

Appendix C

To be handed out at
Session One of the Study Circle

Session One Materials

Contents:

- Handout E: “Sample Ground Rules”
- Handout F: “Quotations from Participants”
- Handout G: “Readings for Session Two”
- Reading #4: *Toward a New Pluralism in ABE/ESOL Classrooms: Teaching to Multiple “Cultures of Mind” Executive Summary*, pp. 1-21
- Reading #5: “Three Developmentally Different Types of Learners”
- Reading #6: “Three Different Types of Change”
- Reading #7: “The Power of Cohort and Collaborative Groups”

Sample Ground Rules

The Study Circles Resource Center

- Everyone gets a fair hearing.
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- Share “air time.”
- If you are offended, say so, and say why.
- You can disagree, but don’t personalize it; stick to the issues. No name-calling or stereotyping.
- Speak for yourself, not for others.
- One person speaks at a time.
- What is said in the group stays here, unless everyone agrees to change that.

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Handout F

Quotations from Participants

- “Cause I think helping your kids with their education is good because it shows you care... Well, I want them to be able to make it out in this world...do things on their own...” (p.260)
- “I decided to take computer information because I have my friend also he took the computer information....He tell me you can work and study also....He get good job, he has good office and good team....” (p. 119)
- “I decide to come here and study so I could have GED...so I can go to college and be somebody.” (p.254)
- “I think the learning is, like they say the language, is really good thing for human to experience....You understand yourself in another way. And then you see the world, and then you understand the world another way, in your own way....And I have to be in my own world and my own world.” (p. 169)
- “I wanted to always keep my mind fresh and organized and learn new things...Getting a college education to me would be like a way to have a door open...nobody is going to tell me...you are not qualified.” (p.273)
- “My family’s important to me...I think I should care about them because they are part of myself.” (p. 267)
- “If I improve myself, I can give more opportunities to my children ...And I would like my children to feel happy with me...And they feel like proud.” (p. 268)

From *Toward a New Pluralism in ABE/ESOL Classrooms: Teaching to Multiple “Cultures of Mind”* by The Adult Development Research Group, Cambridge, MA: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, August 2001.

Readings for Session Two

This is the list of readings for Session Two of the Study Circle. Please bring all the readings to Session Two.

<u>Session Two of the Study Circle</u>	
Date:	_____
Time:	_____
Location:	_____

Reading #4: *Toward a New Pluralism in ABE/ESOL Classrooms: Teaching to Multiple “Cultures of Mind” Executive Summary*, pages 1-21

Reading #5: “Three Developmentally Different Types of Learners”

Reading #6: “Three Different Types of Change”

Reading #7: “The Power of Cohort and of Collaborative Groups”

For further reading (optional):

Many participants in the original study circle made the observation that the concept of “holding environments” in the adult development research resonated with Vygotsky’s theory of the “zone of proximal development.” Because there is not enough time to adequately read and discuss the work of Vygotsky in this study circle, you may want to do additional reading on this topic.

Vygotsky, Lev S. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Vygotsky, Lev S. and Alex Kozulin. *Thought and Language*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986.

Toward a New Pluralism in ABE/ESOL Classrooms: Teaching to Multiple “Cultures of Mind” Executive Summary

The Adult Development Research Group

[Only pp. 1-21.]

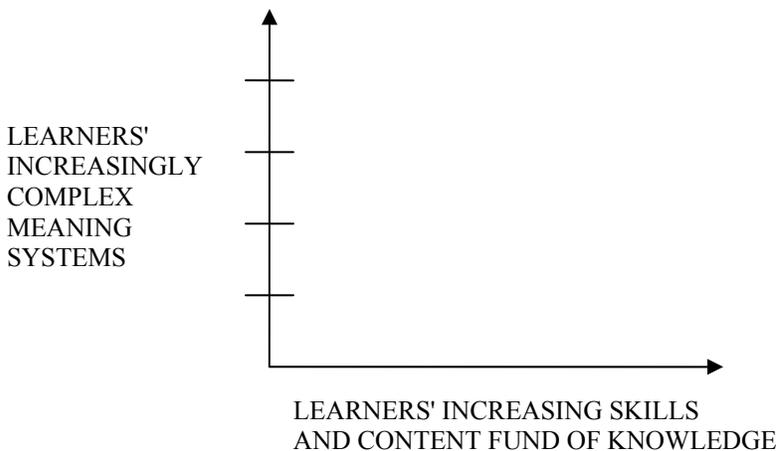
INTRODUCTION

Focus and Context of the Research Study

Beyond the acquisition of important language skills and increased content learning, what are the bigger internal meanings for adults of participating in ABE/ESOL programs? How do the systematic ways adults are making meaning when they enter their programs affect how they will best learn in them, and what they will most need from them?

If we were to depict graphically the "conceptual space" of this study, questions like these suggest two possibly independent trajectories (see Figure One).

Figure One: A New Space for the Consideration of Learners' Experience



The first trajectory (the horizontal, in Figure One) indicates the familiar curricular aspiration for students to acquire greater skills and a bigger fund of content learning. The "beginning student" can be expected to enter the classroom at the leftward end of this trajectory and, over time, hopefully, to migrate rightward.

What is novel about the present study is its introduction of a second trajectory (the vertical, in Figure One), which, when taken with the first,

creates a new two-dimensional “space” for the consideration of ABE/ESOL teaching and learning. The vertical in Figure One suggests the possibility of increasingly complex meaning **NCSALL** systems through which a learner *makes sense of* the curriculum and instruction of the classroom. “Change on the horizontal” for a learner in a history class, for example, might involve developing a greater fund of knowledge about the events, players, and dates of a given historical period in a particular part of the world. But “change on the vertical” (e.g., a change from a more concrete to a more abstract way of understanding the curriculum) might involve a qualitatively new relationship to the content itself such that one can identify the values or beliefs *underlying* a factual historical narrative; generalize from the facts to infer themes or principles; or inquire into the historiographic bias of those who are rendering the account in the first place.

This two dimensional space for the consideration of learners’ experience prompts an obvious question: Should ABE/ESOL teachers assume that their students (often beginners or near beginners with the English language or in the subject matter areas, and therefore “on the left” of the horizontal) are also necessarily toward the *bottom* of the vertical? **The present study clearly demonstrates that ABE/ESOL teachers should not make such an assumption**, thus suggesting that this new space for the consideration of ABE/ESOL learning and teaching might not be merely conceptual and hypothetical (as in Figure One) but empirically explorable. The present study constitutes just such an exploration.

As adult developmental psychologists interested in adult education we carefully followed for a year or more the inner experiences of learning and change of 41 ABE/ESOL learners from all over the world. They were enrolled in three distinct U.S. programs (a community college, a family literacy site, and a workplace site), each oriented to enhancing greater English language fluency, increasing content knowledge, and improving effectiveness as workers, parents, or students.

Our purposes were to gain a better understanding of how these adults perceived program learning; how, if at all, program learning helped them to enact a particular social role; and how, if at all, these adults changed while participating in the program. We were particularly interested in how the participants made sense of their instruction, their own motives and goals for learning, their expectations of themselves and their teachers, and their definitions of and sense of themselves in their social roles as students, workers, and/or parents. Additionally, we sought to understand how they conceived of program supports and challenges to their learning and role competence.

We situate our study in the expanding field of ABE/ESOL research in which we detect a growing restlessness and an over-representation of large sample, quantitative, demographic, summary approaches (Skilton-Sylvester & Carlo, 1998; Rockhill, 1982; Valentine, 1990; Horsman, 1990; Hunter & Harman, 1979). We note that several contributors to the field make clear that what is needed are more thickly descriptive qualitative approaches which are not so markedly framed from the perspective of either the ABE/ESOL “mission,” in general, or the intentions

and purposes of the specific ABE/ESOL program in which the learner is enrolled. As some researchers note, in much of the research the learner's perspective tends to be considered in light of a program's expectations or the U.S. host society's definitions of the learner's needs, rather than considering the perspectives of learners as *they* would define their own experiences, their own hopes, and their own needs (Wiley, 1993).

In contrast, our study attends to the learner's meanings as the fundamental starting point of the exploration. In so doing we join such researchers as Lytle and her colleagues (Lytle, 1991; Lytle & Schultz, 1990; Lytle, Marmor & Penner, 1986) in their call to help develop a literature of "adults' own evolving conceptual frameworks or theories about language, literacy, teaching, and learning" (Lytle, 1991, p. 120). To this end we most thoroughly attend to both the *meaning constitutive* and potentially *transformable* nature of adult learners' *beliefs*. We focus on how these shape experience, constituting a lens through which the learner looks out at the world within and beyond the classroom, and how that lens can potentially change over time.

Our Developmental Perspective on Adulthood

Our approach derives from a 30 year long-standing theoretical and methodological tradition in the field of adult growth and learning that follows closely the *development* of individuals' ways of *making sense of* their inner and outer experience (Basseches, 1984; Baxter-Magolda, 1992; Belenky, et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; King & Kitchener, 1994; Kohlberg, 1969; Perry, 1970). This perspective is referred to as "constructive-developmental" because it considers the way a person's beliefs *construct* the reality in which he lives, *and* the way these beliefs can change or *develop* over time.

In our constructive-developmental perspective a person's beliefs amount to an interpretive lens through which an individual makes meaning. This lens filters the way a person takes in, organizes, understands, and analyzes her experiences—it represents her *way of knowing*.¹ Our perspective also suggests that our relationship to our ways of knowing are not casual, random, or strictly idiosyncratic. Rather they are durable for a period of time; reflect an identifiable inner logic and coherence; and may feel more to us like the way we *are* rather than something we *have*. The world we construct through our way of knowing may seem to us less the way things *look to us*, and more like the way things *are*.

We link adult growth and development to the lifelong process of constructing increasingly complex systems of meaning making—or ways of knowing—in order to better understand ourselves and our social roles in an increasingly complex world. Adults gradually evolve from a simpler way of knowing or underlying meaning system to another more complex way of knowing at their own pace depending on the available supports, scaffolding, appropriate developmental challenges, and encouragement for growth. We see development as an interactive process between the person and the environment, which transpires within a social-cultural context. In the United States, the

social role and task demands on adults frequently outpace an individual's developmental capacities (Kegan, 1994). Moreover, there may or may not be the necessary supports to develop more complex capacities.

We identify three qualitatively distinct ways of knowing most prevalent in adulthood and widely represented in the present study. While developmental processes are sequential, people of similar ages and life-phases can be at different places in their development (Broderick, 1996; Drago-Severson, 1996; Goodman, 1983; Kegan, 1982; Popp, 1993; Portnow, 1996; Portnow, Popp, Broderick, Drago-Severson, & Kegan, 1998; Stein, 2000). We refer to these three broadly different ways of knowing as the Instrumental, Socializing, and Self-Authoring ways of knowing.

A person predominantly making meaning with an Instrumental way of knowing tends toward a concrete, external, and transactive orientation to the world. Experience of self, others, and the world is understood and organized by concrete attributes, events, sequences; by observable actions and behaviors; by one's own vantage point, interests, and preferences. Rules, sets of directions, and dualisms give shape and structure to one's daily life, providing the trajectory for the right way to do what one needs to do, whether helping kids with homework or doing one's job.

A person predominantly making meaning with a Socializing way of knowing has a more abstract and internal orientation to the world. The self, others, and the world participate in a swirl of values, loyalties, and longer-term purposes which are seen to underlie events, attributes, and immediate preferences. Other people are experienced not merely as resources or supplies to the self but also as sources of internal validation, orientation, or authority. The self is identified with or "made up by" its relationship to other persons (such as important people in one's life) or ideas (such as religious, political, or philosophical ideologies).

Persons with a predominantly Self-Authoring way of knowing have the capacity to take responsibility for and ownership of their own internal authority, to be the "maker up" of their own system of belief (rather than "made up by"). The person now has the capacity not only to identify (and identify *with*) abstract values, ideals, and longer-term purposes, but also to prioritize and integrate competing values; to appeal the expectations and demands of others to one's own internal seat of judgment; and to author an overall system of belief or personal ideology of one's own.

Although development is a gradual process and the complete evolution from one comprehensive way of knowing to another may take years (Kegan, 1994), there are identifiable and significantly different steps along the way, each move creating a new frame on how adults think about themselves as parents, learners, and workers. A person's way of knowing shapes how she will understand her responsibilities, possibilities, and expectations for herself as a student, as an employee, or as a parent.

Research Methods

In 1997, we identified three Adult Basic Education (ABE/ESOL) settings that were running programs we considered exemplary. "Best practice" programs are commonly celebrated because they use effective methods for achieving results and set benchmarks for other programs (Hammer & Champy, 1993). In our case, we selected programs that were longer term (nine to 14 months), enabling us to explore the possibilities of long-term growth in students' understanding. These programs allowed us to examine the developmental dimensions of transformational learning—i.e., how the ways of knowing, for some learners, might actually change. We also looked for programs that intentionally incorporated a variety of supports and challenges to facilitate adult learning (including, for example, tutoring, advising, technological support for learners). Moreover, each program included practices and curricula aimed at supporting the enhancement of adults' specific role competency in one of three social roles: student, parent, or worker. The three sites were: a high school diploma program oriented especially to the work role, staffed by the Continuing Education Institute of Watertown, Massachusetts, and provided to factory workers at the Norwood, Massachusetts plant of the Polaroid Corporation; a Massachusetts Even Start program oriented especially to family literacy; and a pre-enrollment program for prospective higher education students, offered by the Bunker Hill Community College of Charlestown, Massachusetts.

Rich diversities and intriguing commonalities characterized the sample of learners. The learners were men and women; people in their early 20's to mid-life; and mostly immigrants—non-white, non-native English speakers **mostly** from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and from every part of the world. Some of the participants were adults whose prior schooling experiences were negative and marked by shame and failure, and others had prior educational experiences that were positive and marked by pride and success. At the same time, within each site there was an intriguing concentration of learners around a given age and life-phase. The learners at the Bunker Hill Community College site were mostly unmarried young adults in their 20's; the learners at the Even Start Site were mostly in their 30's, and the parents of young children; and the learners at the Polaroid plant were frequently mid-life adults, men and women in their 40's, the parents of older children.

The three sites also provided contrasts in their particular learning focus and cohort design. At Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) learners were a group of recently emigrated young adults who were enrolled in a 9-month pilot program helping them become better prepared for academic coursework in college. These learners participated in the same two classes during their first semester of the program (an ESOL class and an introductory psychology class designed for ESOL learners). During the second semester the group disbanded and each learner independently selected his or her own courses from the full range of academic courses available at BHCC. At the Even Start Family Literacy Program in Massachusetts, learners had emigrated from various countries and had been in the U.S. for an average of nine years. Enrolled either in a pre-GED class or an ESOL class,

these learners entered and exited the program at their own distinct times. At the Polaroid Corporation of Waltham, Massachusetts, learners comprised a group of workers who participated in a 14-month Adult Diploma Program leading to the high school diploma (designed and staffed by the Continuing Education Institute). Many of these learners had lived in the U.S. for close to twenty years. In this program every learner began the program at the same time, all worked toward a common purpose, and all graduated the program at the same time.

A total of 41 of the initial 58 learners across the three sites participated in the complete study, making time available on three (and, at the Polaroid site, four) separate extended occasions to share their thinking via a variety of data collection methods and tools, including tape-recorded, open-ended qualitative interviews; structured exercises; classroom observations; focus groups; and quantitative survey type measures. Although we considered interviewing each adult learner in his or her first language, the diversity of our sample made the cost of this strategy prohibitive and impractical. All interviews were administered individually, in English. Each visit lasted several hours and permitted us to gather data on a wealth of questions about participants' experience of a variety of aspects of the learning and teaching enterprise, for example: What are your purposes in pursuing this learning? What, in your view, makes a person a good teacher? What effect is your learning having on your work, in your relationships with your child, or in your role as a prospective college student? Revisiting the same participant over the course of a year or more also allowed us to ask of the data (as well as the participant): Are there changes over time in the learner's views on these kinds of matters?

The overarching research questions that guided our study were:

- 1) How does developmental level (i.e., way of knowing) shape adults' experiences and definitions of the core roles they take on as learners, parents, and workers?

What are the regularities in the ways in which adults at similar levels of development construct the role demands and supports in each of these domains?

- 2) How do adult learners' ways of knowing shape their experience and definition of programs dedicated to increasing their role competence?

What are adult learners' motives for learning, definitions of success, conceptions of the learners' role, and understandings of their teachers' relationship to their learning?

- 3) What educational practices and processes contribute to changes in the learner's relationship to learning (vis-à-vis motive, efficacy, and meaning system) and specifically to any re-conceptualizations of core roles?

FINDINGS

In addition to the many better understood forms of diversity that are present in an ABE/ESOL classroom, and which good teachers strive to recognize and include (differences of gender, age, race, cultural origin), our study suggests the importance of *another form of diversity*—a new kind of pluralism—namely, the differing meaning-systems or ways of knowing which adult learners bring into the room. All three of the study's major findings revolve around the importance of this new variable for thinking about teaching and learning in the ABE/ESOL classroom.

The three findings have to do with

- 1) the possibility and variety of **significant change** for adults in ABE/ESOL settings, even during as short a period as about a year;
- 2) **the importance of the cohort** for adult learning;
- 3) the variety of **importantly different ways of knowing** adults bring to the ABE/ESOL classroom.

Major Finding #1: Varieties of Change for ABE/ESOL Learners

As we listened to the learners at all three program sites, across the many months of their programs, we were struck by the forms of change they exhibited. Participants changed in at least three important ways: 1) informative, 2) transformative, and 3) acculturation. We will first introduce them briefly and then describe them in more detail in the main body of this section.

- 1) All participants were seeking to gain new kinds of information, skills, and ideas throughout the course of their program. Often, these changes contributed to consolidation and elaboration of their perspectives—where learners extended their ideas and values within their existing ways of knowing. Participants also described their learning as contributing either to ongoing or hoped for improvements in many other aspects of their lives, including their sense of their own identity, their careers, their social and economic status, their home lives, and their confidence in themselves.
- 2) Some participants experienced transformational changes. These learners not only made gains in *what* they knew; they also modified the shape of *how* they knew. They grew to demonstrate new and more complex ways of knowing. That these qualitative shifts in participants' ways of knowing would occur even for a few learners over the short span of one year is quite remarkable.
- 3) Most of the 41 participants in our study were also undergoing changes of acculturation. As immigrants to the United States, they were confronting the formidable tasks of gaining fluency in the English language as well as fluency in a new culture. We found the ways participants experienced and navigated these changes were related to their developmental position. That is, learners with

different ways of knowing demonstrated notable differences in their descriptions of these changes. Learners with the same way of knowing, on the other hand, gave descriptions of change that had striking similarities.

In order to give a brief and somewhat contextualized overview of these changes here, as well as to explicate the developmentally driven similarities and differences among the learners, we discuss each type of change as it was evidenced in one particular site and around one particular aspect of the program. However, it is important to note that the changes we describe were evident *at all three sites*, and in several aspects of the program.

Changes of Consolidation and Elaboration—As Illustrated by ABE/ESOL Students at Even Start

One dimension of the changes among participants, across all three sites, centered on the ways in which new learning enabled participants to consolidate and elaborate on their existing social identities within a given way of knowing. In addition to gaining new skills, knowledge, ideas, perspectives, and values, learners formed new relationships between these ideas, and perhaps reconsidered their own beliefs. These types of changes—what we call consolidation and elaboration—allowed participants to build up and deepen their way of knowing. At Even Start, a family literacy program, learners described how various aspects of the curriculum helped them broaden their understanding of their parenting role and supported them in enacting their visions of themselves as effective parents. For the most part, this consolidating and elaborating went on within the same broad way of knowing with which they entered and exited the ABE/ESOL program.

Parents who predominantly had recourse to an Instrumental way of knowing tended toward a concrete focus on their own and their children's needs. They often found it difficult to put themselves in the shoes of their children and understood proper discipline as ensuring their children did what they were told, followed the rules, and met parental needs. In recounting how various aspects of their program enhanced their ability to parent, Instrumental learners described their increasing ability to perform practical functions and activities. They reported that the program enabled them to better help their children because they were more effective in communicating with doctors and teachers, assisting their children with homework, and making better use of public transportation. Unlike their Socializing and Self-Authoring peers, Instrumental learners *did not* identify additional criteria by which they understood their parenting role.

Parents tending to make use of a Socializing way of knowing demonstrated the ability to internalize their children's perspectives. They held values of parenting that were prescribed culturally or by authorities, and they disciplined their children in alignment with these externally mediated values. In many cases, Socializing learners at Even Start accepted the underlying values of the program's parenting curriculum, through which they were able to consolidate and elaborate their own views and values of parenting. These learners explained and valued how their increasing ability to

participate in educational activities with their children, such as reading aloud or working on a school project, deepened the emotional bonds between them.

Parents predominantly making meaning according to the Self-Authoring way of knowing saw themselves as creators and generators of their own parenting “philosophies.” These parents were able to take into account both the child’s internal psychological perspective and their own, and they recognized that children’s successes and struggles were distinct from and not determined by those of their parents. At Even Start, Self-Authoring learners often adopted the program’s approaches to or information about disciplining their children; however, they were able to assess the program’s values according to their own self-generated parenting philosophies. Increased parenting skills and information were valued as important sources of fuel for their own self-definition of parenting competence.

Transformational Changes to Learners’ Ways of Knowing—As Illustrated by ABE/ESOL Polaroid Learners (The “good teacher”)

Some learners experienced changes that not only deepened or elaborated their current way of knowing, but led to changes in the way of knowing itself. For example, at several points during their programs, we invited all learners at each site to describe their understanding of what makes a “good teacher.” Over the course of the program, we observed how several Polaroid learners came to demonstrate new ways of knowing, qualitatively changing their conceptions of, for example, good teachers.

Learners with an Instrumental way of knowing wanted their teachers to provide clear explanations, corrections on written work and speech, and step-by-step procedures in order to make them learn. They focused on their own concrete needs and felt supported when teachers gave them information and task-oriented scaffolding to help them build the mechanical skills they needed to complete their assignments. These learners identified good teachers as *those who “made” them learn*. But by the end of the program, we noticed that many of these learners described “the good teacher” in ways more similar to those who, from the beginning, operated out of a Socializing way of knowing.

These participants, like Instrumental knowers, felt supported in their learning when teachers explained concepts well and talked slowly. However, unlike Instrumental knowers, Socializing learners also expected their teachers to be *good role models*. Wanting their teachers to value their ideas and themselves, they felt most supported by teachers who really “cared” about them. While Socializing learners felt that good teachers helped them understand concepts so that they could complete assignments, they explained that it was the interpersonal connection they had with good teachers that helped them to feel comfortable. They appreciated teachers who employed a variety of teaching strategies that helped them to apply their learning to broader goals. Learners with a Socializing way of knowing were not only interested in *fulfilling* their teachers’ expectations of them, but they also *identified with* their teachers’ expectations of them. In other words, the teachers’ learning goals for them became their own goals for learning. They viewed their teachers as

sources of authority and expected the teacher to know what they needed to learn. Although these learners could feel (internally) when they had learned something, they needed the teacher's acknowledgement to validate it. During the programs, several learners who entered with a Socializing way of knowing grew to demonstrate a more Self-Authoring way of knowing operating alongside a Socializing way of knowing. For instance, these learners began to see their teachers' perspective and expectations as separate from their own. Some learners developed a capacity to appreciate the complexity of a teacher's work and developed an understanding of the motivation to learn, to a certain extent, as independent of the teacher's influence.

Learners who were Self-Authoring knowers not only saw their teachers as authorities and sources of knowledge, but importantly also viewed themselves and each other as generators of knowledge. These learners, unlike Socializing knowers, were often able to reflect on their teachers' instruction and offer constructive feedback. Like Socializing knowers, they voiced appreciation for teachers who employed a variety of teaching techniques and strategies to meet learners' needs. However, they were primarily concerned with meeting their own goals and internally generated standards on behalf of what they saw as their larger learning purposes. They had their own internally generated criteria for assessing and critiquing good teachers, who in their view, supported them in meeting their own goals for competence and self-mastery. Additionally, Self-Authoring knowers took greater responsibility for their learning both inside and outside of the classroom. For example, many of these learners talked about "growing" themselves and "feeling strong" as they learned in the program.

Changes Linked to Acculturation—As Illustrated by ESOL Students at Bunker Hill Community College (The "good student")

At all three sites, many learners experienced changes relating to acculturation and, in particular, related to their understanding of what it meant to be a "good student." At BHCC, the vast majority of the participants were recent immigrants who were growing accustomed to their new roles as students in an American community college. In order to find success in these new roles—to become what teachers and institutions recognize as "good students"—the learners needed to understand and demonstrate the specific skills, behaviors, attitudes, and types of knowledge that are valued in these settings. As with other aspects of their learning experiences, the ways that BHCC students described their understandings of a "good student" were shaped by their different ways of knowing.

Instrumental learners oriented largely to the externally observable behaviors and skills that they had to acquire to be successful as students. They described the importance of improving their academic English language skills, including learning new vocabulary and constructing five-paragraph essays according to accepted rules of grammar, punctuation, organization, and style. Developing successful strategies for studying, such as note taking, using a textbook effectively, and completing homework regularly and correctly were also mentioned as important skills for these learners to acquire. Other particular behaviors that Instrumental learners

emphasized included asking questions and offering opinions in class discussions; attending all classes and arriving to them promptly; and utilizing institutional forms of academic support such as personal tutoring and computer software programs. Considering the identified behaviors and concrete skills as the keys to academic success, these learners were likely to evaluate their learning based on the grades and course credit they received and according to their ability to produce the “right” answers. While it is important to mention that all learners (not only Instrumental learners) named many of these concerns, what distinguishes Instrumental learners from the others is that they described *only* these concerns.

Like Instrumental learners, Socializing learners saw the need to learn the skills and behaviors valued by American educational institutions and their teachers and they included these concerns in their explanations. However, they also oriented to abstract purposes and internal characteristics, such as considerations of character and personality that were both augmented by and could help them acquire particular skills and new types of knowledge. In order to become good students and learn effectively in their new environment, according to the way they saw it, it was important also to maintain a “positive” attitude, a sense of “hope,” and the “will to learn.” Accordingly, these students tended to refer to the internal world of their attitudes and their personality when they evaluated their learning, judging themselves, for example, on their ability to remain open and receptive to new learning.

In addition to demonstrating similar concerns about acquiring new skills and knowledge, and acknowledging the importance of more abstract internal states, Self-Authoring learners also referred to and concentrated on additional priorities. These students often described their struggles to master the English language in terms of how effectively they were able to communicate the complexity of their own ideas. They showed interest in differences of opinion where each perspective could be considered as a possible and viable alternative that could inform their own understanding. Thus, rather than relying on teachers to communicate correct information or ideas as both Instrumental and Socializing learners did, Self-Authoring students regarded themselves and other students as additional and valid sources of knowledge. These learners could evaluate their teachers and the subject matter by their usefulness in meeting the learners’ own self-constructed goals.

Combinations of Change

The changes the participants in our study related and demonstrated are not as straight forward as the above descriptions imply. Instead, many learners across the sites were experiencing multiple types of changes that influenced several, if not all, aspects of their lives. For example, some participants were making transitions of acculturation *and* transformation simultaneously, and these changes concerned not one, but many aspects of their experiences. Participants were coming to many new understandings at once: of their role as students, of the teacher’s role, of the subject matter they were studying, and of their

relationships to their fellow classmates. We see all these dimensions of change as therefore inter-related and reciprocal.

Furthermore, these changes also combined with and animated other changes. Across all three sites, as learners extended their skills and knowledge, their confidence and feelings of success also grew. Many adjusted the goals and expectations they set for themselves to incorporate larger and more ambitious dreams and plans. Thus, the changes they experienced in the classroom carried over into other aspects of their lives. In particular, students reported that the learning they did in their programs heightened their competency in their social role, enhancing their performance as students, workers, or parents.

Major Finding #2: The Power of the Cohort in Adult Learning

We did not initially set out to examine the influence of the learner peer group on participants' program experience, but an unexpected finding was that being part of a "cohort"—a tight-knit, reliable, common-purpose group—was extraordinarily important to participants, and in *different* ways, at all three sites. This finding challenges the longstanding view that adults, who often come to their class-taking with well-established social networks, are less in need of entrée to a new community than, for example, college-age adolescents who are psychologically separating from their families of origin and who have not yet formed new communities of which they are a part (Knowles, 1970, 1975; Cross, 1971, 1981; Aslanian & Brickell, 1980). Despite interesting differences in the cohort design across the three sites, the interpersonal relationships that these adult peers developed in the cohort made a critical difference to their academic learning, their emotional and psychological well-being, and their ability to broaden their perspectives.

The Cohort as a Holding Environment

Growth processes, like learning and teaching processes, depend on connections, and thus invariably occur in some *context* (Kegan, 1982). Students with different meaning making systems will need different forms of support and challenge from their surrounding contexts in order to grow. We refer to such contexts as “holding environments” (Kegan, 1982, 1994), which, when successful, can help students grow to better manage the complexities of their learning and their other social roles.

A good holding environment serves three functions (Kegan, 1982, 1994). First, it must “hold well,” meaning that it meets a person by recognizing and confirming who that person is, without the holder's frustration, disappointment, or urgent anticipation of change. It provides appropriate supports to accommodate the way the person is currently making meaning. Secondly, and when a person is ready, a good holding environment needs to “let go,” permitting, challenging, and stimulating learners to grow beyond their existing perceptions to new and more complex ways of knowing. Third, a good holding environment “sticks around,” providing continuity, stability, and availability to the person in the process of growth.

This means that, whenever possible, the holding environment remains in place so that relationships can be re-known and reconstructed in a new way—a way that upports who the person has grown to become.

While this third characteristic of good holding may be difficult to provide in shorter-term ABE/ESOL programs, we believe that any classroom can include the other two features, namely high support and high challenge.

Both are essential for good holding. It was apparent in our study, despite different design features, that for most participants their learning group became something very much different than “just a class” or “just a group.” In all three settings participants spoke of the group as “like a family,” or a band of warriors, or fellow strugglers—in short, a cohort. These cohorts served as dynamic transitional growth spaces that helped learners make good use of each other by providing both the *challenge* that encouraged learners to grow and the *support* they needed in order to meet those challenges.

The Learner Cohorts at the Three Research Sites

As mentioned, the three sites in our study provided interesting contrasts in terms of their specific cohort designs. At the BHCC site, students started their program together and were enrolled in the same two classes during their first semester. The cohort disbanded at the start of the second term, and each student independently selected his or her own courses for that semester. At Even Start, each parent determined his or her own entry and exit times from the family literacy program (perhaps the most common design in ABE/ESOL classes). Many parents had enrolled in this program before our study began and continued after its completion. At the Polaroid site, all workers began the adult diploma program at the same time, worked toward a common purpose, and all left the program at the same time.

Despite these differences in the cohort shape and configuration (and differences of age and life-phase), the importance of participating in a learner cohort held true at all three sites. Even though these adults, like adults in general, used quite different ways of knowing, they all described how their cohorts served several key purposes. First, the cohort served to support and challenge adult students in their *academic learning*. Participants at all sites reported that their academic learning was enhanced due to their participation in collaborative learning activities within their cohorts. Secondly, the cohort served as a context where students provided a variety of forms of *emotional and psychological support* to each other. Lastly, the cohort challenged learners to *broaden their perspectives*. What is noteworthy is that both within and across sites, learners who shared a particular way of knowing demonstrated similar conceptions of how the cohort and collaborative learning experiences served to support and challenge them in multiple ways. Furthermore, students with different ways of knowing described important differences in these conceptions. Overall, these findings suggest not only the importance of a cohort, but that elements *other than* a specific structure regarding entry and exit might be crucial to transforming a class into a cohort.

The Learner Cohort as a Holding Environment for Academic Learning

Sharon Hamilton (1994) provides helpful suggestions to teachers who wish to construct collaborative learning activities to enhance academic learning. She describes three distinct models identified by John Trimbur (1993) and relates them to the characteristics, practices, and beliefs about collaborative learning that she has observed within the field over the past decade. In so doing, she illustrates how these three models can be applied to classrooms and suggests that teachers adopt one particular model that aligns with their teaching philosophy or personal style.

Each model has its own goals and suggested processes. The first model, the “postindustrialist model” of collaborative learning, “appears in classrooms in the form of group efforts to solve common problems formulated by an instructor whose curricular agenda determines group structure, time on task, goals, and anticipated answers” (Hamilton, 1994, p. 94). The second model, the “social constructionist model,” consists of “engaging students more actively in their learning while concurrently developing social skills of negotiation and consensus building” (Hamilton, 1994, p. 95). Finally, the third model is the “popular democratic model” of collaborative development, where the challenge for learners is “not to obliterate essential differences in the search for commonalities but rather to envision these essential differences as catalysts for the making of meaning within specific concepts of the particular course” (Hamilton, 1994, pp. 95-96). Not only do these models have different goals, but each model also assigns different responsibilities to teachers and learners and recommends different principles for designing classroom environments. In our study, we noticed a remarkable correspondence between these three models of collaborative learning and those preferred in the three different meaning systems that learners demonstrated at each site, raising obvious questions about whether teachers really have the luxury of adopting the one model that most closely aligns with their personal teaching style or philosophy.

Learners who were Instrumental knowers primarily valued opportunities to work collaboratively because doing so helped them achieve specific concrete, behavioral goals. Their reasoning aligns with the goals of the “postindustrial model.” Instrumental learners said that cohort collaboration helped them:

- “find the right answers” in math, or the correct sentence structure when writing
- learn how to use the right words to better express themselves in English, and improve their vocabulary
- learn how to communicate better with other people at work, at home, and in their daily interactions with other people in the world (e.g., with school officials, doctors, and/or their children’s teachers)
- see classmates and even themselves as holders of knowledge (constructed as an accumulation of facts, and/or parenting practices that they could then implement)
- understand the meaning of words and concepts

- learn how to learn on their own (as evidenced by demonstrating a behavior)

While valuing the supports that were named by Instrumental knowers, Socializing knowers also spoke about appreciating the encouragement they received from peers and/or fellow parents. Socializing learners especially valued the cohort and collaborative work for the important emotional and psychological support it offered as they balanced the multiple demands of work, family, and school. Their experience mirrors the goals of the “social constructionist model” of collaborative learning. It helped them:

- feel “comfortable” asking questions when they did not know the answer or did not know what to do in particular situations
- learn to “socialize with other people”
- feel less “afraid when speaking English” in front of others (both within and outside of the classroom)

Although Self-Authoring knowers mentioned both the functional and psychological/emotional reasons why working with cohort members was helpful, they focused particularly on their appreciation of the different perspectives members in the group brought to any particular activity. Their experience aligns closely with the goals of the “popular democratic model” of collaborative learning. Working with other cohort members helped them:

- enhance their learning and teaching processes because they were exposed to varying perspectives (points of view) on particular issues
- better understand themselves and other learners’ academic, parenting, and life experiences
- recognize and, at times, appreciate forms of difference and commonality across and beyond the cohort

That these three groups of learners’ descriptions so closely match those described in the literature suggests that, in designing collaborative activities, educators, in contrast to Hamilton’s suggestions, should perhaps give less priority to *which* approach *they* personally favor and more consideration to the prospect of needing to provide *all three* models in any one classroom—the “new pluralism” to which our research directs us more generally. We elaborate on this recommendation in the implication section of this Executive Summary.

The Learner Cohort as a Holding Environment for Emotional Support

The literature on group learning also points to ways these groups can serve as social and emotional support (see, for example Bosworth & Hamilton, 1994; Pedersen & Digby 1995). Our study again demonstrates how learners experienced this emotional support *differently* according to their ways of knowing. While for many of the participants the cohort became “like a family,” the meaning of “family” is different according to different ways of knowing.

For students who were predominantly Instrumental knowers, the cohort was a place where their ideas could be compared to those of other people and where peers created an active learning environment. For several of these learners, the cohort sometimes embodied a community of concern. For example, when a student was absent from a particular class, others inquired about the student's wellbeing. Support was discussed in more concrete ways such as help with homework, friendly encouragement, and/or help pronouncing words correctly.

Students who were predominantly Socializing knowers were less orientated to discussing the external facts of a situation and more orientated to their internal experience of the thoughts and ideas of cohort peers. For these learners, the cohort was about being in a relationship with one another, a way of giving an abstract level of support, of accepting and valuing each other. Lack of conflict among cohort members was essential to their comfort. While individuals with any way of knowing might dislike or feel uncomfortable with conflict, those making meaning with a Socializing way of knowing often found conflict with important people or ideas particularly difficult. These students often avoided conflict as it felt like a breach of the loyalty and mutuality they looked for in relationships.

Learners who were predominantly Self-Authoring knowers, however, were able to experience conflict as a necessary and inevitable aspect of the natural back and forth discussions they had with each other and saw it as a way to enhance their own learning. They saw the relationships among group members not as an end in itself but as an enrichment of their own experience and understanding. Like Socializing knowers, they acknowledged and valued the connections with others and identified these connections as important factors in their learning lives. However, for Self-Authoring learners, the connections with others went beyond a need for acceptance and validation to providing a bigger context for voicing, working out, and challenging their own ideas and thoughts. Self-Authoring learners valued the *process* of working together for the ways it stimulated new ideas and new thinking both for themselves and for others.

The Learner Cohort as a Holding Environment for Perspective Broadening

Interpersonal interactions with cohort members also helped students to become more aware of and to share their own perspectives. Sharing ideas through dialogue and writing challenged and supported learners to broaden their perspectives by listening to and considering others' outlooks. Engaging with others in groups over time *challenged* cohort learners to experiment with and enact new ways of thinking and behaving. Collaboration with other cohort learners often became a catalyst for growth.

Many learners therefore began to understand their relationship to the cohort in new ways. We observed that some learners' notions of these group experiences expanded as they progressed through their programs. (We refer to these changes as a consolidation or elaboration—where learners extended their ideas within their existing way of knowing). Also, several students understood their cohort experience in more complex ways. (We refer to this

as transformational change—where students evidenced qualitative and pervasive shifts in their underlying meaning system). The shapes of students' growth varied, depending on their ways of making meaning.

Several learners who were initially Instrumental knowers commented on how the experience of listening to and learning from cohort members transformed their thinking about themselves, their own families of origin, and people from other countries. These students began to think differently about their classmates and about life experiences in general. By coming to know others in the group whose backgrounds were starkly different from their own, several learners grew better able to understand and empathize with other people.

For students with a predominantly Socializing way of knowing, working with others in the cohort created an opportunity for recognizing and exploring cultural differences which permeated cohort sharing and filtered into discussions. Several learners began to recognize commonalities across their cohort group that enabled them to manage their differences, rather than feel threatened by them. A few students grew to be able to generalize their enhanced capacity for perspective taking beyond the classroom and into other domains of their lives (e.g., work). The holding environment of the cohort supported several learners to be better able to take on other people's perspectives, which helped them in many aspects of their lives.

Students who were predominantly Self-Authoring knowers experienced the learner cohort as a context for analyzing and critiquing information which they then used to enhance their competence as learners and in their social roles as students, parents, and workers. The cohort was a safe place that challenged and supported them as they broadened their perspectives on their own and on other people's learning process. Some of these students adopted a broader perspective on their own learning when they came to believe that they could learn from the process of working with other cohort members who were different from them. Working with learners from different countries helped several Self-Authoring knowers to develop a new and deeper understanding and appreciation of what it meant to be a person who came to the United States as an adult learner.

The holding environment of the cohort served as a context where adults were often encouraged by each other, and by teachers, to challenge their own assumptions. We believe this deeply influences the ways in which individuals think and act (Kegan & Lahey, 2001).

Major Finding #3: A New Pluralism: Varieties of Meaning Systems Among Adult Learners

Despite the fact that learners in any one of the three research settings were primarily of similar age and oriented to a common and particular social role (for example, at the Even Start site all participants were parents and tended to be in their 30's; and at the Polaroid site all participants were workers and tended to be in their 40's), we discovered in each setting a *diversity* in learners' ways of knowing—an intriguing and less visible new form of

pluralism. To return to our conceptual graphic (Figure One), while many of our participants may have begun their programs as English language *beginners*, situated on the left side of the horizontal, they were arrayed from the beginning *all over the vertical trajectory*. Moreover, these learners demonstrated a range of ways of knowing that was *virtually identical* to the range found in previous studies with samples of *native English speaking adults* when those samples consisted of participants of similarly widespread socio-economic status (see e.g., Kegan, 1994). For example, at each of our research sites there was at least one learner for whom an Instrumental way of knowing was dominant. At each of the sites, there were several learners for whom Self-Authoring ways of knowing were dominant. At all three sites, the majority of learners demonstrated some degree of a Socializing way of knowing. Thus, the diversity in these participants' ways of knowing represents a continuum that is similar to that demonstrated by previous samples examined in prior research. ABE/ESOL learners should *not* be presumed to construct experience less complexly than anyone else. Nor are the differences in complexity of learners' meaning systems highly associated with level of formal education. That is, some learners with limited formal education did nonetheless demonstrate developmentally complex meaning systems.

As even the brief elaborations here on the previous two findings suggest, interesting regularities and patterns emerged both within and across sites that illuminate how learners bound by a particular way of knowing commonly understood their program learning experiences, themselves as students, teacher expectations, and their social roles. Contrary to what might be "common sense" expectation, adults of markedly different ages, from very different cultures and parts of the world nonetheless shared these commonalities. Furthermore, people of similar ages or from similar cultural backgrounds were sometimes distinguished by very different ways of knowing—hence a “new pluralism” of significance for the teacher began to emerge.

This finding teaches us that ABE/ESOL classrooms are likely to be populated by adults who have a range of qualitatively different ways of making sense of their experiences. Therefore, teachers and programs that recognize students' developmental diversity—and support students' growth accordingly—will be especially effective. We suggest that educators who are alert to developmental differences and similarities among their students possess some very useful tools for understanding and supporting the learners they teach. This kind of developmental attentiveness may allow us to meet and better scaffold students with a diversity of learning needs and ways of knowing.

Note

¹ The important work of Belenky et al., especially *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986), has achieved such understandable prominence in the field of adult education, that it may be useful to point out that we are using the term "ways of knowing" in its literal and ordinary sense here; we are not referring to their specific taxonomy. A *way of knowing* (as distinct from *something* that is known, a *product* of knowing) is what in philosophy is

called an *epistemology*. The underlying structure of an epistemology is the subject-object relationship—what can this way of knowing reflect upon, look at, have perspective on ("object")? What is it embedded in, attached to, identified with ("subject")? The distinctly different meaning-systems defined in our study are identifiable as distinctly different ways of organizing the subject-object relationship; i.e., they are literally different "ways of knowing." Readers interested in the work of Belenky et al., may want to consider however, how their own framework constitutes an alternative way of rendering "the vertical" in Figure One.

Reading #5

Three Developmentally Different Types of Learners

Eleanor Drago-Severson, Deborah Heising, Robert Kegan, Maria Broderick, Kathryn Portnow, and Nancy Popp

Drago-Severson, E., Helsing, D., Kegan, R., Broderick, M., Portnow, K., & Popp, N. (2001). Three developmentally different types of learners. *Focus on Basics* 5(B), pp. 7-10.

How is it that the very same curriculum, classroom activities, or teaching behaviors can leave some learners feeling excited and their needs well met, while others feel deserted or lost? Research findings from the NCSALL Adult Development Research shed some light on this question. Despite similarities in the study participants, all of whom were participating in adult basic education (ABE) programs, the students demonstrated a diversity of ways of knowing. In this article, the NCSALL Adult Development Research Group demonstrate how a developmental perspective can be a tool for better understanding how adults make sense of the learning they experience in their programs. Our intention is to broaden conceptions about how to support adult learners in their educational processes.

Diversity of Learners' Ways of Knowing

Learners in any one of the three research settings in which we gathered data (see page 3 for a description of the study) were primarily of similar age and oriented to a common and particular social role (e.g., at one site, all participants were parents, at another, all participants were workers). We nevertheless discovered a diversity in learners' ways of knowing in each site. At the same time, the learners demonstrated a range of ways of knowing similar to the range found in previous studies with samples of native English-speaking adults with similarly widespread socioeconomic status (see e.g., Kegan, 1994). For example, at each of our research sites, an Instrumental way of knowing was dominant for at least one learner. At each of the sites, Self-Authoring ways of knowing were dominant for several learners. At all three sites, the majority of learners demonstrated some degree of a Socializing way of knowing (a person can have two ways of knowing operating at the same time). Instrumental knowers tend toward a concrete, external, and transactive orientation to the world; Socializing knowers identify self through its relation to other persons or ideas; and Self-Authoring knowers take responsibility for and ownership of their own internal authority. The differences in complexity of learners' ways of knowing were not highly associated with level of formal education. That is, some learners with limited formal education nonetheless demonstrated developmentally complex ways of knowing.

Interesting similarities and patterns emerged both within and across sites that illuminate how learners bound by a particular way of knowing commonly understood their program learning experiences, themselves as

students, teacher expectations, and their social roles. Adults of markedly different ages, from very different cultures, and from different parts of the world shared these commonalities. Furthermore, people of similar ages or from similar cultural backgrounds were sometimes differentiated by very different ways of knowing. Hence a "new pluralism" of significance for the teacher emerges: that of developmental level. **Tables 1 and 2** illustrate how, across all three sites, learners who shared a way of knowing demonstrated similar understanding in their conceptions of good students and good teachers.

Implications

Our findings teach us that ABE and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classrooms are likely to be populated by adults with a range of qualitatively different ways of making sense of their experiences. Therefore, teachers and programs that recognize students' developmental diversity and support their growth accordingly will be especially effective. Attention paid to development may allow ABE and ESOL programs to better scaffold students who have a diversity of learning needs and ways of knowing.

In our study, we found that participants' experiences varied across different ways of knowing, and that there were intriguing commonalities among the experiences of learners who shared a particular way of knowing. This less visible form of diversity in adults' ways of knowing is one aspect of what we call a "new pluralism." The diversity of learners' ways of knowing that will likely exist in any ABE or ESOL classroom calls for what constitutes the second aspect of our new pluralism. Educators need to be mindful of and orient toward this new variable by including a variety - or plurality - of pedagogical approaches in their classroom practice.

A final aspect of our new pluralism is that a person's way of knowing can become more complex (i.e., change) if she or he is provided with developmentally appropriate supports and challenges. Attending to the diversity of ways in which adults interpret and make sense of their experience - in addition to other more visible types of diversity - can provide new and important insights into learners' experiences.

To return to our opening question, familiarity with learners' different ways of knowing may help to explain how the very same curriculum, classroom activities, or teaching behaviors can leave some learners feeling excited and their needs well-met while others feel deserted or lost. In such cases, teachers may unknowingly be using materials or teaching strategies attuned to one way of knowing while neglecting others. For example, asking one student to critique another student's idea may be threatening to a Socializing knower, who depends on feeling a sense of empathy and agreement with her peers. Teaching the English language only as a collection of specific and concrete rules to be learned may leave both Socializing and Self-Authoring learners feeling frustrated, while an Instrumental learner may feel comfortable. A teacher's enhanced capacity to support all students in a class, across a range of ways of knowing, can increase the chances of more students feeling

recognized and valued for the meanings they bring to their learning. Students who are adequately and appropriately supported and challenged academically are more likely to learn more.

Conclusion

Our findings suggest that a new definition of the "resource-rich" classroom is needed including good pedagogical matches to a wide variety of adults' learning needs and ways of knowing. Thus, our study suggests that ABE and ESOL practitioners develop an understanding of this new variable - a diversity of learners' ways of knowing - as it expresses itself in the ABE or ESOL setting. By extension, we point to the need for educators to use a diversity of approaches in meeting and supporting learners with a diversity of learning needs and ways of knowing. Adult learners inevitably differ in ways that are less immediately apparent than that of more familiar pluralisms of race, gender, or age.

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Reading #6

Three Different Types of Change

Eleanor Drago-Severson, Deborah Heising, Robert Kegan, Maria Broderick, Kathryn Portnow, and Nancy Popp

Drago-Severson, E., Helsing, D., Kegan, R., Broderick, M., Portnow, K., & Popp, N. (2001). Three different types of change. *Focus on Basics* 5(B), pp. 10-14.

As adult basic education (ABE) students progress, teachers know their students are changing. How can teachers best understand and support multiple types of changes? In this article, the NCSALL Adult Development Research Group presents findings from our longitudinal study. We found that adults' participation in ABE and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programs were adult developmental events in which the learners generally extended the reach of an existing way of knowing to a wider range of applications, and in which some learners actually transformed their ways of knowing.

The NCSALL Adult Development Research Group views development as a lifelong process, meaning that even as adults we continue to grow and become more complex. We mark this growth along a spectrum of sequential and qualitatively distinct levels of development. The three most common levels for adults are the Instrumental way of knowing, the Socializing way of knowing, and the Self-Authoring way of knowing. Instrumental knowers tend toward a concrete, external, and transactive orientation to the world; Socializing knowers have more a more abstract and internal orientation; and Self-Authoring knowers take responsibility for and ownership of their own internal authority. A given way of knowing may frame and influence one's experience of oneself, others, and events. To grow from one level to the next involves a qualitative shift in the ways an adult knows and makes sense of the world.

In researching the experiences of 41 adult learners at three literacy programs over the course of a year or more, we found that learners' descriptions of their experiences varied notably across different ways of knowing. Participants who shared a particular way of knowing had intriguing commonalities among their descriptions. We were also struck by the three types of changes occurring in learners' lives, which we will first introduce briefly and then describe in more detail.

Changes: An Overview

Most of the 41 participants in our study were undergoing changes of acculturation. As immigrants to the United States, they were confronting the formidable tasks of gaining fluency in the English language as well as in their new culture. How participants experienced and navigated these changes was related to their developmental levels. That is, learners with different ways of knowing demonstrated notable differences in their descriptions of

these changes. Learners with the same way of knowing, on the other hand, gave descriptions of change that had striking similarities.

All participants were seeking to gain new kinds of information, skills, and ideas throughout the course of their program. Often, these changes contributed to consolidation and elaboration of their perspectives, through which learners made connections among and extended their ideas and values within their existing ways of knowing. Participants also described their learning as contributing either to occurring or hoped-for improvements in many other aspects of their lives, including their sense of identity, their careers, their social and economic status, their home lives, and their self-confidence.

Some participants experienced transformational changes. These learners not only made gains in what they knew, they also modified the shape of how they knew. They grew to demonstrate new and more complex ways of knowing, along the lines of the distinctions suggested in Tables 1 and 2 of the previous article, "Three Developmentally Different Types of Learners" on pp. 8 and 9. For these qualitative shifts in participants' ways of knowing to occur even for a few learners over the short span of one year is remarkable.

To give an overview of these changes here, as well as the developmentally driven similarities and differences among learners, we discuss each type of change as we saw it in one particular site and around one particular aspect of the program. Remember, however, that the changes we describe were evident at all three sites and were related to learners' conceptions of several aspects of the program (including for example, how they perceived themselves as students, their teachers, their peers, and their learning).

Acculturation

At all three sites, many learners experienced changes relating to acculturation and, in particular, to their understanding of what it meant to be a good student. At Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC), in Charlestown, MA, all participants were immigrants growing accustomed to their new roles as students in an American community college. To succeed in these new roles, the learners needed to acculturate: to understand and demonstrate the specific skills, behaviors, attitudes, and types of knowledge that are valued in these settings. As with other aspects of their learning experiences, the ways that BHCC students described their understandings of a good student were shaped by their different ways of knowing.

Learners' Ways of Knowing

INSTRUMENTAL

- Knowledge is a kind of possession, an accumulation of skills, facts, and actions that yield solutions; a means to an end. You get it and then you have it.
- Knowledge is right or wrong.
- Knowledge comes from external authority that tells you the right skills, facts, and rules you need to produce the results to get what you want.
- Knowledge helps one meet one's own concrete needs and goals, and obtain Instrumental outcomes.
- The purpose of education is to get X.

SOCIALIZING

- Knowledge is general information one should know for one's required social roles and to meet expectations of teachers and authorities.
- Knowledge is equated with objective truth.
- Knowledge comes from high authorities and experts who hand down truth and understanding. Authorities and experts are the source of the legitimate knowledge and informed opinions.
- Knowledge helps one to meet cultural and social expectations, gain acceptance and entry into social roles, and feel a sense of belonging.
- The purpose of education is to be X.

SELF-AUTHORING

- Knowledge is understood as construction, truth, a matter of context. Bodies of knowledge and theories are seen as models for interpreting and analyzing experience.
- Knowledge comes from one's interpretation and evaluation of standards, values, perceptions, deductions, and predictions.
- Knowledge comes from a self-generated curiosity and sense of responsibility for one's own learning.
- Knowledge helps to enrich one's life, to achieve a greater competence according to one's own standards, to deepen one's understanding of self and world to participate in the improvement of society.
- The purpose of education is to become X.

(By K. Portnow & N. Popp, (1998). "Transformational learning in adulthood." *Focus on Basics*, 2D. Adapted from R. Weathersby, *A Synthesis of Research and Theory on Adult Development: Its Implications for Adult Learning and Postsecondary Education*, 1976; pp. 88-89.)

Instrumental learners are oriented largely to the specific and concrete, externally observable behaviors and skills that they had to acquire to be successful as students. They described the importance of improving their academic English language skills, including learning new vocabulary, and constructing five-paragraph essays according to accepted rules of grammar, punctuation, organization, and style. They mentioned the importance of developing successful strategies for studying, such as note-taking, using a textbook effectively, and completing homework regularly and correctly. Other particular behaviors that Instrumental learners emphasized included asking questions and offering opinions in class discussions; attending all classes and arriving at them promptly; and utilizing institutional forms of academic support such as personal tutoring and computer software programs. Considering the identified behaviors and concrete skills as the keys to academic success, these learners were likely to evaluate their learning based on the grades and course credit they received and according to their ability to produce the "right" answers. While all learners name many of these concerns, Instrumental learners described only these concerns.

Like Instrumental learners, Socializing learners saw the need to learn the skills and behaviors valued by American educational institutions and included these concerns in their explanations. However, they also gave weight to abstract purposes and internal characteristics, such as considerations of character and personality that could help them acquire and were augmented by particular skills and new types of knowledge. To become good students and learn effectively in their new environment, they emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive attitude, a sense of hope, and the will to learn. Accordingly, these students tended to refer to their attitudes and their personalities when evaluating their learning, judging themselves on their ability to remain open and receptive to new learning.

Demonstrating similar concerns about acquiring new skills and knowledge and acknowledging the importance of more abstract internal states, Self-Authoring learners referred to and concentrated on additional priorities. These students often described their struggles to master the English language in terms of how effectively they were able to communicate the complexity of their ideas. They showed interest in differences of opinion: each perspective could be considered as a possible and viable alternative that could inform their own understanding. Thus, rather than relying on teachers to communicate correct information or ideas as both Instrumental and Socializing learners did, Self-Authoring students regarded themselves and other students as additional valid sources of knowledge. These learners could evaluate their teachers and the subject matter by their usefulness in meeting the learners' own self-constructed goals.

Consolidation and Elaboration

Another dimension of the changes in participants' lives, across all three sites, centered on how acquiring new learning enabled participants to consolidate and elaborate on their existing social identities within a given way of knowing. In addition to gaining new skills, knowledge, ideas, perspectives,

and values, learners formed new relationships among these ideas, and perhaps reconsidered their own beliefs. These changes in their perspectives on themselves and their roles - what we call consolidation and elaboration - are developmental changes: they allowed participants to build up and deepen their way of knowing. At an Even Start family literacy program in Cambridge, MA, learners described how various aspects of the curriculum helped them broaden their understanding of their parenting roles and supported them in enacting their visions of themselves as effective parents.

Instrumental parents had a concrete focus on their own and their children's needs and often found it difficult to put themselves in their children's shoes. They understood proper discipline as meaning that their children did what they were told, followed the rules, and met parental needs. In recounting how various aspects of their program enhanced their ability to parent, Instrumental learners described their increasing ability to perform practical behaviors. They reported that the program enabled them to help their children better because they were more effective in communicating with doctors and teachers, assisting their children with homework, and making better use of public transportation. Unlike their Socializing and Self-Authoring peers, Instrumental learners did not identify additional criteria by which they understood their parenting role.

Parents with a Socializing way of knowing demonstrated the ability to internalize their children's perspectives. They held values of parenting that were prescribed culturally or by authorities, and they disciplined their children according to the externally mediated values they had internalized. In many cases, Socializing learners at Even Start accepted the underlying values of the parenting curriculum, through which they were able to consolidate and elaborate their own views and values of parenting. These learners explained how their increasing ability to participate in educational activities with their children, such as reading aloud or working on a school project, deepened the emotional bonds between them.

Self-Authoring parents saw themselves as the creators and generators of their parenting philosophies. These parents were able to take into account both the child's internal psychological perspective and their own, and recognized that children's successes and struggles were distinct from and not determined by their parents'. At Even Start, Self-Authoring learners often adopted the program's approaches to or information about disciplining their children. However, they were able to assess the program's values according to their own self-generated parenting philosophies. Increased parenting skills and information were valued as important fuel for their own self-definition of parenting competence.

Transformational

At several points during their programs, we invited all learners at each site to describe their understanding of what makes a good teacher. Over the course of the program, we observed how several Polaroid learners experienced

transformation, growing to demonstrate new ways of knowing and qualitatively changing their conceptions of, in this example, good teachers.

Learners with an Instrumental way of knowing wanted their teachers to provide clear explanations, corrections on written and oral work, and step-by-step procedures. They focused on their own concrete needs and felt supported when teachers gave them information and task-oriented scaffolding to help them build the mechanical skills they needed to complete their assignments. These learners identified good teachers as those who made them learn. At the end of the program, we noticed changes in how several of these learners conceived the teacher-learner relationship. In many of these cases, Instrumental knowers began to recognize a more internal psychological and abstract quality to their learning, describing, for example, the way that their teachers made them feel about themselves. We marked these transformational changes as the emergence of a Socializing way of knowing.

Socializing learners, like Instrumental knowers, felt supported in their learning when teachers explained concepts well and talked slowly. However, unlike Instrumental knowers, Socializing learners also expected their teachers to value their ideas and themselves. They felt most supported by teachers who really cared about them. While Socializing learners felt that good teachers helped them understand concepts so that they could complete assignments, it was the interpersonal connection they had with good teachers that helped learners to feel comfortable. They appreciated teachers who employed a variety of teaching strategies that helped them to apply their learning to broader goals. Learners with a Socializing way of knowing were not only interested in fulfilling their teachers' expectations of them, but they also identified with their teachers' expectations of them. In other words, the teachers' learning goals for them became their own goals for learning. They viewed their teachers as sources of authority and expected the teacher to know what they needed to learn. Although these learners could sense internally when they had learned something, they needed the teacher's acknowledgement to feel complete. During the programs, several learners grew to demonstrate a more Self-Authoring way of knowing operating alongside of a Socializing way of knowing. For instance, these learners began to see their teachers' perspective and expectations as separate from their own. Some learners developed a capacity to appreciate the complexity of a teacher's work and began to understand their own motivation to learn as independent of the teacher's influence.

Self-Authoring knowers not only saw their teachers as authorities and sources of knowledge, but also viewed themselves and each other as generators of knowledge. These learners, unlike Socializing knowers, were often able to reflect on their teachers' instruction and offer constructive feedback. Like Socializing knowers, they voiced appreciation for teachers who employed a variety of teaching techniques and strategies to meet learners' needs. However, they were primarily concerned with meeting their own goals and internally generated standards on behalf of what they saw as their larger learning purposes. They had their own internally generated criteria for assessing and critiquing good teachers who, in their view, supported them

in meeting their own goals for competence and self-mastery. Self-Authoring knowers also took greater responsibility for their learning both inside and outside of the classroom. For example, many of these learners talked about "growing" and feeling "strong" as they learned in the program.

Combinations of Change

The changes that participants in our study related and demonstrated were not as straightforward as the above descriptions imply. Instead, many learners at all three sites were experiencing multiple types of changes that influenced several, if not all, aspects of their lives. For example, some participants were making transitions of acculturation and transformation simultaneously, and these changes concerned not one but many aspects of their experiences. Participants were coming to many new understandings at once: of their role as students, of the teacher's role, of the subject matter they were studying, and of their relationships to their fellow classmates. We see all these dimensions of change as therefore interrelated and reciprocal.

Furthermore, these changes also combined with and fueled other changes. Across all three sites, as learners extended their skills and knowledge, their confidence and feelings of success also grew. Many adjusted the goals and expectations they set for themselves to incorporate larger and more ambitious dreams and plans. Thus, the changes they experienced in the classroom carried over into other aspects of their lives. In particular, students reported that the learning they did in their programs heightened their competency in their social role, enhancing their performance as students, workers, or parents.

Implications

In recognizing and welcoming continuing forms and expressions of growth and change, educators can support students' newly emerging identities. We submit that teachers can best aid, encourage, or spur change among their learners by understanding both the points where students are and where educators would like them to be. In terms of acculturation, teachers must therefore understand how any one learner might currently be making sense of her experiences and how her way of knowing shapes the way she might acculturate to the United States. In terms of developmental change, teachers must not only understand a learner's existing way of knowing but must also be alert to ways he might be exploring and gradually taking on new and more complex ways of knowing.

Change also has associated risks. In our study, Socializing learners were particularly at risk for internalizing empowering but also disempowering values transmitted by authorities and the surrounding culture. For example, in acculturating to the United States, these participants were not yet able to generate their own critiques of the ways that they might be devalued as immigrants, members of racial minorities, and nonnative speakers of English. Socializing learners might also be particularly vulnerable to feelings of distress and low self-evaluation in the face of

teachers, administrators, or other authorities who might neglect or marginalize them. These students must receive appropriate supports from teachers, peers, and others to identify and contradict deprecating and disempowering cultural messages.

We suggest that one reason for the success of each program we studied was that the teachers were skilled in supporting learners' processes of change. Thus, while not focused consciously on their learner's developmental levels, rather than teaching in ways that cater to one way of knowing over others, they presented material, designed classroom experiences, and developed expectations that were flexible and responsive enough to meet a wide range of different learners at their current way of knowing. At the same time, in presenting learners with appropriate challenges, they were, in effect, inviting learners to move toward a slightly more complex or slightly more elaborate understanding.

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Reading #7

The Power of Cohort and Collaborative Groups

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Being part of a cohort - which we define as a tight-knit, reliable, common-purpose group - was very important, in different ways, to many of the 41 adult learners at three different program sites who participated in the NCSALL Adult Development Research over the course of 14 months. This finding challenges the view that adults, who often come to their class-taking with well-established social networks, are less in need of entrée to a new community than, for example, older adolescents who are psychologically separating from their families of origin and who have not yet formed new communities of which they are a part (Knowles 1970, 1975; Cross, 1971, 1981; Aslanian & Brickell, 1980). Despite differences in the cohort design across the three sites, the interpersonal relationships that peers developed in the cohort made a critical difference to their academic learning, emotional and psychological well-being, and ability to broaden their perspectives.

The NCSALL Adult Development Research group sees development as a continuing and lifelong process. We understand growth as occurring along a continuum of successive and qualitatively different levels of development. We refer to these levels as ways of knowing or meaning systems that shape how people interpret - or make sense of - their experience. The three most common levels of development in adulthood are Instrumental, Socializing, and Self Authoring (please click here for a discussion of our constructive developmental framework).

The Cohort as a Holding Environment

Robert Kegan's theory of adult development (1982, 1994) considers a person as a maker of meaning throughout his or her lifespan. We employ this framework to suggest why and how the use of cohorts in adult basic education (ABE) and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) settings is important in different ways to a variety of students who have different ways of knowing and learning. Because every ABE or ESOL class will likely be populated by adults who make meaning with different ways of knowing, programs that recognize students' developmental diversity—and support students' growth accordingly—will be especially effective.

Growth processes, such as learning and teaching processes, depend on connections, and these processes, according to Kegan's theory, invariably occur in some context (Kegan, 1982). Students with different ways of knowing need different forms of support and challenge from their surrounding contexts to grow. We refer to such contexts as "holding environments" (Kegan, 1982, 1994), which, when successful, can help

students grow to manage better the complexities of their learning and their other social roles.

A good holding environment serves three functions (Kegan, 1982, 1994). First, it must "hold well," meaning that it meets a person's needs by recognizing and confirming who that person is, without frustration or urgent anticipation of change. It provides appropriate supports to accommodate the way the person is currently making meaning. Second, when a person is ready, a good holding environment needs to "let go," challenging learners and permitting them to grow beyond their existing perceptions to new and greater ways of knowing. Third, a good holding environment "sticks around," providing continuity, stability, and availability to the person in the process of growth. It stays, or remains in place, so that relationships can be reknown and reconstructed in a new way that supports who the person has grown to become.

While this third characteristic of good holding may be difficult to provide in as short a period of time as a few weeks, any classroom can include the other two features: high support and high challenge. Both are essential for good holding. It was apparent in our study, despite differences in the designs of the three programs, that for most participants their learning group became more than "just a class" or "just a group." In all three settings participants spoke of the group as "like a family." We might also call them a "band of warriors," or "fellow strugglers": in short, a cohort. These cohorts served as dynamic transitional growth spaces that helped learners make good use of each other by providing both the *challenge* that encouraged learners to grow and the *support* they needed to meet those challenges.

Three Sites, Three Cohort Designs

The three sites in our study provided contrasts in their specific cohort designs. At the Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) site, in Charlestown, MA, students started their program together and were enrolled in the same two classes during their first semester. The cohort disbanded by the start of the second term and students independently selected their own courses for that semester. At Even Start, a family literacy program in Cambridge, MA, parents determined their own entry and exit dates from the program. Many parents had enrolled in this program before our study began and continued after its completion. At Polaroid, in Norwood, MA, all workers began the adult diploma program at the same time, worked toward a common purpose, and left the program at the same time.

Despite these differences in the cohort shape and configuration (and differences in age and social role among participants), the importance of participating in a learner cohort held true at all three sites. Even though these adults, like adults more generally, utilized different ways of knowing, they all described how their cohorts served several key purposes. First, the cohort served as a holding environment spacious enough to support and challenge adult students in their *academic learning* (see Table 1). Participants at all sites reported that their academic learning was enhanced by their participation

in collaborative learning activities within their cohorts. Second, the cohort served as a context in which students provided each other with a variety of forms of *emotional and psychological support* (see Table 2). Lastly, the cohort challenged learners to *broaden their perspectives* (see Table 3). Both within and across sites, learners who shared the same level of development demonstrated similar concepts of how the cohort and collaborative learning experiences supported and challenged them in multiple ways. Furthermore, students with different ways of knowing described important differences in these concepts. Overall, these findings suggest not only the importance of a cohort but also that elements other than a specific structure regarding entry and exit might be crucial in transforming a class into a true cohort.

Academic Learning

Sharon Hamilton (1994) provides helpful suggestions for teachers who wish to construct collaborative learning activities to enhance academic learning. She describes three distinct models (postindustrialist, social constructionist, and popular democratic) identified by John Trimbur (1993) and relates them to the characteristics, practices, and beliefs about collaborative learning she has observed in higher education over the past decade. She illustrates how these three models can be applied to classrooms and suggests that teachers adopt one particular model that aligns with their teaching philosophy or personal style.

Each model has its own goals and suggested processes. The "postindustrialist model" of collaborative learning "appears in classrooms in the form of group efforts to solve common problems formulated by an instructor whose curricular agenda determines group structure, time on task, goals, and anticipated answers" (Hamilton, 1994, p. 94). The "social constructionist model" consists of "engaging students more actively in their learning while concurrently developing social skills of negotiation and consensus building" (p. 95). In the "popular democratic model" of collaborative development the challenge for learners is "not to obliterate essential differences in the search for commonalities but rather to envision these essential differences as catalysts for the making of meaning within specific concepts of the particular course" (pp. 95-96). Not only do these models have different goals, but each also assigns different responsibilities to teachers and learners and recommends different principles for designing classroom environments. In our study, we noticed a remarkable correspondence between these three models of collaborative learning and the three different ways of knowing that learners demonstrated at each site. This raises questions about whether teachers really have the luxury of adopting a teaching model that most closely aligns with their personal style or philosophy.

Instrumental learners primarily valued opportunities to work collaboratively because doing so helped them achieve specific concrete, behavioral goals (see Table 1). Their reasoning aligns with the goals of the "postindustrial model." They said that cohort collaboration helped them to:

- "find the right answers" in math, or the correct sentence structure when writing.
- learn how to use the right words to express themselves better in English, and improve their vocabulary.
- learn how to communicate better with other people at work, at home, and in their daily interactions (e.g., with school officials, doctors, and/or their children's teachers).
- see classmates and even themselves as holders of knowledge (constructed as an accumulation of facts, and/or parenting practices they could then implement).
- understand the meaning of words and concepts.
- learn how to learn on their own (as evidenced by demonstrating a behavior).

While valuing the supports that were named by Instrumental knowers, Socializing knowers also spoke about appreciating the encouragement they received from peers and fellow parents. Socializing learners especially valued the cohort and collaborative work for the important emotional and psychological support it offered as they balanced the multiple demands of work, family, and school. Their experience mirrors the goals of the "social constructionist model" of collaborative learning. It helped them to:

- feel "comfortable" asking questions when they did not know the answer or did not know what to do in particular situations.
- learn to "socialize with other people."
- feel less "afraid when speaking English" in front of others (both in and out of the classroom).

Although Self-Authoring knowers mentioned the instrumental, psychological, and emotional reasons why working with cohort members was helpful, they focused particularly on their appreciation of the different perspectives that members in the group brought to any particular activity. Their experience aligns closely with the goals of the "popular democratic model" of collaborative learning. Working with other cohort members helped them to:

- enhance their learning and teaching processes because they were exposed to varying perspectives (points of view) on particular issues.
- understand themselves and other learners' academic, parenting, and life experiences better.
- recognize and, at times, appreciate forms of difference and commonality across and beyond the cohort.

These three groups of learners' descriptions closely match those described in the literature. This suggests that, in designing collaborative activities, educators, in contrast to Hamilton's suggestions, should perhaps give less priority to which individual approach they personally favor and more consideration to providing all three models in any one classroom: the

"new pluralism" to which our research directs us more generally. We elaborate on this recommendation below.

Emotional Support

The literature on group learning points to ways these groups can serve as social and emotional support (see, for example Bosworth & Hamilton, 1994; Pedersen & Digby 1995). Our study demonstrates how learners experienced this emotional support differently according to their ways of knowing (see Table 2). While for many of the participants the cohort became "like a family," what "family" actually means differs according to different adult ways of knowing.

Instrumental knowers found the cohort to be a place where their ideas could be compared to those of other people and where peers created an active learning environment. For several of these learners, the cohort sometimes embodied a community of concern. For example, when a student was absent from a particular class, others inquired about the student's wellbeing. Support was discussed in concrete ways, such as help with homework, friendly encouragement, and help pronouncing words correctly.

Socializing knowers were less oriented to discussing the external facts of a situation and more oriented to their internal experience of the thoughts and ideas of cohort peers. For these learners, the cohort was about a way of being in relationship with one another, a way of giving an abstract level of support, and of accepting each other. Lack of conflict among cohort members was essential to their comfort. While individuals with any way of knowing might dislike or feel uncomfortable with conflict, those making meaning with a Socializing way of knowing often find conflict with people or ideas with whom they identify particularly difficult. These students will avoid conflict for its own sake, and feel the conflict as a breach in important relationships that tears them apart.

Self-Authoring learners, however, had a perspective on their feelings about conflict and saw the relationships among group members not as an end in itself but as a means toward some greater end. They did not experience conflict as a threat to their sense of cohesion with others. They were able to reflect upon their feelings and examine the roots and importance of those feelings. Like Socializing knowers, they noticed connections between themselves and others, cared about those connections, and offered them as important factors in their learning life. However, unlike Socializing learners, they reflected on what these relationships meant to them in a more abstract way. Many Self-Authoring students valued the process of working together because they felt it was effective, challenging, and supportive, not only for their own learning but also for other people's learning.

Perspective Broadening

Interpersonal interactions with cohort members also helped students to become more aware of and to share their own perspectives. Sharing ideas

through dialogue and writing challenged and supported learners to broaden their perspectives by listening to and considering others' outlooks. Engaging with others in groups over time challenged cohort learners to experiment with and enact new ways of thinking and behaving. Collaboration with other cohort learners often became a catalyst for growth.

Many learners therefore began to understand their relationship to the cohort in new ways. We observed that some learners' notions of these group experiences expanded as they progressed through their programs. We refer to these changes as a consolidation or elaboration: learners extended their ideas within their existing way of knowing. Also, several students understood their cohort experience in more complex ways. We refer to this as transformational change: students evidenced qualitative and pervasive shifts in their underlying meaning system. The shapes of students' growth varied, depending on their ways of making meaning (see Table 3).

Several learners who were Instrumental knowers commented on how the experience of listening to and learning from cohort members transformed their thinking about themselves, their own families of origin, and people from other countries. These students began to think differently about their classmates and about life experiences in general. By coming to know others in the group whose backgrounds were starkly different from their own, several learners grew much better able to understand and empathize with other people.

For students with a Socializing way of knowing, working with others in the cohort created an opportunity for recognition and exploration of cultural differences that permeated cohort sharing and filtered into discussions. Several learners began to recognize commonalities across their cohort group that enabled them to manage their differences, rather than feeling threatened by them. A few students grew to be able to generalize their enhanced capacity for perspective-taking beyond the classroom and into other domains of their lives (e.g., work). The holding environment of the cohort supported several learners to be better able to take on other people's perspectives, which helped them in many aspects of their lives.

Self-Authoring knowers experienced the learner cohort as a context for analyzing and critiquing information, which they then used to enhance their competence as learners and in their social roles as students, parents, and workers. The cohort was a safe place that challenged and supported them as they broadened their perspectives on their own and on other people's learning process. Some of these students adopted a broader perspective on their own learning when they came to believe that they could learn from the process of working with cohort members who were different from them. Working with learners from different countries helped several Self-Authoring knowers to develop a new and deeper understanding of what it meant to be a person who came to the United States as an adult learner in their programs.

The holding environment of the cohort served as a context where adults were often encouraged by each other, and by teachers, to challenge

their own assumptions, which we believe deeply influences the ways in which individuals think and act (Kegan & Lahey, 2000).

Summary

Our findings teach us about the different ways that the learner cohort served as a space of developmental transition and transformation: a holding environment for growth. Cohort members were indeed partners engaged in a community formed around a common learning endeavor, where students supported one another in their academic and cognitive development and emotional wellbeing as they participated in these programs. Furthermore, we have illustrated the ways learners with different ways of knowing experienced collaborative group learning. We have argued that these seem to mirror the goals Hamilton (1994) articulates for Trimbur's (1993) three models of collaborative learning.

Implications

The importance of cohorts and the different ways in which learners will experience them suggest implications for both teacher practice and program design. Since learners make sense of their cohorts and collaborative learning activities in qualitatively different ways, they need different forms of both support and challenge to benefit more fully from them. Some ABE teachers occasionally use group learning as a pedagogical approach directed toward building classroom cohesion and to facilitate learning (Garner, 2001). While Hamilton (1994) suggests that a teacher would benefit from selecting and implementing one particular model that suits his or her teaching philosophy or style, we submit that choosing only one model would support learners with one way of knowing better than it would others.

For example, a teacher who designs a highly structured activity, in which students are expected to arrive at predetermined answers, might leave Socializing and Self-Authoring knowers feeling inadequately challenged and possibly frustrated. Without appropriate supports, a collaborative learning experience that requires learners to share their own thoughts and feelings might be experienced as overly challenging to Instrumental knowers. Finally, collaboration that asks students to welcome diversity of opinion and conflict within a group might be experienced as threatening to learners who have not developed self-authoring capacities. Therefore, to create optimal holding environments for all adult learners, teachers need to adopt a plurality of approaches, flexibly incorporating aspects of all three models in any one classroom to meet a wide range of learners' ways of knowing and their diverse needs.

Some program designers refrain from using the cohort model because of funding requirements (Beder & Medina, 2001) or because the needs and life situations of their participants seem to dictate an open-entry/open-exit policy (Bingman, 2000). However, although our sites presented three very different cohort designs, most participants valued highly their sense of belonging in the group and benefited substantially from their cohort

experiences. While some cohort designs might make for some bumps or challenges along the way, especially for a particular way of knowing, we do not claim that any one cohort design is preferable. Instead, we suggest that good matches to a variety of ways of being supported or challenged might be more crucial to success than a particular structure regarding entry and exit. And, above all, we recommend that educators look for ways to create some form of enduring and consistent learner cohort, employing practices by which students are regularly invited to engage in collaborative learning. Our participants show us that cohort experiences seem to facilitate academic learning, increased feelings of belonging, broadened perspectives, and, at least by our participants' report, learner persistence.

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