or others. Perhaps you try to avoid arrogance and conceit by not reflecting on self too closely and so these positive attributes remain invisible to your eye. In your critique you will not only strip away weaknesses, but find unanticipated energy as well.

▲ *Critique in Action*

There is a more proactive third sense in which your CEP is critical. Your project enables you to imagine possibilities for reconstructing your own practice and the practices of others so that these practices become more democratic, anti-racist, anti-sexist, and socially just. In Freire's words, you engage in a "pedagogy of hope" in that you have confidence things can be changed for the better. Even in apparently closed systems there are open spaces—however small—in which dominant ideas and unfair practices can be contested. Occasionally all you can do is focus on how the damage inflicted by a program, policy or practice can be kept to a minimum. At other times you have the extraordinary opportunity to develop new structures that seem more democratic or to create new spaces in which open, critical conversation can take place.

Engaged Inquiry

Read once again the chapter on the “Three Engagements.” The questions you find there were not proposed for the beginning of your journey, then to be forgotten. Those questions are embedded in each and every step you take in your inquiry. Because you are the principal instrument of your research, you must take frequent measure of yourself, your resolve, your commitments, your vision.

You build your CEP out of a sense of self—your strengths and limitations as a practitioner of your craft and as a researcher in your current inquiry. *Who am I?* Both your relationships with collaborators and the interests that are served through your collaboration are essential elements in your response to this question. In viewing your work, an observer should be clear about why you are undertaking this project, what you hope to gain from it for yourself and for others, what assumptions you are making about your role as adult educator and as researcher.

The point of your CEP is not to understand the world, but to make it better. The means for transforming the world is your own practice. It is here you begin. *What are the commitments embedded in my current practice? Who am I becoming?* These questions directly address the utility of your project. In viewing your work, an observer should be clear about the impact of your work and the responsibility you assume for bringing this about. You are accountable for what you become and for the consequences of your project.

Reflection on the three engagements through the questions in chapter two is not only important to you. It is certainly of importance to collaborators who make common cause with you. Shared commitments and vision—brought into the open, formally, systematically, and rigorously questioned, tested against actions taken—are the basis of your collaboration.

A Checklist for Collaborators

In summary, here are some questions you might ask yourself—and invite your project team and other collaborators to ask as well. It is in the answers to these questions that your work will be evaluated in the context of this program.

- Where and how clearly have you stated the point of this project—at least at project’s end?
- How are your original questions which you presented in the concept paper addressed or reframed in your work?
- In what way are your personal interests and concerns in this project honestly presented?
- Are the collaborators in this project identified and their roles established?

- In what way is the work of others acknowledged and your project developed in relation to this work?
- How have you clarified the terms and concepts you use?
- How have you presented evidence to support your inferences and assumptions?
- How are your positions clearly stated and grounded in practice?
- How has the “other side” of positions taken been acknowledged and addressed?
- In what ways have you attended to power in your inquiry?
- Have you examined practices and texts—your own and those of others—to determine whether they perpetuate inequities?
- How is your rationale for the way in which the project was carried out presented?
- Where have you provided a map, a conceptual or theoretical frame which ties together the whole project?
- How has the project made a difference? How does it challenge or transform practice? How has it been critical in its proactive stance?

Check all your writing for style and format. Is it consistent? Does it sing your song? See if your authentic voice is reproduced in your text and if your writing is transparent—a window to your thoughts. You might ask someone who has not been a collaborator to check final drafts for these attributes in your writing.

The checklist above is not exhaustive. There are always other questions—ones, perhaps, more relevant to your specific project—which you will want to include. These you will want to identify for your project team and other collaborators so that their critique can strengthen and support you. Through their eyes you will come to recognize good work.

6. Allegories

*It is a lonely way
Across the desert
Called a dissertation.
Between the small, green places of hope
Are vast, vast stretches
Where the way looks endless
And, worse, dull.*

Aimee Horton • “View from the Desert”

Telling Your Story

Each journey is different. The steps you take cannot be prescribed or even described except by looking backwards—at where you have been. This chapter includes several allegories which attempt to describe the joys, frustrations, anxiety, and ecstasy some before you have experienced. At journey’s end you might want to add your own story to this chapter.



Allegory I: The Desert Journey

My journey has taken me far and over many days. For longer than I care to remember I have been in a mountainous desert—an arid, wild and wind-swept land of gray rock and sandstone. A cave provides occasional relief from the hot, relentless wind and sun. Even in the darkest nighttime, the land retains extremes of discomfort like embers after the flame is extinguished.

I explore my cave—too exhausted to travel on or to endure the rigors of the mountainside. With each passing hour the shifting light reveals new details of the cave, but explore as I might, there is nothing of interest here. I pass the time in thought and reflection. Waiting.

Days pass, perhaps months, until a day comes, long after I have lost track of time, when my ears discern a change in the wind, a lowering of its pitch as it billows through and around my cave. I stand at the entrance and see far

distant a black, shapeless cloud moving towards me—a storm, I think—pushing the wind before it. A storm in this desert, I remember having heard, might occur only once in twenty years or more. But as I watch, the sky darkens and suddenly I am enveloped in rain, a rush of wind and water plummeting the dry earth, forming pools at my feet and rivulets cascading down the walls of the cave.

Almost as soon as the storm comes, it is gone. The wind is lighter now, almost a refreshing breeze. As I look about me, I discover my world has been transformed. Mist rises from the pools of rain water and the air is clear and welcoming—no longer burning the lungs when I breath too deeply, but lightening my spirit, inviting me to follow to distant places. And there is a fragrance too, where before all had smelled of dust and decay.

The Discovery

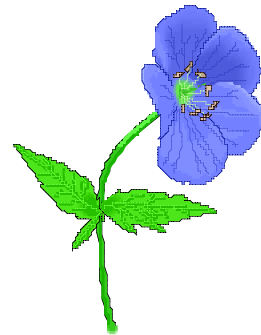
Invigorated, I walk outside my cave for the first time in many months. Making my way between rocks and over divides, I explore the land that has for so long been within my reach. I round an outcropping at the foot of a mountain and suddenly I stop, amazed at the sight before me. Here, in this desolate place, in this land of grays a short distance from my cave, is an entire mountainside colored the most vibrant blue in shades ranging from dark velvet to a shimmering effervescence.

I am drawn to this beauty, pulled without prior thought or intention to the blanket of blue larger than the mountain itself. It is only when I am in the midst of this wonder that I begin to recognize it for what it is. I see the tiniest, most delicate of flowers, millions of them—each with shimmering blue petals. I am lost in this space, transformed, absorbed by the grace of what remains to me a mystery, a miracle.

After many hours, the darkening sky gradually breaks into my contemplation and reminds me that I require food and water. Reluctantly, I return to my cave, promising myself that I will return to this mystical place.

The Return

I rise with the sun and set out to retrace my steps of the previous day. I round what I am sure is the same outcropping at the foot of the mountain. Something is terribly wrong. I must have lost my way. The mountainside I see before me is nothing but gray rock. I check my bearings. This is the same place I stood yesterday, but the extraordinary sight, the miracle is gone.



As I climb the mountainside I begin to understand. There at my feet are the already dried remains of tiny petals. Before my eyes they become dust born by the freshening wind into the far reaches of the mountain. And amidst the

detritus of yesterday's beauty, barely perceptible to the naked eye, are the smallest of seeds.

In the coming days I spend much time alone and seeking out others trying to understand this mystery. I read journals of those who traveled before me. I encounter travelers—nomads like myself. From these sources I learn that others too have seen the flowers. They have seen them grow throughout this region, only appearing after a rainstorm. The flowers last only a day and then they disappear.

Saddened with this knowledge I go back to the mountainside with faint hope, seeking to recover just one of the tiny seeds I saw so many days before. If only I could plant one of these seeds, I could care for it and, over time, fill my cave with the magic I once discovered after the rain had passed. But when I return, the seeds, having blown into the cracks and fissures of the rocky terrain, could no longer be recovered.

And so I go back to my cave, protected from hot winds and sun. Time passes. I wait for rain to come.

And while I wait, I write. I write of the desert and the sudden appearance of the flowers, the fragrance that filled the air, the music that filled my soul. I fill pages with what I now know about the desert, about myself, and the joy which I found in discovery, the pain I experienced in loss. The flowers—ephemeral, fleeting, but nonetheless “real”—give meaning and direction to my life. My text sings with with what I have become and am becoming.

When I am finished writing, the blueness of the flowers seems to fill my cave. I breath the freshness of the air. I am ready to continue my life's journey, leaving the cave and the desert behind.



Allegory II: The Great Ascent

Preparation

It was time. I had been preparing for this trip for many years. I could no longer delay. It was time to begin my ascent of the Great Mountain. I had been gradually working up to this moment by acclimating myself to the altitude and by hiking smaller mountain trails, gaining strength in my body and lungs. On some of these earlier journeys I had been accompanied by others, but this, the grandest of all ascents, was to be a solo accomplishment 14,000 feet above sea level, deep in the tundra region where no trees grow. That in itself was intimidating, but this was a special challenge. There were no clearly marked trails guiding my way. I would have to find my own path to the top. Some others had climbed this mountain before me, but their routes

had been circuitous, their purpose different. They had left behind no helpful maps. “How do I start?” I had a vague idea of direction, but wished I’d had more clarity.

The Wise Woman

I’d heard tell of a wise woman who lived in this region and knew these mountains. I decided to pay her a visit, to ask for her guidance in making this ascent. I found her at home. What’s more, she seemed to be expecting me. It appeared to me that she, sitting silently in utmost concentration must indeed have the answers to the questions I sought. “Oh Wise Woman, can you tell me the secrets of the Great Mountain? How do I begin? Where do I start? Suppose I become lost or sick or injured? How will I know which path is the right one?”

“My child,” she began. “I do not have the answers you seek. For though it is true I have lived in these parts for many winters and have climbed many mountains, I have not climbed this particular mountain. And even if I had, my path may not be the one you seek. I envy your journey. I wish I could go along with you and be your guide, but alas, I am too old for that now. And even if that were not the case, it would not serve your best interests. You must find your own way. For it is not the destination that is important, it is the journey itself.”

“But how will I know...” I protested.

“Child, you must search deep within your heart and trust your intuition. Although it may not seem clear at this time, you will know which way to go when you need to. You must look and listen deeply. Remain open to all possibilities and be aware of your surroundings. And remember that you can call on my guidance and wisdom whenever you need to, as well as that of others who have crossed your path in the past. “

The Journey

The next morning, I began the ascent. I wore sturdy shoes and brought along an adequate supply of food and water as well as rain gear for the sudden mountain storms that I was told could arrive at any time. It was a beautiful clear day. The temperature was in the 60’s and my spirits were buoyant. I followed a path through a forest of pines and poplars where the sun shone through the trees. I felt strong and good.

Before long, the trees gave way to a rocky slope and the climb became steeper. It was uphill every step of the way and I found it hard to breathe. I had to stop and rest frequently to catch my breathe and allow my heart rate to return to normal. My progress was tortuously slow. “At this rate I’ll never make it,” I thought. I was beginning to have serious doubts. “Who was I to think I was prepared to climb this mountain?” Just as I was becoming totally discouraged, sitting on a small boulder to rest, I peered over the edge. The view was breathtaking! The mountains were majestic against a deep blue

sky. The tall pines stood out against a backdrop of white clouds. A lake loomed in the distance, clear as glass.

At this moment I remembered the advice of the wise woman. “Look and listen deeply. Pay attention to your surroundings.” I had been so focused on my pain and struggle that I neglected to see the beauty around me. This was my first lesson in the power of mental attitude. I began to re-frame how I viewed the situation. The walk did not become easier but I was no longer discouraged by the difficulty. I was too busy taking in all that was before me. I became aware of the subtle differences in the color of the sky, depending upon the direction and density of the clouds. I found many species of wildflowers; yellows, whites and violets. I found a perfect spider web between the rock crevices, its strands intricately woven. The trees became short and scrubby. I had entered the sub alpine zone. I walked on, awed by the beauty of my surroundings.

After a while the path I traveled seemed to widen and then disappear altogether. I stopped. “Which way now?” It seemed like there were many possibilities and at the same time, no possibilities. Nothing made sense. Panic began to set in. “Which way do I go? If I walk in a certain direction will it take me to the summit or will I be wandering around aimlessly for days?” I sat there for what seemed like hours, unable to see my way out. The words of the wise woman again came to me. “Follow your intuition.” Breathing deeply, I looked around. A little pica darted out from behind a rock. I decided to follow the pica to see where it was going. It moved quickly, occasionally disappearing into a crevice but returning to continue on its way. I followed it up a steep embankment. I slipped a few times and had to use my hands for balance. Eventually, I climbed over the last rock. There before me was a path. It seemed clear where I was supposed to go now.

After walking a while I came upon a beautiful mountain lake. It was that blue-green color that only comes from glacial run off. Nestled deep in the mountains, it was protected from the strong winds I had encountered on the trail. Feeling tired and hungry, this seemed like a good place to take a break. On a nearby boulder, a yellow-bellied marmot yawned lazily, sunning itself on the rock. That seemed like a good idea. I laid back and closed my eyes, feeling the warmth of the sun on my face and body. I was soon asleep.

I'm not sure how much time passed, but when I awoke it was no longer sunny. The sky was a deep violet blue. I had heard about afternoon mountain storms and I was prepared. I pulled my hooded poncho out of my pack and continued on my way. Before long I noticed that the terrain had again changed. I was above tree line in the tundra region. There were rocks as far as the eye could see. The only vegetation that grew there were little tiny flowers euphemistically called belly flowers because you had to get down on your belly to look at them. It was much colder here, as there was nothing to block the wind. I shivered as I searched for my sweater and wool hat. I was enchanted. This must be what it is like to be at the end of the earth!

The sky continued to darken and the first raindrops fell. Suddenly there was a loud clap of thunder followed by a brilliant flash of lightening not twenty feet away. I remembered a sign I once saw in a national park upon entering the tundra region. *You Are a Lightning Rod*. I realized that I was the tallest thing around. If lightening hit, it would strike me first. I desperately looked around for shelter as the thunder and lightening clapped and flashed around me. Suddenly it began to hail. Large hailstones the size of marbles pelted my body. I crouched down beside the largest boulder I could find and made a tent around me with my poncho, praying silently. "Have I come this far only to die upon this mountain?" In between moments of panic I concentrated on the brilliant flashes of light against the deepening sky. It was really quite beautiful.

Gradually it stopped hailing and the rain seemed to let up some. A thin stream of sunlight appeared through the rain, and then there was a rainbow. It was so light and vague that at first I thought I was imagining it. I blinked my eyes. The rainbow remained and gradually became clear and more brilliant. It was so beautiful it brought tears to my eyes. I wished I'd had a camera to capture the moment but I had to settle for taking a mental photograph, permanently etching the image in my brain. Just as quickly as the rainbow appeared, it was gone. It was time to continue the journey.

The air was very thin in the high altitude. "I must surely be nearing the top," I thought. I walked with a sense of purpose now, determined to arrive at my destination although I was growing tired and weary. I walked for what seemed like many miles but there was still no sign of the summit. Before me on the ground was a large white area. I blinked. "It couldn't be snow! In August?" I had heard there were some areas in the higher elevations where the snow never melted but I had never encountered it myself. Now, after everything I had to trudge through a snowfield.

"All right, I can do this." I told myself. It wasn't easy. The ground was slippery and my hiking boots were not made for snow. Twice I lost my balance and fell. The cold wetness seeped into my boots and my feet quickly became numb. Still I persevered. "I am going to do this!" I shouted to the winds. After a while I began to see clear patches of ground. I side-stepped the snow and traversed the path. I came to another incline. Could it be? Yes! It was the base of the glacier that led to the summit of the mountain. I did it. I had arrived. "I made it!" I yelled. "I'm here!"

The End and the Beginning

Around me was a panoramic view of the entire mountain range. Looking down I could see the lake where I'd taken my nap, and several other lakes as well. I saw the tops of several trees cascading down in descending layers. I saw the paths I'd traveled. They were so clear to me now. I had ascended the mountain and I had created my own way out of my intuition and inner-knowing, just as the wise woman said I would.

I felt every emotion at once. I cried tears of joy and relief. I laughed out loud and shouted to the four corners of the earth. “I did it!” I felt more exhausted than I ever had in my entire life, but also exhilarated. I sat in quiet reflection, allowing the surrounding beauty to wash over me.

I knew that I would never be the same. There would be other challenges, other mountains to climb, but I would probably not feel this same level of intensity for a long time; nor did I want to. One thing became clear to me. I had a mission. My mission was to guide others through similar journeys. Not to walk with them, but as the wise woman guided me, to discover their own power to find the way within themselves. For that, I discovered, is the answer.



Allegory III: Brancusi

I began by seeing what was not there.

It was a massive, cold and as-yet lifeless block of stone, jagged with edges roughened by giant saws at a distant Italian quarry. Yet for me its age-hardened disguise could barely conceal the soft contours of the soul within. The challenge was to liberate that soul, to sift away the dross, to violently open a prison of stone with hammer and rasp without damaging its captive essence. This was not merely a project, it was my life.

Planning filled my earliest days—carefully examining the stone’s surface, measuring faults, and drawing from many angles that which I had seen, but which was not yet there. I plotted out the attack, marking critical planes of fracture that intersect to yield more complex forms, and the sequence of strokes needed to carefully peel away layers of external rock from the entombed mass of my sculpture.

After months of preparations, I was ready. I fell on my work with steel chisel against Carrara marble, sparks and chips of stone flying in all directions. But as the stone’s façade slowly began to change, so did the vision. Each alteration suggested new possibilities, defied my careful planning, and multiplied options. My sketches were useless. I had taken comfort in knowing where my work was headed, relied on the schedules I had set, confident that I knew what lay within this stone. The more my work progressed, the more quickly my confidence waned.

That I could have been so wrong was devastating. I began doubting that there was any soul within or, perhaps, I had mistakenly damaged the stone’s essence in my initial attack on its surface. Or was this the wrong stone? I was paralyzed by indecision, fearful that an ill-considered blow would destroy the stone utterly, and at times actually wishing the stone’s destruction.

I reconsidered the sequence of events that led to my frustration. I had imposed my vision on the stone, trying to bend its unyielding essence to my own imaginings. Instead I found my self being bent to the rhythms of the stone, being forced to accept the gradually revealed logic of the stone's inner essence. I no longer knew where this would lead me or if, indeed, there was a captive soul held prisoner here.

Each stroke revealed possibilities for the next. Decisions I made limited decisions to follow, but also gave me orientation—a sense of inner harmonies within the pure white marble coming into the light. A shape—rhythmic, complex, organic—revealed itself, not a reflection of my own envisioning, but a manifestation of the stone itself.

To sculpt was more being witness to a birth, assisting in the delivery, than creating new life. To gain this sense of awe and attain the status of witness I needed first to let go of the process, let the soul within the stone take over and guide me. My art became a disciplined restraint, an intense listening with eyes and hands to the living material before me, removing irrelevancies, seeking a balance between the kinetic and stasis, and polishing to a bright shine the essence within. The marble became translucent under the gentle strokes of pumice, glowing and responding to light in subtle ways, dropping the veils of its rough exterior.

The gentle extrusions of the emerging surface suggested fullness, containment, the outward pressure of internal forces. Concave surfaces enveloped me. There was no longer unyielding stone, but a flowing mass of positive and negative volumes that resonated the breath and the beating heart of the stone.

I knew I was finished when my work spoke to me—not as to Pygmalion, but to one humbled by his work—as a burning bush unconsumed by flames. My work—restrained, an elegant geometry of form—was revelation, a new truth, transcending my skills as an artist, surpassing my imagination. It was not the months of planning (although without the unraveling of my plans I would have learned little about the power of the stone). It was never a matter of technique or method, nor was it the vision with which I began. It was reality itself calling out to me, awakening my reluctant ears and hands to its need to be heard and made visible.



7. Journey's End

Here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye... You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Knowing the Journey Is Over

At times your questions multiplied far faster than answers. Without the plan you carefully developed in your concept paper—the working document which has changed and grown over the passing months—your project would have mushroomed, becoming an endless and unfulfilling Odyssey. Your plan set limits to what you agreed to accomplish in this project. By now you know the destination of your journey. You recognize the landmarks by which you know that you have arrived. You have reached the summit. What had once seemed so large and looming, even overwhelming, has now been accomplished. Looking down you can see the paths that you've traveled. From the vantage point of higher ground you have gained greater perspective on what brought you to this point. It is time to reflect on where you have come in three years and how you will commemorate your arrival.

Gather all evidence of the work you have completed, all the documents you have produced, field notes you have written, data you have collected, journals which record the process. Review especially the products of your inquiry—the monograph or book you have written, the series of articles, the supporting documentation which frames and interprets your work in the field.

You know you have completed your work when all the essential ingredients of your expanded and refined plan are in place, when you can demonstrate your work meets the criteria for critique and engagement described in chapter five, when all challenges of your collaborators have been addressed, and when your core faculty in consultation with your project team and your own intuition tell you, "It is complete."

Rituals of Completion

Your Critical Engagement Project represents a major benchmark in your involvement in the discourse of the field. You have become an expert in your

area of inquiry. In the words of the fox in *The Little Prince*, “You are responsible for what you have tamed.” It is time to share your knowledge with other scholars and practitioners in the field. Your project’s completion is an event that should not pass quietly. You will want to announce your work, highlighting its significance for you and for others. Expect that many who are unfamiliar with what you have done will want to question you, both to understand what you have done as well as to be certain you have done your work thoroughly, competently, and critically.

You invited and welcomed the critique of others throughout your journey; there is no reason for you now to “defend” your work against critique. You continue to be a partner in dialogue. Your stance in discourse is, as it was before, that of teacher who has much to learn, that of learner who has much to teach.

As a ritual of completion you should plan a forum within which you can both announce your work and engage with others in discourse concerning its worth and implications for further inquiry and study. You might join with peers in organizing a mini-conference and invite new-found colleagues—adult educators in varied practices—to participate. You might stage a “press conference” or similar media event in the locale where you conducted your inquiry and use this occasion to address questions of the community and your peers. You might involve your collaborators and others in a residential workshop to plan strategies for following up on the work you began in your CEP.

Whatever shape the forum takes it should involve your collaborators, but expand participation to other practitioners of your craft as well. It should provide an opportunity for you to announce and discuss your work, especially its implications for practice and the work yet to be done by you and by others.

This forum represents the formal presentation of your work and its acceptance within the field of adult education. Plan it carefully so that it reflects well on your work, solidifies the seminal network you need for future collaboration, and affords you new opportunities for growth in your ability to be critical. The tone of this forum should be, above all, celebratory and supportive—welcoming you to full partnership in the discourse of the field.

If you have not already written your CEP for publication, now is the time to consider doing so—in the quieter months after you have finished the inquiry, but before you have lost your momentum. Look for journals or publishers who have accepted for publication work similar to yours. Consult with published authors who have similar interests. Begin with those on your project team.

You are not limited to print media. There are electronic journals and web sites, as well as more visual and audial media: film and video documentaries, theater, and poetry. Dissemination of your work by whatever means will broaden the ambiance of your voice, heighten the level of discourse, and strengthen your influence within your chosen communities of practice. For three years you have planted, nurtured the seedlings, watched over the cycles

of growth and maturation. Now is the time of harvest. Enjoy the fruits of your work.

Other Roads, Distant Places...

Every ending is a new beginning. Think carefully about who you are becoming, not only through your CEP, but now in the broader context of your involvement as a full participant in the field of adult education.

Now that your journey is over, perhaps you want nothing more than to rest—to read a mystery novel, take long walks after a leisurely supper, play with your children, or watch sitcoms on television. Or perhaps you are already planning your next adventure. If not now, soon you will be. In all your plans, be daring. Remember the strength you found in collaboration. Remember the central importance of your engagements. Be critical. Live what you began in your CEP.

Appendix I

Human Subjects Review

Truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power. Truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. Each society has its régime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true: the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned, the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth, the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

Michel Foucault • *Power/Knowledge*

Do No Harm

In research, as in all other forms of practice, there are ethical dimensions—subtle impositions of power disguised as “voluntary” participation; deceptions as to purpose or outcome; breaches of confidentiality and anonymity; distortions of convenience. Your research might represent an intrusion into people’s lives. Will you intervene, disrupt the lifeworld and appropriate thoughts and feelings of others as building blocks for your own project? As noted in our discussion of critique, your research can reproduce unquestioned power relationships and economic and cultural inequities, hegemonic and anti-democratic forces. While you intend none of this, it is only through diligent reflection and preventive action that these unintended consequences of your research can be foreseen and minimized.

To assist you in examining the ethical implications of your work—and to protect both you and the university in matters of liability—the University has appointed an Institutional Review Board (IRB) which can review your plans for the involvement of others in generating data for your research. Specific information on the procedures for the human subjects review is available directly from the IRB.

However, given the nature of most research in adult education and the low levels of risk to subjects, it is anticipated that, in most instances, Critical Engagement Projects would not require full review by the Institutional Review Board. Certification that these projects meet the ethical requirements of the University is likely to take place at the Departmental level, the results being filed with the IRB.

Ethical Principles and Guidelines*

Scientific research has produced substantial social benefits. It has also posed some troubling ethical questions. Public attention has been drawn to abuses of human subjects in biomedical experiments, especially during the Second World War. During the Nuremberg War Crime Trials, the Nuremberg code was drafted as a set of standards for judging physicians and scientists who had conducted biomedical experiments on concentration camp prisoners. This code became the prototype of many later codes¹ intended to assure that research involving human subjects would be carried out in an ethical manner.

The codes consist of rules, some general, others specific, that will guide you in your work. Such rules often are inadequate to cover complex situations and at times they come into conflict, are frequently difficult to interpret or apply. Broader ethical principles, however, will provide you with a basis on which specific rules may be formulated, criticized and interpreted.

Three principles, or general prescriptive judgments, that are relevant to research involving human subjects are identified in this appendix. Other principles may also be relevant. These three are comprehensive, however, and are stated at a level of generalization that should assist you in understanding the ethical issues inherent in research involving human subjects. These principles cannot always be applied so as to resolve beyond dispute particular ethical problems. The objective is to provide an analytical framework that will guide you in the resolution of ethical problems arising from your research.

This appendix will discuss the distinction between research and practice, three basic ethical principles, the application of these principles to your work

* The following material has been freely adapted with some additions from *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*. This public document, issued on April 18, 1979, was prepared for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

¹ Since 1945, various codes for the proper and responsible conduct of human experimentation in medical research have been adopted by different organizations. The best known of these codes are the Nuremberg Code of 1947, the Helsinki Declaration of 1964 (revised in 1975), and the 1971 Guidelines (codified into Federal Regulations in 1974) issued by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Codes for the conduct of social and behavioral research have also been adopted, the best known being that of the American Psychological Association, published in 1973.

as a researcher, and documentation required to demonstrate that these principles have been applied in your CEP.

Boundaries Between Practice and Research

It is important to distinguish between research and experimental practices in order to know what activities ought to undergo review for the protection of human subjects of research. The distinction between research and practice is blurred partly because both often occur together (as in research designed to evaluate an innovation) and partly because notable departures from standard practice are often called “experimental” when “research” is not carefully defined.

For the most part, the term “practice” in adult education refers to interventions that are designed solely to enhance the well-being of learners and that have a reasonable expectation of accomplishing the goals you set as an adult educator. By contrast, the term “research” designates an activity which might be designed to test an hypothesis, permit conclusions to be drawn, develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge, create or enlarge upon theory. Research is usually described in a formal protocol that sets forth an objective and a set of procedures designed to reach that objective.

When you depart in a significant way from standard or accepted practice, your innovation does not, in and of itself, constitute research. The fact that your pedagogy is “experimental,” in the sense of new, untested or different, does not automatically place it in the category of research. Although it should be noted, radically new pedagogies should probably be made the object of formal research at an early stage.

Research and practice may be carried on together when research is designed to evaluate the safety and efficacy of an intervention. This need not cause any confusion regarding whether or not the activity requires review; the general rule is that if there is any element of research in your innovative practice, that practice should undergo review for the protection of human subjects.

Basic Ethical Principles

The expression “basic ethical principles” refers to those general judgments that serve as a basic justification for the many particular ethical prescriptions and evaluations of human actions. Three basic principles, among those generally accepted in our cultural tradition, are particularly relevant to the ethics of research involving human subjects: the principles of respect of persons, beneficence and justice.

▲ *Respect for Persons*

Respect for persons incorporates at least two ethical convictions: first, that individuals should be treated as autonomous agents, and second, that persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection. The principle of

respect for persons thus divides into two separate moral requirements: the requirement to acknowledge autonomy and the requirement to protect those with diminished autonomy.

An autonomous person is an individual capable of deliberation about personal goals and of acting under the direction of such deliberation. To respect autonomy is to give weight to autonomous persons' considered opinions and choices while refraining from obstructing their actions unless they are clearly detrimental to others. To show lack of respect for an autonomous agent is to repudiate that person's considered judgments, to deny an individual the freedom to act on those considered judgments, or to withhold information necessary to make a considered judgment, when there are no compelling reasons to do so.

However, not every human being is capable of self-determination. The capacity for self-determination matures during an individual's life, and some individuals lose this capacity wholly or in part because of illness, mental disability, or circumstances that severely restrict liberty. Respect for the immature and the incapacitated may require protecting them as they mature or while they are incapacitated.

Some persons are in need of extensive protection, even to the point of excluding them from activities which may harm them; other persons require little protection beyond making sure they undertake activities freely and with awareness of possible adverse consequence. The extent of protection afforded should depend upon the risk of harm and the likelihood of benefit. The judgment that any individual lacks autonomy should be periodically reevaluated and will vary in different situations.

In most cases of research involving human subjects, respect for persons demands that subjects enter into the research voluntarily and with adequate information. In some situations, however, application of the principle is not obvious. The involvement of prisoners as subjects of research provides an instructive example. On the one hand, it would seem that the principle of respect for persons requires that prisoners not be deprived of the opportunity to volunteer for research. On the other hand, under prison conditions they may be subtly coerced or unduly influenced to engage in research activities for which they would not otherwise volunteer. Respect for persons would then dictate that prisoners be protected. Whether to allow prisoners to "volunteer" or to "protect" them presents a dilemma. Respecting persons, in most hard cases, is often a matter of balancing competing claims urged by the principle of respect itself.

▲ *Beneficence*

Persons are treated in an ethical manner not only by respecting their decisions and protecting them from harm, but also by making efforts to secure their well-being. Such treatment falls under the principle of beneficence. The term "beneficence" is often understood to cover acts of kindness or charity that go beyond strict obligation. In your CEP, beneficence

should be understood in a stronger sense—as an obligation. Two general rules have been formulated as complementary expressions of beneficent actions in this sense: do not harm and maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms.

The Hippocratic maxim “do no harm” has long been a fundamental principle of medical ethics. Claude Bernard extended it to the realm of research, saying that one should not injure one person regardless of the benefits that might come to others. However, even avoiding harm requires learning what is harmful; and, in the process of obtaining this information, persons may be exposed to risk of harm. Further, the Hippocratic Oath requires physicians to benefit their patients “according to their best judgment.” Learning what will in fact benefit may require exposing persons to risk. The problem posed by these imperatives is to decide when it is justifiable to seek certain benefits despite the risks involved, and when the benefits should be foregone because of the risks.

The obligations of beneficence affect both you as researcher and society at large, because they extend both to particular research projects and to the entire enterprise of research. In the case of particular projects, you and supporting members of your institution are obliged to give forethought to the maximization of benefits and the reduction of risk that might occur from the research investigation. In the case of research in general, members of the larger society are obliged to recognize the longer term benefits and risks that may result from the improvement of knowledge and from the development of innovative educational and other social interventions.

▲ *Justice*

Who ought to receive the benefits of research and bear its burdens? This is a question of justice, in the sense of “fairness in distribution” or “what is deserved.” An injustice occurs when some benefit to which a person is entitled is denied without good reason or when some burden is imposed unduly. Another way of conceiving the principle of justice is that equals ought to be treated equally. This requires explication. Who is equal and who is unequal? What considerations justify departure from equal distribution? Almost all commentators allow that distinctions based on experience, age, deprivation, competence, merit and position do sometimes constitute criteria justifying differential treatment for certain purposes. It is necessary, then, to explain in what respects people should be treated equally. There are several widely accepted formulations of just ways to distribute burdens and benefits. Each formulation mentions some relevant property on the basis of which burdens and benefits should be distributed. These formulations are

- to each person an equal share,
- to each person according to individual need,
- to each person according to individual effort,
- to each person according to societal contribution, and
- to each person according to merit.

Questions of justice have long been associated with social practices such as punishment, taxation and political representation. Until recently these questions have not generally been associated with scientific research. However, they are foreshadowed even in the earliest reflections on the ethics of research involving human subjects. For example, during the 19th and early 20th centuries the burdens of serving as research subjects fell largely upon poor ward patients, while the benefits of improved medical care flowed primarily to private patients. Subsequently, the exploitation of unwilling prisoners as research subjects in Nazi concentration camps was condemned as a particularly flagrant injustice. In this country, in the 1940's, the Tuskegee syphilis study used disadvantaged, rural black men to study the untreated course of a disease that is by no means confined to that population. These subjects were deprived of demonstrably effective treatment in order not to interrupt the project, long after such treatment became generally available.

Against this historical background, it can be seen how conceptions of justice are relevant to research involving human subjects. For example, the selection of your research subjects needs to be scrutinized in order to determine whether some classes (e.g., welfare recipients, particular racial and ethnic minorities, or persons confined to institutions) are being systematically selected simply because of their easy availability, their compromised position, or their manipulability, rather than for reasons directly related to the problem being studied. Finally, whenever research supported by public funds leads to the development of new beneficial services and practices, justice demands both that these not provide advantages only to those who can afford them and that such research should not unduly involve persons from groups unlikely to be among the beneficiaries of subsequent applications of the research.

Applications

Applications of the general principles to the conduct of your research leads to consideration of the following requirements: informed consent, risk/benefit assessment, and the selection of subjects of research.

▲ *Informed Consent*

Respect for persons requires that the subjects of your research, to the degree that they are capable, be given the opportunity to choose what shall or shall not happen to them. This opportunity is provided when adequate standards for informed consent are satisfied. Informed consent means the knowing consent of an individual (or of a legally authorized representative when a vulnerable or dependent person is to be involved) to his or her participation in a research activity without coercion or undue influence.

While the importance of informed consent is unquestioned, controversy prevails over the nature and possibility of an informed consent. Nonetheless,

there is widespread agreement that the consent process can be analyzed as containing three elements: information, comprehension and voluntariness.

Information. Most codes of research establish specific items for disclosure intended to assure that subjects are given sufficient information. These items generally include: the research procedure, their purposes, risks and anticipated benefits, alternative procedures (where interventions are involved), and a statement offering the subject the opportunity to ask questions and to withdraw at any time from the research. Additional items have been proposed, including how subjects are selected, the person responsible for the research, etc.

However, a simple listing of items does not answer the question of what the standard should be for judging how much and what sort of information you should provide. You might want to consider a standard of “the reasonable volunteer:” the extent and nature of information should be such that persons, knowing that their involvement in your project is neither necessary for them nor perhaps fully understood, can decide whether they wish to participate in the furthering of knowledge. Even when some direct benefit to them is anticipated, the subjects should understand clearly the range of risk and the voluntary nature of participation.

A special problem of consent arises where informing subjects of some pertinent aspect of the research is likely to impair the validity of the research. In many cases, it is sufficient to indicate to subjects that they are being invited to participate in research of which some features will not be revealed until the research is concluded. In all cases of research involving incomplete disclosure, such research is justified only if it is clear that

- Incomplete disclosure is truly necessary to accomplish the goals of the research;
- There are no undisclosed risks to subjects that are more than minimal; and
- There is an adequate plan for debriefing subjects, when appropriate, and for dissemination of research results to them.

Information about risks should never be withheld for the purpose of eliciting the cooperation of subjects, and truthful answers should always be given to direct questions about the research. Take care to distinguish cases in which disclosure would destroy or invalidate your research from cases in which disclosure would simply inconvenience you, the investigator.

A specific consent form should usually be developed for each research project. This form would contain the following:

- A statement that the study involves research, an explanation of the purposes of the research and what is being asked of the subject;

- A description of any benefits or reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject (see below);
- A statement describing whether and how confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained;
- An explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subjects' rights; and
- A statement that participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

Comprehension. The manner and context in which you convey information is as important as the information itself. For example, presenting information in a disorganized and rapid fashion, allowing too little time for consideration or curtailing opportunities for questioning, all may adversely affect a subject's ability to make an informed choice.

Because the subject's ability to understand is a function of intelligence, rationality, maturity and language, it is necessary to adapt the presentation of the information to the subject's capacities. You are responsible for ascertaining that the subject has comprehended the information.

You should express that information—orally or in written form—verbally and in a language which is understandable to the subject or the representative. The text of a consent form should not involve any exculpatory language through which the subject is asked to waive any legal rights, including release of you or your institutional sponsor from liability for negligence. All subjects or their authorized representatives should be given a copy of any consent document which they have completed.

Voluntariness. An agreement to participate in research constitutes a valid consent only if voluntarily given. This element of informed consent requires conditions free of coercion and undue influence. Coercion occurs when an overt threat of harm is intentionally presented by one person to another in order to obtain compliance. Undue influence, by contrast, occurs through an offer of an excessive, unwarranted, inappropriate or improper reward or other overture in order to obtain compliance. Also, inducements that would ordinarily be acceptable may become undue influences if the subject is especially vulnerable.

Unjustifiable pressures usually occur when persons in positions of authority or commanding influence—especially where possible sanctions are involved—urge a course of action for a subject. A continuum of such influencing factors exists, however, and it is impossible to state precisely where justifiable persuasion ends and undue influence begins. But undue influence would

include actions such as manipulating a person's choice through the controlling influence of a close relative or threatening to terminate employment.

▲ *Assessment of Risk and Benefits*

The assessment of risks and benefits requires a careful array of relevant data, including, in some cases, alternative ways of obtaining the benefits sought in the research. Thus, the assessment presents both an opportunity and a responsibility to gather systematic and comprehensive information about your proposed project. For you, it is a means to examine whether your CEP is properly designed. For your project team, your assessment represents a basis for determining whether any risks that will be presented to subjects are justified. For prospective subjects of your research, the assessment will assist them in determining whether or not to participate.

The requirement that research be justified on the basis of a favorable risk/benefit assessment bears a close relation to the principle of beneficence, just as the moral requirement that informed consent be obtained is derived primarily from the principle of respect for persons. The term “risk” refers to a possibility that harm may occur. However, when expressions such as “small risk” or “high risk” are used, they usually refer (often ambiguously) both to the chance (probability) of experiencing a harm and the severity (magnitude) of the envisioned harm.

The term “benefit” is used in the research context to refer to something of positive value related to health or welfare. Unlike “risk,” “benefit” is not a term that expresses probabilities. Risk is properly contrasted to probability of benefits, and benefits are properly contrasted with harms rather than risks of harm. Accordingly, so-called risk/benefit assessments are concerned with the probabilities and magnitudes of possible harm and anticipated benefits. Many kinds of possible harms and benefits need to be taken into account. There are, for example, risks of psychological harm, physical harm, legal harm, social harm and economic harm and the corresponding benefits. While the most likely types of harms to educational research subjects are those of psychological pain or injury, other possible kinds should not be overlooked.

Risks and benefits of research may affect the individual subjects, the families of the individual subjects, and society at large (or special groups of subjects in society). Previous codes and Federal regulations have required that risks to subjects be outweighed by the sum of both the anticipated benefit to the subject, if any, and the anticipated benefit to society in the form of knowledge to be gained from the research. In balancing these different elements, the risks and benefits affecting the immediate research subject will normally carry special weight. On the other hand, interests other than those of the subject may on some occasions be sufficient by themselves to justify the risks involved in the research, so long as the subjects’ rights have been protected. Beneficence thus requires that we protect against risk of harm to subjects and also that we be concerned about the loss of the substantial benefits that might be gained from research.

It is commonly said that benefits and risks must be “balanced” and shown to be “in a favorable ratio.” The metaphorical character of these terms draws attention to the difficulty of making precise judgments. However, the idea of systematic, nonarbitrary analysis of risks and benefits should be emulated insofar as possible. This ideal requires you to be thorough in the accumulation and assessment of information about all aspects of your research, and to consider alternatives systematically. This procedure renders the assessment of your research more rigorous and precise, while making communication with the project team and review board members less subject to misinterpretation, misinformation and conflicting judgments. Thus, there should first be a determination of the validity of the presuppositions of the research; then the nature, probability and magnitude of risk should be distinguished with as much clarity as possible. The method of ascertaining risks should be explicit, especially where there is no alternative to the use of such vague categories as small or slight risk. It should also be determined whether your estimates of the probability of harm or benefits are reasonable, as judged by known facts or other available studies.

▲ *Selection of Subjects*

Just as the principle of respect for persons finds expression in the requirements for consent, and the principle of beneficence in risk/benefit assessment, the principle of justice gives rise to moral requirements that you use fair procedures and attain fair outcomes in the selection of your research subjects.

Justice is relevant to the selection of subjects of research at two levels: the social and the individual. Individual justice in the selection of subjects would require that you exhibit fairness: thus, you should not offer potentially beneficial research only to some adult learners who are in your favor or select only “undesirable” persons for risky research. Social justice requires that distinction be drawn between classes of subjects that ought, and ought not, to participate in any particular kind of research, based on the ability of members of that class to bear burdens and on the appropriateness of placing further burdens on already burdened persons. Thus, it can be considered a matter of social justice that there is an order of preference in the selection of classes of subjects and that some classes of potential subjects (e.g., the institutionalized mentally infirm or prisoners) may be involved as research subjects, if at all, only on certain conditions.

Injustice may appear in the selection of subjects, even if individual subjects are selected fairly and treated fairly in the course of research. This injustice arises from social, racial, sexual and cultural biases institutionalized in society. Thus, even if you treat your research subjects fairly, and even if the IRB takes care to assure that subjects are selected fairly within a particular institution, unjust social patterns may nevertheless appear in the overall distribution of the burdens and benefits of your research. Although you may not be able to resolve a problem that is pervasive in your social setting, you can consider distributive justice in selecting research subjects.

One special instance of injustice results from the involvement of vulnerable subjects. Certain groups, such as racial minorities, the economically disadvantaged, the very sick, and the institutionalized may continually be sought as research subjects, owing to their ready availability in settings where research is conducted. Such groups may, in the past, have cooperated with researchers in the mistaken belief that academic research would lead to an improvement of the social or economic conditions under which they live. Given their dependent status and their frequently compromised capacity for free consent, they should be protected against the danger of being involved in research solely for academic ends, or because they are easy to manipulate as a result of their political or socioeconomic condition.

Documentation

These, in the broadest terms, are the ethical issues you face as a research scholar. To document the way you have attended to these issues you will need to write a brief summary of your project, describing in non-technical terms what will happen in relation to the subjects of your inquiry. Describe any benefits and any potential risks to them. To the best of your ability, give anticipated numbers of subjects you will involve as sources, with attention to race, gender, class and age. How will they be recruited and what procedures do you propose to obtain informed consent.

Complete a copy of the form at the end of this appendix—the Review of Research Involving Human Subjects—and attach to that form any relevant documentation, for example any forms you will use related to “informed consent.” Sign the Review form along with your co-researchers, if any, and your primary core faculty team member. This documentation is to be given to the ACE Department Chair for approval before you begin collecting data.

If it is necessary for your project to receive full review by the Institutional Review Board, the Chair will inform you of this.

Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

Note: Please complete this form and attach brief responses to the issues raised, keeping in mind that the primary concern is the potential risk—physical, emotional, or other—to the subjects. Provide copies of all stories, questionnaires, consent forms or other documents to be used in the inquiry. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) must have enough information about the transactions with the subjects to evaluate the risks of participation. Assurance from you, no matter how strong, will not substitute for a description of the transactions.

Name(s):

Department: ACE

Address:

Phone:

CEP Title:

Data Collection Start Date:

Note: Unless designated “Exempt” by your department chair or designee, this project must receive formal clearance in the form of an approval letter from the IRB chair prior to the start of data collection. Projects designated exempt must still be submitted to the IRB within two weeks of that determination.

Project Team Primary Core Faculty:

Project Team Secondary Core Faculty:

On a separate attachment address the following:

For all projects:

- *Briefly describe the purpose of your study and, in non-technical terms, what will happen to your subjects.*
- *Describe any potential risks to your subjects.*
- *Give the anticipated ages, sex, and number of subjects, and explain how and where they will be recruited.*
- *Describe the procedures for obtaining informed consent as provided for the Code of Federal Regulations, section 46.116. Append any forms used.*

For Non-Exempt Projects Only:

- *If minors are involved, describe the procedures for obtaining individual assent to participate from the minors capable of giving assent, as well as the procedures to obtain parental or guardian consent.*
- *If risk is involved, explain how the knowledge to be gained and/or the benefits to the subject(s) from the proposed research justify any risks the subject might incur.*
- *Explain what, if any, support services will be provided in the event of harm to a subject.*

-over-

Required Signatures

Certification

I certify that I have read and understand the policies and procedures for research projects that involve human subjects and that I intend to comply with University Policy. Significant changes in the approved protocol will be submitted to the IRB for written approval prior to those changes being put into practice. I understand that all non-exempt projects require annual review.

Research Scholar(s)

Date:

Primary Core Faculty:

Date:

Departmental determination according to Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46:

- Project is exempt. **Cite exempt category:**

- Project is referred for expedited review. **Cite appropriate expedited category:**

- Project is referred for full IRB review.

Department Chair:

Date:

Appendix II

Further Reading

Like any act of study, reading is not just a pastime but a serious task in which readers attempt to clarify the opaque dimensions of their study. To read is to rewrite, not memorize, the contents of what is being read. We need to dispense with the naive idea of 'consuming' what we read.

Paulo Freire • *The Politics of Education*

Other Visions, Other "Manuals"

Some of the texts listed here argue that the making of a dissertation—or research, in general—should use processes and subscribe to purposes far different from those described in this manual for a Critical Engagement Project. Of course, all texts should be read critically, especially your own! With this in view, you might want to read (and rewrite) the following:



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Babbie, Earl (1995). *The Practice of Social Research* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

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Brooks, A.; Watkins, K.E. (eds.). (1994). *The Emerging Power of Action Inquiry Technologies*. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, No. 63. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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- Kirk, J.; Miller, M.L. (1986). *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
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- Madsen, D. (1991). *Successful Dissertations and Theses: A Guide to Graduate Student Research from Proposal to Completion*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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- McCracken, G. (1989). *The Long Interview*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
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- Merriam, S.B. (1988). *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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