

**Worldview Awareness
and Adult Education**

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Abstract

This research derived data from two sets of interviews with 18 participants who were involved in adult education in either a community college or a university. The purpose was to explore their worldview awareness. Through the interviews, the participants shared their understanding of worldview as a term and concept and as something that might be seen to apply in their practice of teaching. The responses indicated that there are three kinds of awareness (noetic, experiential, and integrative) which appeared to develop upon a landscape of constraints and opportunities. Constraints were seen to fall into the 5 broad categories of institutional, circumstantial, self-imposed, other-imposed, and discipline-related constraints. Opportunities for developing awareness were linked to individual experiences and could occur to different extents in many directions, on different occasions, and in different phases of life. Through this research, and in spite of the prevalence of worldview in the human experience, it was found that the term and concept have remained on the margins of educational discourse. Consequently, theory, research, and practice have been deprived of a useful and usable concept.

Acknowledgments

I first want to thank the 18 participants of this study who made themselves available for the interviews and were faithful in reviewing and returning the transcripts. Their responses and cooperation have provided me with many helpful and stimulating insights. I also have to acknowledge the contribution of two scholars who, in their own spheres have influenced my thinking about worldview. At a particularly influential period of my life, I was fortunate to encounter the work of Dr. Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) in a film series and book entitled *How Shall We Then Live?* It was through that encounter that I was introduced to the concept of *worldview*. More recently, through the course of my studies at Brock University, I was again fortunate to encounter the work of Dr. Leon McKenzie on *Adult Education and Worldview Construction*. Both of these attest to the important influence of ideas conveyed through the written word.

I was first attracted to study at Brock University by the reputation of Dr. Patricia Cranton and her work in the field of adult education. Patricia encouraged me to pursue the topic of worldview through our exchanges in an independent learning course. When Patricia left the university, it was my good fortune to encounter Dr. Coral Mitchell and I realized that her abilities and interests would contribute greatly towards making this “a done thesis.” Coral has to be commended for her patience and understanding as she guided me through an arduous but worthwhile task. Both Patricia and Coral exemplify excellent models of adult educators, not only in the high quality of their scholarship but equally in their genuine interest in the learner. Both attest to the importance of personal encounters in the experience of education.

I want to make known my gratitude to my wife, Lynne, who has patiently listened to me muse, talk, and mumble about worldview. She has sacrificed much in seeing me complete this task and has encouraged and supported me in a multitude of ways. Finally, I dedicate this work product to the memory of my parents, Henry and Olga. Their words spoken and their lives lived did much to shape my own worldview. They upheld the importance of a good education and made it possible for me to reach this goal.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

This is a study of worldview awareness on the part of a group of adult educators. As people whose careers require them to enter into exchanges with others in teaching-learning situations, personal perspectives and shared understandings are often part of those exchanges. The reader might find the following scenario to be a common experience. People assemble in a classroom, in a room of some community facility or church building, in the training room of a business, or in some other similar setting. They have come together either because it is required or because they have some personal interest. They are there with an adult educator for the purpose of entering into some kind of learning experience. As one looks about at the others in the group, there is a sense of diversity. In some instances, the first meeting provides opportunity for the adults to introduce themselves and to tell something of a story about who they are and why they are there. What had been a sense that there is diversity turns to thoughts that this is a really interesting assortment of people. Adult educators prepare and deliver courses, seminars, and presentations in the midst of this kind of diversity every day. This study seeks to respond to the type of situation described in the scenario by exploring a particular kind of diversity that is characterized by the term *worldview*. By worldview, I mean the outlook and attitude that people have about life and the world. The study involved meeting with 18 adult educators to gain their understanding of the term and concept and to find out how worldview might enter into their practice of teaching.

Background of the Study

My personal experience in education turned into a study interest as I stood on the first day of class at a community college and watched the adult learners enter the computer lab

where we would be working. The simple question crossed my mind, “What are these people bringing to this learning situation?” As part of an independent study at Brock University, I had undertaken to answer that question by developing a mental map into a conceptual framework that listed the elements, experiences, and influences that affected an adult and that would possibly influence the learning situation. Over time, the label changed from “What an Adult Learner Brings to the Learning Situation” to “Factors that Might Influence an Individual’s Worldview.” More attention needs to be given to that framework (Appendix A), but it has helped me to illustrate the pleasant complexity and challenge faced by the educator who would lead a group of adult learners.

I had first encountered the term *world view* in 1977 in a book and a related film series entitled *How Should We Then Live?* (Schaeffer, 1976). The term and concept had not been a matter of study interest, but it repeatedly appeared in other materials that I encountered in my reading and studies. Hence, over an extended period, the term worldview became both familiar and comfortable to me. Yet, when I came to the writings of prominent theorists and authors in the area of adult education, there was scant use of the term worldview. In classes with co-learners, the term was not used in conversations and descriptions. I gradually came to realize that the term had not gained widespread recognition, at least in my initial encounter with learning about education. I wanted to find out if this was the case among teaching practitioners, particularly those who teach adults.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out from a group of adult educators their understanding of worldview as a term and concept and to explore how worldview might

enter into their practice of teaching. I hoped that, in one-to-one interviews with a number of teachers from a community college and a university, they would share what they knew about worldview and would describe how it might appear in their work in the field of education. My intent was to ask the participants questions that would probe matters like their understanding of worldview as a term and concept, their thoughts about what factors might contribute to the formation of a worldview, and their perception about how worldview might have entered into their own practices in education.

The participants were self-selected but it was expected that, by inviting people from a variety of disciplines and fields of expertise, there would be a range of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. One set of interviews occurred during a quiet time in their teaching schedule followed by a second set when they were more actively involved with students. This period between the interviews also allowed time for personal reflection on the matter of worldview. By framing the data collection in this way, I hoped the participants would give me their initial understanding about the term and concept of worldview and then indicate how they saw it played out in their particular teaching situations.

Significance of the Study

Through a process of being an adult learner, of working as an educator of adults, of reading literature in the field, and of reflecting upon these experiences, I had come to consider that worldview might serve as an important aspect of education, particularly as it concerns adult learners. My initial, practical interest in worldview was matched by an interest in the role that the concept might play in the development of thinking in the field of adult education. The term worldview had been in use for over two centuries, but the

notion of worldview existed long before the term was coined in any language. One can discern appreciation of the concept when reading ancient philosophers and religious literature. Although the term has had sustained use in some quarters, a survey of literature about adult education suggests that worldview, in that context, has been neglected or conceptualized into other terms.

Worldview will be defined in more detail later in this study but, for present, the word is considered to describe a person's assumptions and understanding about the world as he or she experiences it. Some people may regard the concept of worldview as general and vague and, as a result, feel that it is unusable for a theoretical framework. Yet, there are issues in adult education where worldview examination may be the very thing that can stimulate further progress. It has been observed that "much debate and controversy has occurred over the merits of apparently conflicting research paradigms and methods used to generate fact and theory in adult education" (Garrison & Shale, 1994, p. 17). Where philosophical differences have arisen in discussions among educators and researchers over issues and concerns, worldview might provide the means for understanding an alternate position and for recognizing that there is a range of viable alternatives.

As another example, Garrison (1994) described a major parting of the ways that sent theorists into one of two camps: either logical positivism or phenomenology, with a corresponding modernist or postmodernist mindset. Without debating here the validity of either view, there has been no mention of alternate views that may be equally valid.

A theoretical framework should be sufficient to accommodate reasonable, alternate views where there are more than two camps to be included.

Examples of other concerns in adult education are about the relationship between pedagogy and andragogy (Knowles, 1990), about the tools to apply in a field of study that borrows from other disciplines (Garrison, 1994), and about the need for an integrative theoretical framework for andragogy (Garrison, 1994). Such discussions make it appropriate to consider worldview as a concept that might provide common ground and offer a possibility for answering some questions surrounding those concerns. There are few works delving into worldview as it pertains to adult education and there has been little discussion of the role that worldview might serve in this field. As well, “as a field of study, adult education is a relative newcomer” (Garrison, 1994, p. 1). Consequently, it faces “the necessity of distinct and coherent theoretical frameworks for its identity, vitality, and development” (Garrison, 1994, p. 1). Hence, there is a rationale for further study of the concept of worldview; this kind of study could benefit both theorist and practitioner.

Theorists and practitioners might well regard the field of adult education to be complex. This is not only in terms of the amount and range of material that can be delivered to adult learners, but also in the nature and needs of the learners themselves. Although worldview may appear to be a general concept, it holds some hope for approaching groups of learners as individuals with the means of understanding the person’s readiness to learn, motivation, learning interests, and teachability. It is a concept that is sensitive to aspects such as ability, age, background, culture, experience, gender, and intelligence. The concept of worldview has already been valuable in bridging the gap between others in different cultures and ourselves, both today (Kelly, 1982; Smart, 1983) and in past times (Doran, 1995). It has been used so that we might understand how others

have thought and acted in their world situation. Having already been proven useful in that way, worldview may be a powerful tool to help develop an understanding of our experiences in adult education.

This study cannot fully address all of these concerns, issues, and possibilities. What is important to recognize is the potential for the concept of worldview in both theory building and practice in the field of adult education. In general terms, the significance of this study might be simply in increasing awareness of the term and concept of worldview. If that occurs, others may deem it relevant enough to investigate how worldview could serve to address a number of concerns among theorists and practitioners. The starting point, though, was to discover what understanding the participants had about worldview and how they reflected upon worldview in their practice with adult learners.

Methodological Scope

The study was designed to involve a number of self-selected adult educators from a community college and a university within close proximity of one another. Data were collected from two interviews with each participant, the initial round of interviews being during July 1998 and the follow-up interviews being during the Fall semester of 1998. The research used a qualitative case study methodology of emergent design with a combination of semi-structured and unstructured questions being asked during the interviews. This was done to find out from a range of adult educators what their understanding was of worldview as a term and concept and as something that might be placed within their practice of education. While the study enabled me to gain insights from 18 participants, the inclusion of more participants from other disciplines and fields of study would undoubtedly have derived more data for inclusion. Not all participants

originated from that geographic region, nor were their experiences limited to the Canadian context, yet it would also have benefited the study to have the methodology repeated in other locations. This was, after all, a study of worldview and it always occurred to me that there were perspectives, opinions, and understandings that should be heard to add to my understanding of the concept. Nonetheless, there was adequate data to provide new insights and to recognize some patterns of description.

Outline of the Chapters

Chapter One has provided an overview of this study looking at its inception as a practical concern, the methodology, the purpose, and the possible significance. Chapter Two examines literature that is both specific to the term worldview and dealing with related concepts. Chapter Three describes in detail the methodology employed in recruiting participants for this study and the conduct of the interviews. Chapter Four presents the findings regarding worldview awareness from the data. Chapter Five reviews the nature of this study and discusses the findings with attention to the implications for theory, research, and practice.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The word *worldview* suggests something that is all-encompassing and is only eclipsed by words like *cosmos* and *universe* that suggest even wider parameters. While the word *worldview* is not yet extensively used, when people do refer to it, there can be a range of meanings intended. In part, this research was conducted to find out the awareness that a group of educators had concerning the term *worldview* and so it is appropriate also to consider how the term has been used in literature and in the media. The literature that is relevant to a study of *worldview*, as it might be applied to the field of adult education, can be organized into four categories: (a) early defining works, (b) subsequent sustaining works, (c) recent specific works, and (d) recent related works. This chapter will use those categories to consider resources for advancing an understanding of *worldview*. Following that framework, some synthesizing definitions and descriptions of *worldview* will be offered. From the contents of this chapter, it will be seen that various authors have recorded, in addition to *worldview*, words such as *world view*, *world-view*, and *world-and-life view*. In spite of these alternate renderings, it seems that authorial intent is to present a notion comparable to that attached to *worldview*, which, apart from citations, is the spelling used in this document. It is recognized that there are many other works that might contribute to an understanding of *worldview* but, for the purposes of this study, I have chosen to limit the discussion to those that speak most strongly to me.

Early Defining Works

During the period of the German Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant coined the word *Weltanschauung* as part of his work in developing a philosophical system. The concept “is rooted precisely in that metaphysical faith” which he regarded “as the firm ground on

which we must stand in order to characterize man's position in the world and the relation of the world to ourselves" (Kroner, 1914/1956, p. 21). Kroner devoted a whole book to describing Kant's *Weltanschauung* but, while that expression is used repeatedly, a comparable English expression was not provided in the authorized translation. Indeed, the translator stated that "no English word or phrase adequately expresses what the author has in mind" (1956, pp. viii-ix). Yet, McKenzie (1991) stated that "worldview is a term that translates the German *Weltanschauung*" (p. 2) while Mayers (1984) in his reference to *Weltanschauung* relates it to *world-and-life view* (p. 9) and later in his book speaks of *world views* (p. 57). Sproul (1986) also relates the German word to *world view* (p. 31) though his book is entitled *Lifeviews*. Throughout this study, *Weltanschauung* will be rendered as *worldview*.

Kant's philosophical system, which included treatment of the concept of *Weltanschauung*, was subsequently discussed and critiqued by numerous philosophers and writers. McKenzie (1991) wrote,

In its first usage, the term referred to a beholding of the world, a perception of the world, an apprehension of nature in a general sense. Both Johann Goethe and Alexander von Humboldt subsequently employed the word in Kant's sense and the meaning entered into the German language. The philosopher Friedrich Schelling, however, introduced a shift in the word's meaning. Schelling assigned the word not to sense observation but to intelligence.... Thus, a worldview becomes a conscious way of apprehending and interpreting a universe of beings. (p. 3)

It was Heidegger who devoted much attention to "exploring the subtle nuances of the notion of *Weltanschauung*" (McKenzie, p. 2). He stated that a worldview is "an all

inclusive reflection on the world and the human *dasein* [being of being-human], and this happens in different ways, explicitly and consciously in individuals or by appropriating an already prevalent worldview” (Heidegger, 1975/1982, pp. 5-6).

As worldview is related to *Weltanschauung*, the early use places it in elaborate philosophical discussions. Although the notion of worldview may be discerned in some philosophical writings predating Kant’s use, it was argued by Heidegger (1975/1982) that “the word ‘Weltanschauung’ is of specifically German coinage” (p. 4) and was first formulated and presented during the eighteenth century as part of German Enlightenment thinking in Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*. Heidegger (1975/1982) described it as “world-intuition in the sense of contemplation of the world given to the senses...the mundus sensibilis—a beholding of the world as simple apprehension of nature in the broadest sense” (p. 4). This early, defining work was conducted and developed among German writers and continued as a matter of philosophical speculation for about 150 years where its use seems to have been largely in the German language. While it has not been determined whether the word was in popular use in the German language, it is interesting to note that a contemporary German-English dictionary translates *Weltanschauung* as “a philosophy of life, world outlook, views, creed, ideology” (*Cassell’s German English Dictionary*, p. 562). A few years after World War Two ended, the term would come into greater use in the English language.

Subsequent Sustaining Works

The expression world view appears in a monograph written in 1953 by anthropologist Robert Redfield. Kelly (1982) says it was “one of the earliest definitions of the term ... [in which] Redfield tried to isolate all that the word meant from other terms

anthropologists used to describe similar concepts” (p. 225). In his book, Redfield (1953) devoted a chapter to the primitive world view, yet he wrote in a way that offered some general insights that would be helpful in developing the concept of worldview. He stated,

Included in ‘world view’ may be the conceptions of what ought to be as well as what is; and included may be the characteristic ways in which experiences are kept together or apart—the patterns of thought—and the affective as well as the cognitive aspect of these things also. ‘World view’ may be used to include the forms of thought and the most comprehensive attitudes toward life. A world view can hardly be conceived without some dimension in time, some idea of past and of future; and the phrase is large enough and loose enough to evoke also the emotional ‘set’ of a people, their disposition to be active, or contemplative, or resigned, to feel themselves distinct from what is ‘out there,’ or to identify themselves closely with the rest of the cosmos.... It is the way we see ourselves in relation to all else. (p. 86)

Kelly (1982) had also found definitions and treatments of world view in works that had a primary focus on anthropology, culture, or intercultural communication. Chronologically, these were provided by Lee (1957), Ortiz (1973), J.E. Walsh (1979), Samovar, Porter, and Jain (1981), and Kearney (1982). Although Kelly (1982) did not elaborate on the contribution of every one of these writers, he felt that they all had some common characteristics. He did provide a description by Ortiz whose perspective was both as an anthropologist and as a Tewa Indian. As recorded in Kelly (1982), Ortiz offered that,

The notion of ‘world view,’ denotes a distinctive vision of reality which not only interprets and orders the places and events in the experience of a people, but lends form, direction and continuity to life as well. World view provides people with a

distinctive set of values, an identity, a feeling of rootedness, of belonging to a time and a place and a felt sense of continuity with a tradition which transcends the experience of a single life time, a tradition which may be said to even transcend time. (p. 226)

Kelly's own description was that "the world view of a society is that society's core cognitive structure.... These cognitions are not necessarily accurate but they form the basic assumptions that give form and coherence to the universe and all it contains" (p. 225). While there was this occasional interest in the concept of worldview for those dealing in matters related to cultural studies, it seems that the term was not in general use by mainstream academics in the last half of the 20th century. One significant and widely recognized work, though, does merit attention.

In 1962, Kuhn's groundbreaking work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, introduced the term *paradigm*, which Kuhn defined as "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners" (p. viii). In this book, he included a chapter entitled "Revolutions as Changes of World View" and, although he used the expression world view, the focus even here was on the matter of scientific orientations and their implication specifically for the scientist. He wrote, "The scientist must, for example, be concerned to understand the world and to extend the precision and scope with which it has been ordered" (p. 42). He later related this idea to his new phrase by saying "paradigm changes do cause scientists to see the world of their research-engagement differently" (p. 111). Kuhn's work is significant in understanding how scientific thinking had been shaped and in providing a concept that continues to contribute to discussions in other disciplines and endeavours.

Although his discussion of paradigms speaks indirectly to the matter of worldview, it does not explicitly advance that term.

In the late 1960s, Francis A. Schaeffer (1968) employed the expression *world-view* in a brief endnote in his book *The God Who Is There* (1968/1982, p. 386). In a later film and book project, Schaeffer (1976) articulated what might be considered a definition when he said,

People have presuppositions, and they will live more consistently on the basis of these presuppositions than even they themselves may realize. By *presuppositions* [emphasis in the original] we mean the basic way an individual looks at life, his basic world view, the grid through which he sees the world. Presuppositions rest upon that which a person considers to be the truth of what exists. People's presuppositions lay a grid for all they bring forth into the external world. Their presuppositions also provide the basis for their values and therefore the basis for their decisions. (p. 19)

Schaeffer's overall contribution was not so much to revitalize use of the term world view as it was to give attention to how thinking is developed and shaped within a culture.

Subsequent to this work, there is an increased use of worldview, in a variety of spellings, by academics and practitioners who can be identified as part of a particular Western Christian tradition. Missiologists considered the concept to be helpful in describing differences that existed between a Christian perspective arising out of their particular beliefs and values and the perspectives of other groups in other nations or even within their own larger culture. The obvious and more generalized use was that which considered cross-cultural communication as Christians went to other people groups and to

other countries as missionary workers. It may be that the concept was adopted by Christian missiologists through the combined influence of seminal thinkers like the philosopher-theologian Schaeffer and the writings of those who specialized in anthropology and intercultural communication. Kraft (1979), with a background in anthropology, addressed the matter of Christianity in culture, and he would be an example of a person who had read in both fields. Kelly (1982), who studied under Kraft, gave considerable attention to world view in his work focusing on receptor-oriented communication directed towards North American Indians. Kelly referred to class notes of a lecture given by Kraft in 1979 in which he suggested that the five functions of a world view were explanatory, evaluational and validating, psychological reinforcement, integrating function, and adaptational. By the early 1980s, both Schaeffer and Kraft had developed a conceptual approach to worldview in culture. Schaeffer gave more attention to the individual's presuppositions as they guided thinking and decisions within a culture whereas Kraft looked more at the collectively held worldview and the implications for cross-cultural communication. Both men had played influential roles as educators with significant writings and they were among a number of voices that helped to stimulate interest in worldview as part of the vocabulary of theologically-conservative, Western Christianity.

Christian theologians also recognized that worldview was an important and valid concept in analysing how Christian beliefs should distinguish those adherents from other people within their own culture. Consequently, worldview became a tool of apologetics in the presentation and defence of the Christian faith. The complete works of Schaeffer, published as a set, were labeled with the secondary title of *A Christian Worldview*

(Schaeffer, 1982), and this seems most appropriate as his thinking and influence appear to precede much of the attention given to worldview by many other Christian apologists and writers. Porter (1988), in *Great Leaders of the Christian Church* (Woodbridge, Ed.), evaluated the entirety of Schaeffer's activities and writings. He described the particular contribution of Schaeffer to the concept of worldview in a section entitled "Apologetic and cultural critique" in these words,

He [Schaeffer] argued that philosophy is not an academic compartment, but that everybody holds to some world view or other. By urging inquirers to follow through the implications of their religious presuppositions he compelled them to face up to the world view they were (often unconsciously) holding. (p. 365)

Examining some titles and cover descriptors of books by other Christian authors shows an ongoing interest in worldview study. Shown chronologically, some examples are *The Universe Next Door—A Basic Worldview Catalog* (Sire, 1976/1988), *Contours of a World View* (Holmes, 1983), *The Transforming Vision—Shaping a Christian Worldview* (Walsh & Middleton, 1984), *Lifeworlds* (Sproul, 1986), *Turning Point: A Christian Worldview Declaration* (Schlossberg et al, 1987), *Worldviews in Conflict* (Nash, 1992), *The Collapse of the Brass Heaven—Rebuilding Our Worldview* (Long & McMurry, 1994), *Making Sense of Your World: A Biblical Worldview* (Phillips, 1996). Statements about worldview made by some of these authors are included with other definitions and descriptions at the end of this chapter.

The term worldview continues to be used in numerous Christian publications, sometimes without extensive definition but, on occasion, serving as a defining concept. As a case in point, Colson and Pearcey (1999) co-authored a book entitled *How Now*

Shall We Live? which was dedicated to the memory of Schaeffer, whose reflections on culture, history, and the Christian faith were featured in a film series entitled *How Should We Then Live?* (1977). Colson attributed to Schaeffer “a profound influence on my own understanding of Christianity as a total worldview” (Colson & Pearcey, p. v). These authors go on to say that “understanding worldviews is extremely important.... Genuine Christianity is a way of seeing and comprehending *all* reality. It is a worldview” (p. 14). The point here is that worldview is the central concept of the work even though the word does not appear in the title. As a second example, an Internet search of titles on www.amazon.com using the keyword *worldview* indicated that about one-quarter of the books identified at that source had clear connections to Christian writers. Like the earlier attention given to the concept of worldview primarily by German philosophers, this result signifies a sustained and shared interest that has continued for three decades in another sub-culture of Western society. Still, use of the term through recent years has reached into other areas of endeavour as well.

Recent Specific Works

In addition to the attention given to worldview by Christian writers, the term has been used in literature touching upon a variety of fields of study. Journal articles and books dealing with cross- and intra-cultural studies, communication theory, counselling, the environment, ecology, economics, education, geography, history, science, sociology, and religion have made some reference to worldview. Use of the term in any one of these fields has been infrequent and rather sporadic. As well, use of the term has sometimes been with a different meaning than established definitions and so these appearances failed to provide additional information about the concept. As a note of caution, a webpage of

ERIC (Educational Resource Information Center) describes world view as a “Comprehensive belief/value systems held by individuals or groups—fundamental frameworks for perceiving and interpreting life and the universe.... Note: Do not confuse with international or whole-world orientations and undertakings, which see ‘Global Approach’” ([http://www.ericfacility.net/extra/pub/thesfull.cfm?TERM= World%20Views](http://www.ericfacility.net/extra/pub/thesfull.cfm?TERM=World%20Views)). This shows that worldview has been used and, perhaps, confused with the notion of a global outlook.

What, at first, might have appeared to be possible resources for learning more about the concept of worldview did not always prove to be relevant. These references to worldview represented an alternate use of the word in which it had been applied to an examination of situations or events on the face of this planet rather than to a perspective held by an individual or by a group of people. An example of this alternate use that is specific to adult education was found in a chapter entitled “International Influences on the Development of Knowledge” (Peters, Jarvis, & Associates, 1991). The chapter has a section entitled “North Americans with Worldviews” (p. 353). Here, the term worldviews was applied to educators who are internationalists concerned about the state of adult education in other parts of the globe and did not refer to either personal or collective perspectives. Similarly, various media (e.g., television’s CNN, The Globe and Mail) have used *World View* as a title for coverage of world events. The appearance of such alternate uses makes it necessary, at times, to more closely examine the authorial intent for the word.

A survey of sources like ERIC and www.amazon.com did show that titles pertaining to counselling, cross-cultural studies, and religion were the most frequent references to

worldview consistent with the meaning of an outlook or attitude. One article (Treviño, 1996) that combined two of these subject areas used worldview as a unifying construct in consideration of the personal change process in cross-cultural counselling. Although at times in the article it is not easy to deal with worldview apart from the notion of personal change and the technicalities of counselling, the author did discuss worldview as being part of an individually held system. Describing her model and the formation of worldview, Treviño stated,

Individual worldviews are formed out of personal experience, consisting of both shared cultural and unique experiences. Once formed, a person's worldview may be differentiated by level of abstraction, in which general views of the world represent broad, abstract understandings (such as views about interpersonal relationships) and specific views represent particular perceptions (such as views about marriage and interpersonal conflict). (p. 204)

Treviño also indicated that, in the field of counselling, "some worldview instruments have been extensively developed but not tested across cultures" (p. 212).

While it can be readily recognized and understood how different worldviews can belong to geographically separated cultures, less obvious is the existence of different worldviews that occur within the same culture. Christian writers have recently given some consideration to how worldviews within a culture are at variance with one another, but it has also been the subject of attention for those who want to consider moral issues in what has been described as America's culture war. Jensen (1997), for example, had an aim "to bring together and extend those approaches in sociology, psychology, and anthropology which emphasize the connection between moral reasoning and worldviews"

(p. 328). While she indicated that the “concept of worldview is common in the sociological literature pertaining to moral issues” (p. 325), she took her definition of worldview from two Christian writers, Walsh and Middleton (1984). As well, she adapted their four ultimate questions (Walsh & Middleton, 1984, p. 35) and stated them as “Who are we? Where are we? Why are we suffering? What is the remedy?” (Jensen, p. 325). Understandably, these were meaningful and important to her discussion of human suffering and moral reasoning. In response to these questions, she said that “a worldview includes a description of essential humanness...gives an account of the nature of reality...provides a diagnosis of the problems experienced by human beings [and]...outlines a prescription for alleviating these problems” (p. 326). The article also incorporated findings from Jensen’s own research based on an interview study. Part of that research considered different models of schooling endorsed by parents, and Jensen (1997) observed that “The education we provide our children often serves to pass on a worldview” (p. 341). Her attention to education was only supplemental as one factor within the larger issue of worldviews in conflict within the same culture. There has been recent literature that dealt more specifically with worldview in a variety of aspects of education.

In 1987, Leon McKenzie wrote an article about worldview and adult education that later developed into *Adult Education and Worldview Construction* (1991), the only published work combining the two themes. His book, which dealt with the philosophical, theoretical, and practical underpinnings of worldview, would have to be regarded as the primary English language resource concerning worldview in the sphere of adult education. Merriam (1995) edited a book on philosophy and adult education that

included, as a chapter, an excerpt from McKenzie's book. Years earlier, Merriam (1988) had referred to the concept in her book on case study research when she was dealing with philosophical assumptions. She said, "the logic of this type of research [case study] derives from the worldview of qualitative research" (p. 16), in contrast to a "'traditional' or 'scientific' paradigm, which depends upon a very different view of the world" (p. 17). Identifying the essential difference, she said, "From a research perspective, this [scientific] worldview holds the nature of reality to be constant" whereas "qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities—that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception" (p. 17). She stated, "Because the primary instrument in qualitative case study research is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through one's worldview, one's values, one's perspectives" (p. 39).

Specific to the matter of scientific education, worldview was discussed in an article by Cobern (1996) concerning conceptual change instruction. A flow chart model was included to show the author's understanding of how worldview provides an environment for comprehension in terms of epistemology and how worldview results in conceptual change in terms of metaphysics. In spite of Cobern's use of the term worldview there is a sense that what he described is close to Kuhn's (1962) notion of a paradigm. In fact, the article talked about "scientific concepts going against the existing orientation of an individual's worldview" such that "the sheer force of scientific conceptual weight will shift the orientation of his or her worldview to the scientific... bringing about what one might call a Kuhnian revolution" (Cobern, p. 588).

Another educator who has made use of worldview was Restivo (1991) in his book *The Sociological Worldview*. Introducing his work, he said,

Sociology can be variously described and experienced as, or in terms of, a discipline, profession, course, textbook, lecture, or statements on a blackboard. I wrote this book because I did not find anything in this variety, or in the public, private, and professional images of the field that expressed my experience of sociology as a way of seeing and organizing reality as a whole—a worldview. (p. 3)

Restivo then proceeded to examine the development and broad sweep of sociological thought with the concept of worldview setting the tone of his work. Eventually, he also came to say that “Mathematics is a value system and a worldview” (p. 166). He did not discuss worldview in any great detail but rather used the concept as a context for describing his understanding of the development of his field of study.

Unlike Cobern and Restivo, who considered worldview within their own disciplines of science and sociology respectively, a recent work by two educators encourages readers to comprehend the bigger picture. Mitchell and Sackney (2000) addressed concerns related to “the life world of school people as it relates to professional learning” (p. xi) and stated that a “wholeness worldview is at the bottom of our understanding about a learning community in schools” (p. xi). They led off their work with two graphic examples of how an understanding of our world has been changed as a result of significant explorations and discoveries. These different understandings resulted in two different models, an older clockwork model and a new, emerging ecological model. They presented this awareness as part of a discussion of “An Emerging Worldview” (p. 2). In the concluding chapter of their book, they stated that “the notion of the school as a learning community represents a

fundamental shift in the ideology that shapes the understanding of schools and of professional practice” (p. 123) and discussed the differences between the traditional mechanistic worldview and wholeness worldview. Along the lines of Kuhnian thinking, one may be inclined to characterize the call for a change from a mechanistic worldview to a wholeness worldview as a change in paradigm. Yet, what is being suggested by these authors is not based on a new, startling discovery nor is it a parcel of knowledge affecting a limited aspect of life or practice. The wholeness worldview, which is so important in their understanding, is “associated with a constructivist epistemology and an interpretivist methodology” (p. 125) and “assumes that everything is intimately connected with and embedded in everything else, that different elements are unique manifestations of the same underlying reality” (p. 130). Explaining what has contributed to this emerging, wholeness worldview, Mitchell and Sackney stated,

The view of the Earth from space has brought forth an entirely new set of images for grounding the metaphors of the social order and it has sparked at least the beginning of a deep shift in human understanding, one that honours the wholeness of the planet.
(p. 138)

Recent Related Works

Any work entered under this category should not be considered as of secondary importance. The term *related* is used because either the author’s main focus was not on the matter of worldview, or else the author employed a concept that appears to be related to worldview but does not specifically mention it. A number of books falling into this category introduce concepts or carry passages that might help in understanding

worldview. Again, the sense that worldview can be all-encompassing opens the door to considering alternate perspectives and related concepts.

From the field of science, the contribution of Kuhn (1962) and his concept of *paradigm* has already been mentioned. A few years before, Boulding (1956), who was also writing from a scientist's perspective, produced a book called *The Image*, which resulted from a period of intense interaction with social scientists and biologists. In it he discussed more than science by touching on matters such as society, knowledge, economics, politics, history, and philosophy as they pertain to his concept of *image*. He introduced this concept in a personal manner, speaking as one who was aware that he was located "in space and time and in personal relationships... in the world of nature, in a world of how things operate... [and] in the midst of a world of subtle intimations and emotions" (p. 5). Relating this awareness to a concept, Boulding wrote, "What I have been talking about is knowledge. Knowledge, perhaps, is not a good word for this. Perhaps one would rather say my *Image* [emphasis in the original] of the world" (p. 5). He characterized this image as a subjective knowledge that is a personal holding governing behaviour, but he acknowledged that there is also a *public image*, "the essential characteristics of which are shared by the individuals participating in the group" (p. 64). To those already familiar with the concept of worldview, Boulding's discussion of image will have a resonant tone. Although his background was in science, his treatment of the image showed sensitivity to the individual as a social being.

It was Berger and Luckmann (1966) who brought a sociologist's perspective to the theory of knowledge and to what they described as a *socially constructed reality*.

The work, in its entirety, stimulates thinking about the development of perspectives in a social setting. They dealt briefly with the concept of *Weltanschauung* and maintained that

Only a very limited group in any society engages in theorizing, in the business of “ideas,” and the construction of *Weltanschauung*. But everyone in society participates in its “knowledge” in one way or another...only a few are concerned with the theoretical interpretation of the world, but everybody lives in a world of some sort. (p. 27)

Granted, few people would be familiar with that German term and Kant’s philosophical system, but, in that statement, Berger and Luckmann (1966) characterized the construction of a worldview as a conscious activity of theoretical interpretation. It was their position that “the focus on theoretical thought [is] unduly restrictive for the sociology of knowledge [and] ...that ‘common-sense’ knowledge rather than ‘ideas’ must be the central focus for the sociology of knowledge” (p. 27) Their use of *Weltanschauung* restricts it to being a philosophical concept rather than recognizing the essence of what might be the *Weltanschauung* of the individual in the real world. Hence, Berger and Luckmann did not make allowance for worldview as part of their own theorizing, preferring instead to develop their own concept of a socially constructed reality. In spite of this, their work must be considered as something of a parallel discussion, especially if one wants to examine worldview in terms of a social perspective.

Douglas (1986), with her background in anthropology, also approached group-held views from a social perspective. She considered the contributions of a number of theorists with particular reference to both Durkheim’s and Fleck’s notions of the *social group*.

Pertinent to the topic of worldview was her treatment of *worlds* like the “thought world (including distinguishable theology worlds, anthropology worlds, and science worlds)” (p. 16) and it is interesting to note that the descriptors applied to these worlds were related to different disciplines. Following consideration of concepts like thought world and thought collective, she developed her concept of *institutions* by which she meant a “legitimized social grouping” (p. 46). Douglas provided an understanding of how the individual functions within an institution and how these social structures shape an individual’s thinking. While she makes allowance for the exercise of individual thinking and determination, Douglas also shows the strong influence of the collective process. Her work does not specifically discuss worldview, yet she has provided a means of approaching the possibility of a worldview being held by the individual as well as there being ones peculiar to sub-cultures within a society.

From the perspective of a psychologist with philosophical intent, Bruner (1986) gave attention to the theme of *world* in the context of education and travelled by way of considering Kant’s view of the world and more recent *world versions* (p. 124).

In considering the language of education, he began with a premise that

The medium of exchange in which education is conducted—language—can never be neutral, that it imposes a point of view not only about the world to which it refers but toward the use of the mind in respect of this world. (p. 121)

Bruner (1986) maintained that “most of our encounters with the world are not...direct encounters....our direct experiences...are assigned for interpretation to ideas about cause and consequence, and the world that emerges for us is a conceptual world” (p. 122). He stated that “social realities are...the meanings that we achieve by the sharing of human

cognition" (p. 122) and that "culture is constantly in process of being recreated as it is interpreted and renegotiated by its members" (p. 123). From these thoughts, Bruner creates a picture of a dynamic interchange between the individual and the world and with other members of the world. It is a picture in which our interpretations, our language, and our negotiations shape our understanding of the realities of the social world. Bruner's own thinking was influenced by Goodman's (1978) concept of *worldmaking* and he devoted a chapter of his book *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (1986) to consider that contribution.

Goodman's (1978) own presentation of *worldmaking* and the attendant *world-versions* and *frames of reference* were involved discussions that, at times, sought a dialogue with Kantian thought. He would later (1984) have to "clarify some themes of *Ways of Worldmaking*, discuss some objections to it, and reaffirm some of its paradoxes" (p. 30). While he referred to "Constable's or James Joyce's world-view" (p. 5), *worldmaking* was the term and concept that filled his work. Goodman (1978) stated that *worldmaking* "always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking [and] the processes involved in building a world out of others" (p. 6) are (a) composition and decomposition, (b) weighting, (c) ordering, (d) deletion and supplementation, and (e) deformation. For him, "frames of reference...belong less to what is described than to systems of descriptions" (p. 2) and so, to describe the world would depend upon what is the frame of reference. Individuals provide or produce world versions and "we may want to define a relation that will so sort versions into clusters that each cluster constitutes a world" (p. 4). His position is that there is a multiplicity of worlds. If we accept that Goodman's worlds bear some correspondence to worldviews, his work challenges the

notion that there are only a few, significant, widely held worldviews. For those who have a particular interest in a philosophical approach to worldview, Goodman's work would be part of that consideration.

More rooted in immediate experience is Kelly (1955) who, through his work as a psychological clinician and as an educator, developed an elaborate theory concerning personal constructs. One notion that he holds is "that each individual man formulates in his own way constructs through which he views the world of events" (p. 12). Initially, Kelly presented "a construct to be a representation of the universe, a representation erected by a living creature and then tested against the reality of that universe" (p. 12). Later in his book, he became more precise and said that "a construct is a way in which at least two elements are similar and contrast with a third" (p. 61). In Kelly's (1955) system, the *Fundamental Postulate* was that "A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the way in which he anticipates events" (p. 46). Following that, there were eleven corollaries. It is in the elaboration of the *Organization Corollary* that there were suggestions of something corresponding to a worldview. This corollary stated, "Each person characteristically evolves, for his convenience in anticipating events, a *construction system* [emphasis added] embracing ordinal relationships between constructs" (p. 56). By construction system, he was indicating that "A system implies a grouping of elements in which incompatibilities and inconsistencies have been minimized" (p. 57). The implications of this corollary were outlined as follows:

Our view is that it is not consistency for consistency's sake nor even self-consistency that gives man [sic] his place in the world of events. Rather, it is his seeking to anticipate the whole world of events and thus relate himself to them that best

explains his psychological processes. If he acts to preserve the system, it is because the system is an essential chart for his personal adventures, not because it is a self-contained island of meaning in an ocean of inconsequentialities. (p. 59)

The concept of a personally held worldview has yet to be treated in as structured a way as was done for personal construct theory. While Kelly's system is elaborate and does not fit easily into a discussion of worldview, there are aspects about personal constructs that merit attention. One is the notion of an individualized perspective with application for guidance in life situations. Another is that people act both consciously and unconsciously on the basis of constructs. To borrow from Kelly and apply it to worldview would lead to consideration of the practical implications of a worldview and how it provides guidance and a basis for action. His theory and system provide a point of reference within the field of psychology for those who want to think more about personally held worldviews.

Also focused on the experience of the individual but more specific to education is the work of Mezirow. In 1985, he described his concept of *meaning perspectives* as "the structure of cultural and psychological assumptions within which new experience is assimilated and transformed by one's past experience" (p. 144). In discussing his transformation theory, Mezirow (1991) said, "Sets of habitual expectation or 'meaning perspectives' (created by ideologies, learning styles, neurotic self-deceptions) constitute codes that govern the activities of perceiving, comprehending, and remembering" (p. 4). Meaning perspectives were of three types: epistemic (about knowledge and the way that it is used), sociolinguistic (about social norms, culture, and language), and psychological (about self). Cranton (1994) reflected on Mezirow's work on *meaning perspectives* by saying,

The way we see the world, then, is a product of our knowledge about the world, our cultural background and language, and our human nature. Each meaning perspective is made up of a set of meaning schemes: specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, feelings, and assumptions. (p. 29)

Mezirow has provided a theory of transformational learning applying to adult learners which discusses things like values, assumptions, and beliefs in addition to meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. His terms of reference, the scope of his consideration, and his interest in adult learners make the work of Mezirow a suitable tool of comparison with theory developed about worldview construction and adult learning.

Resources that have dealt with the topic of *meanings*, in addition to Mezirow's meaning perspectives and meaning schemes, are ones that might also contribute to an enhanced understanding of worldview. As an example, Jarvis (1993) discussed meaning in a chapter entitled "Meaning, Being and Learning" which he developed by making repeated references to Mezirow and Luckmann. In the second paragraph, he wrote "see also McKenzie, 1991" (p. 92) and consequently included *Adult Education and Worldview Construction* (McKenzie, 1991) among the references. In spite of doing this, he did not use the expression worldview at all in that chapter and provided no real insight into McKenzie's work. In an earlier work, Jarvis (1985) used the term when he wrote, "individuals hold perceptions of reality, universes of meaning and world views that find no verification through these processes" (p. 77) and following soon thereafter talked of both a *natural world-view* and *learned world-view* in reference to Scheler's seven-fold division of knowledge (p. 80).

Lebenswelt is a concept that was created by the German philosopher, Husserl, who is considered the founder of phenomenology. Translated as *life-world*, it relates to “the individual’s inner world of consciousness and experience” (Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 315). Welton (1995) brought together the perspectives of five persons in a book that gave attention to *lifeworld* which he describes as “the realm of intersubjective interaction and adult learning par excellence” (p. 5). He stated that the collaborative effort had “its roots in the imagery of Jürgen Habermas” (p. 5). One of the contributors is Mezirow whose concept of meaning perspectives bears some relation to worldview. Welton, in discussing Habermas’ work, gives some consideration to the “Judeo-Christian worldview” (pp. 137-138). We see in this one book, the convergence of related concepts but with the editor’s assumption that worldview needs no definition or elaboration.

Some of the preceding references represent thinking that unquestionably developed in a modernist context. Some have straddled the line of modernist-postmodernist controversy. In recent years, a number of works have given attention to culture (e.g., Featherstone, 1995) and education (e.g., Usher & Edwards, 1994) in a postmodern context. Although worldview is not specifically a topic of discussion, the suggestion of a change from modernism to postmodernism is a signal that the notion of worldview may be implicitly involved. As another example, O’Sullivan’s (1999) *Transformative Learning* did not deal specifically with worldview, but his work did address the matters of “contemporary educational theory and practice” and the need for a “cosmology that can be functionally effective” (p. 4). Out of his concern about a “dysfunctional industrial system” (p. 7) and a current planetary crisis, he critiqued a “world view that exacerbates the crisis” (p. 7). The call for a transformative vision of education and for a new

cosmology is suggestive of a change in worldview that accompanies postmodern thinking.

Some uses of the term worldview have appeared in the media. The CNN network had a program called *WorldView*, which was described as “a signature global evening newscast designed to provide the latest news from around the world with a broader perspective than other leading network evening newscasts” (<http://www.cnn.com/CNN/Programs/worldview>). The Toronto Globe & Mail newspaper announced *World View*, a column to be written by Gwynne Dyer, as “the title of the new analytical feature on international affairs” (Saturday, August 15, 1998). The same newspaper used *WORLDVIEW* as a subtitle on an article by Peter Cook in the Commentary section of September 14, 1998. A person being interviewed on a CBC radio program spoke about how an activity had changed her worldview, by which she meant her view of life. Scripted dialogue for two characters on network television programs also included worldview as something about themselves that had been affected by an experience (Malcolm in the Middle; Law and Order-SVU). While these are outside the domain of scholarly publications, such instances show that worldview has begun to enter common conversation. Yet, to date, its use is neither widespread nor frequent.

Definitions and Descriptions

The four preceding sections of this chapter have provided sources of information that in one way or another provoke thinking about the term and concept of worldview. If one theorist or writer had initiated and defined the concept in recent times, as in the case of personal constructs from Kelly (1955) or Mezirow’s (1985; 1991) meaning perspectives, then more certainty and precision in definition would surround the notion of worldview.

In some cases, the word has been used with little relationship to Kant's intent for *Weltanschauung*. If we trace its use from the origins in the German Enlightenment through German discourse, there appear to have been shifts in meaning. Modern philosophers have analysed Kantian thought apart from referring to *Weltanschauung* as *worldview* or have introduced new terms, as in the case of Goodman and the term world-making. At all levels of discourse, related terms and concepts do abound. It has proven worthwhile to explore appearances of terms like world view, world-view, world-and-life view, world-making, ideology, life world, lifeviews, personal constructs, social constructs, meanings, and meaning perspectives.

Part of the difficulty in tracing the concept of worldview is that it encompasses many things related to the human experience and hence, by nature, is inclusive. As a result, there are resources that do not use the term worldview but still speak to the matter of worldview. Another difficulty has been in the use of the term by a number of authors who have not described the meaning within their text nor indexed it for reference. As a result of such treatment of the term and concept, an air of uncertainty has been created concerning the meaning and significance of worldview. More occurrences, perhaps even pivotal ones, await discovery. For the purposes of this study, it is reasonable and necessary to examine definitions and descriptions that speak clearly and specifically about worldview and that bring the term and concept into focus. This section provides some of those that have proven helpful in this task.

The Chambers Dictionary (1993) defined worldview as "outlook on or attitude to the world or life" (p. 2014). Erickson (1985), in a chapter entitled "Theological Language as Metaphysical Synthesis" wrote,

A metaphysic is a world-view. And everyone has a world-view, for everyone has an idea of what reality is about. A world-view is a scheme that ties together the varied experiences that we have. It is the frame of reference which enables us to function by making sense of the manifold of experience. (p. 142)

Holmes (1983), who wrote the first volume in a series called "Studies in a Christian World View," gives the following description of worldview formation:

The genesis of a world view is at the prephilosophical level. It begins, without either systematic planning or theoretical intentions, with the beliefs and attitudes and values on which people act. There are feelings about one's world, too, as well as beliefs and attitudes, and the values that different things in that world offer us. In this sense everyone has the beginnings of a world view, and from reflection on these unanalyzed and unsystematic beginnings a more carefully examined and systematically developed view takes shape. (pp. 31-32)

Kraft (1979), from his perspective as a missiologist, wrote,

Cultures pattern perceptions of reality into conceptualizations of what reality can or should be, what is to be regarded as actual, probable, possible or impossible. These conceptualizations form what is termed the worldview of the culture. The worldview is the central systematization of conceptions of reality to which members of its culture assent (largely unconsciously) and from which stems their value system. The worldview lies at the very heart of the culture, touching, interacting with, and strongly influencing every aspect of the culture. (p. 53)

Long and McMurry (1994) posit that

A worldview is both unconscious and pervasive. In fact, it is unconscious because it is pervasive. Like a pane of glass or the water a fish swims in, the worldview is the medium in which we see and experience. We focus our attention on what we see and experience, disregarding the medium. Most of the time, therefore, we are not aware of why we interpret our experiences as we do. Since our presuppositions are unexamined and beyond the reach of normal discussion, they are not easily modified. (p. 29)

McKenzie (1991) wrote,

Worldview means contemplation of the world. In this sense contemplating the world is similar to worldviewing. In another sense a worldview can mean a system of beliefs that results from contemplating the world or from acting in the world on the basis of one's contemplations....Worldview is construed in two senses. First, a worldview is a vantage point given by a person's experience from which the world may be seen and interpreted....Second, a worldview is an interpretation of the world, an understanding of the world that arises out of reflecting on one's experience of the world, an understanding that functions to explain the world to the worldviewer and make it intelligible at least on a provisional basis. (pp. 1-2)

Nash (1992), who examined how worldviews could come into conflict, stated, "A worldview, then, is a conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality" (p. 16). Finally, Sire (1976/1988) said, "A world view is a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or

subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic make-up of our world” (1988, p. 17).

Considering these definitions and descriptions and the thinking of other contributors, worldview might be described as a notion about living held by an individual but with elements that may be commonly shared by a social group. A worldview represents beliefs, assumptions, and understandings about the nature of the world and the way that life can be lived in the world as it is known. It arises out of what the individual gains from information, learning, and experiences, and it develops through time as the individual assimilates these and lives out that understanding in his or her physical and social surroundings.

Summary

Worldview, as a concept, has been discussed over a period spanning about 220 years but the term has not seen much use except in a few fields of endeavour such as philosophy and religion. There is one recent landmark publication by McKenzie (1991) for the field of education, specifically adult education. Other references to worldview that have come from a number of different fields might be helpful in developing its use in education. The term has some alternate meanings and implications depending upon the intentions of the user, but there appears to be enough agreement in the definitions and descriptions of the concept that there can be ground for ongoing discussion of worldview. This study was undertaken with the assumption that there is some value in exploring the use of worldview in an educational setting. What follows is a description of the methodology employed in gaining more insights from a group of adult educators.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted to explore what understanding a sample group of adult educators had about the term and concept of *worldview* and to gain insight into how they reflected upon worldview in their practice with adult learners. Data for this research were collected through participant responses during one-to-one interviews and so, by nature, the study employed a qualitative methodology and was of emergent design. Following is a description of the research design, participant recruitment and preparation, data collection, strategies to safeguard the credibility of the study, and data analysis. The last section in this chapter describing methodology deals with ethical considerations and protection of the participants of this study.

Research Design

Before undertaking this investigation, I had been reading and studying in the field of adult education and had served as an instructor among adult learners in a number of college settings. The question had arisen quite simply, “How is it that this concept of ‘worldview’ is not appearing in articles and conversations about adult education?” An ongoing literature review failed to turn up much that dealt with worldview in the context of adult education. Then the question became, “What do other adult educators know about worldview?” In an attempt to obtain “the most valid, accurate answers possible” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, p. 31) to these questions, I determined that the design should be a qualitative case study using interviews for collection of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993 p. 37). The desire to explore the understanding that others had of a term and concept, along with consideration of its possible integration into practice, made the use of interviews the most direct, incisive, and appropriate data collection technique

(McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, p. 43). That is to say, if the concept of worldview has value in the practice of educators, then it seemed appropriate that the inquiry should focus on the understanding of practitioners. This focus led directly to a qualitative approach to the study because “qualitative methods are especially well suited for investigations in applied fields such as adult education and training because we want to improve practice” (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 97).

Since the research problem arose out of practice and the research findings may eventually benefit the practice of adult education, qualitative methodology is certainly appropriate here. However, qualitative research methodology also has a theoretical and philosophical relationship with the particular topic under consideration. Patton (1990), in writing about qualitative research methods, states, “phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question: ‘What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?’” (p. 69). That was the nature of the research question about worldview. Patton more specifically incorporates the very concept being investigated when he writes, “Thus phenomenologists focus on how we put together the phenomena we experience in such a way as to make sense of the world and, in so doing, develop a worldview” (p. 69). The relationship between personal worldview and qualitative research is further reinforced when Patton discusses the matter of empathy in the context of research. He states, “Empathy involves being able to take and understand the stance, position, feelings, experiences, and worldview of others” (p. 56). Using the term *verstehen* that Max Weber introduced to social science, Patton then indicates “The value of empathy is emphasized in the phenomenological doctrine of *verstehen* which undergirds much qualitative inquiry. *Verstehen* means ‘understanding’ and refers to the unique human

capacity to make sense of the world” (p. 56). This acknowledgment of the relationship between worldview and qualitative research is reiterated by the statement that “the key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based, is the view that reality is constructed by individuals in interaction with their social worlds” (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 97).

The methodological approach of this research may further be described as a case study. “A case is a particular situation selected by the researcher in which some phenomenon will be described by participants’ meanings of events and processes.” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, p. 92). Although there may be some confusion and difference of opinion as to what constitutes a case study (Merriam, 1988, p. 5), a comparison of qualitative case studies has determined that they have four essential properties. These properties are categorized as particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive (Merriam, 1988, p. 11). Hence, qualitative case studies characteristically have a “specificity of focus” in which the results contain descriptive data about attitudes and notions that “illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomena under study” leading to the emergence of “generalizations, concepts, or hypotheses” (Merriam, 1988, pp. 11-13).

“There are three basic ways to collect data in qualitative research. Interviewing is probably the most used in qualitative studies in adult education and training” (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 100). Aside from recognizing the widespread use of interviews in qualitative research, I wanted to engage adult educators in conversation in a way that they could tell me what they knew about worldview and so, the one-to-one interview was the most appropriate technique. The research interviews posed to the participants a number of

open-ended questions that invited open-ended responses. Such responses “permit one to understand the world as seen by the respondents” (Patton, 1990, p. 24). This, too, was at the heart of the research problem both in the use of the term and concept of worldview as the focus of discussions and in a desire to explore how other adult educators were aware of the concept as it was involved in their practice.

Hence, the very concept that was under consideration in the process of research was identified by a few authors as an underlying theme in qualitative case study methodology. This did not dictate the use of such methodology but it was a nice match between the concept and recognized aspects of a methodology and so confirmed the appropriateness of the selected approach.

Participant Recruitment and Preparation

I wanted to draw a purposive sample from people who were instructors in adult education and were involved in a variety of disciplines or fields of study. I had already seen from my own studies that worldview was used extensively in some disciplines but not necessarily in others. By having participants with various academic backgrounds and expertise who were dealing with different subject matter and who were from two different types of post-secondary institutions, I expected to get a range of responses and insights. Seventeen of the participants were drawn from among instructors at a community college and a university with one additional person involved in adult basic literacy and employment skills training. These adult educators became involved in the research on a self-selection basis by responding to randomly distributed invitations to participate. The invitations were, at first, conveyed by means of printed notices and, later, by e-mail messages. Fifty-four printed notices were placed in instructors’ mailboxes in a number

of academic divisions at one campus of the college. A further 20 were distributed by administrative assistants in the class registers of part-time instructors working with the Division of Continuing Education at that same college. At the university's Faculty of Education, 31 printed invitations were placed in faculty mailboxes.

The response from printed materials at the college resulted in 8 people volunteering to participate. Only one person from among the university's Faculty of Education responded to the printed invitations, so 29 more professors from the same university were contacted by random selection using the university's e-mail directory. As a result of this invitation, 8 more professors indicated that they were able to participate within the time frame specified. The resultant group of 18 participants consisted of eight college instructors, nine university professors, and one person involved in adult basic literacy and retraining. Five of these participants were themselves pursuing degree programs and so were formally learners as well as teachers.

Prior to the first interview, participants were advised that the general nature of this study was "Master of Education thesis research concerning the personal perspectives of adult educators." The term worldview was not introduced at that stage because the design of the research required that participants approach the initial interview without any deliberate preparation on the topic of worldview. They were also advised that the time frame involved one initial exploratory interview that would be approximately one hour in duration, to be scheduled for the spring of 1998. A second reflective interview of approximately one hour in duration was to be conducted in the autumn of 1998. Participants were promised that involvement would cause minimal disruption to their personal schedules and that there would be flexibility in the time of the meetings.

Data Collection

The study involved data collection by means of two open-ended interviews conducted with each of the 18 adult educators. The 18 participants who had been recruited represented an ample number to reach data saturation using this study's research tools. The first set of interviews was conducted in July 1998. The second set of interviews was conducted between October 19 and December 1, 1998. All meetings were arranged to suit the participant's convenience and at a time and location that, generally, was suggested by the participant. The interview sessions were recorded by means of audio taping.

At the beginning of the first interview, the participant was provided with a Personal Information Sheet (Appendix B), which was completed at that time. Participants were then given a copy of the Informed Consent form (Appendix C), and the interviewer read aloud the four clauses outlining the conditions under which the interviews would be conducted. The participant was asked to read and sign the Informed Consent Form before proceeding further with the interview.

To begin the interview questions, participants were asked how they felt about their roles as adult educators. After this, there was a set of questions to discover what prior knowledge participants had about the term worldview and about concepts related to that term. Following that, participants were provided with a definition from *The Chambers Dictionary* (1993), which described worldview as an "outlook on or attitude to the world or life" (p. 2014). Participants were asked if that definition sparked any further thoughts about the term or concept of worldview. During this meeting, participants had freedom and opportunity to discuss their understanding of worldview. Questions were posed in a way to allow them to describe whatever awareness they had concerning their own

worldview and the worldviews of colleagues and adult learners. The questions that were used to guide this interview are included in Appendix D.

At the end of the first interview, each participant was provided with a portfolio (Appendix E). The portfolio contained the definition of worldview taken from *The Chambers Dictionary*, three additional descriptions of worldview, four scenarios that placed worldview in different group settings, and a diagram of factors which might influence an individual's worldview. It was made clear to the participants that there was no obligation to use the portfolio. The material was not supplied as a tool for data collection but, rather, as a resource document that they might wish to consider and in which to make notes until the time of the second meeting. No data was collected from use of the portfolio nor were any inferences or conclusions drawn. However, because reference was made to the portfolio in a subsequent interview, the material is included as an appendix. As well, the portfolio provided information inviting the participants to contact the interviewer at any time concerning the study and, as well, reminded the participants of a forthcoming telephone call and second meeting to be scheduled during the Fall semester of 1998.

Following each interview, the dialogue of the session was transcribed from the audio tape. This transcript was sent to the participant with indication that he or she could make changes to any of the personal responses in that transcript. In a cover letter, each participant was asked to send written confirmation of accuracy or written notice of corrections or changes. Transcripts of the first interview were amended where necessary according to written responses. Participants either kept their transcripts or were mailed replacement copies where they had requested changes in their responses. The transcript

of the first interview could then be retained by the participants for inclusion in their portfolios.

Subsequently, at the approximate mid-point between the first meeting and the anticipated date for the second meeting, a telephone call was made to each participant. This informal call served a number of purposes. First, it provided an opportunity for participants to ask questions or make comments about the study. Second, it could encourage participants in further consideration of the theme of worldview. Third, I was able to express appreciation for the commitment made by the individuals to participate in the study, and a reminder was given concerning a later call in which arrangements would be made for the second interview.

A second formal interview with each participant occurred during the Fall semester of 1998. This interview was conducted within one hour at a location chosen by the participant. Both sets of interviews were personal face-to-face meetings, with the exception of the second occasion with Participant H, in which the interview took place over the telephone. The purpose of the second interview was (a) to allow the participants to address or elaborate upon personal responses made during the first meeting, (b) to explore what effect, if any, there was in preparation or presentation of material as a result of reflection upon the matter of worldview, and (c) to provide opportunity for the participants to offer new insights, reflections, or comments on how the study had affected them personally or their practice of adult education (see Appendix F). Unlike the first meeting, no new material was introduced by the interviewer. The proceedings from this set of interviews were audio taped, the dialogue was transcribed, and the transcripts were sent to participants for review.

All persons who agreed to participate completed the two interviews, and there was excellent co-operation in verifying the accuracy of their individual responses as recorded in both interview transcripts. After each participant had been given opportunity to make any necessary amendments to the second interview transcript, the 36 transcripts were ready for data analysis.

Data Analysis

All of the transcripts were analysed for salient comments pertaining to the participant's worldview awareness. Thus, the interviews generated a longitudinal study of each participant's thoughts pertaining to the term and concept of worldview and to its appearance in their practice of teaching. The salient comments were highlighted and extracted to produce a synthesis document for each participant. This was then used to produce the interpretive document previously noted. These same highlighted comments were extracted and cross-referenced with related data from other participants. Largely, responses from the first set of interviews provided insights into certain matters, and responses from the second set of interviews addressed other matters. Data from both interviews were analysed with sensitivity to content and nuances and, occasionally, participant responses had to be considered across the two interviews to build an understanding about recurring themes. There were individual comments made by a number of participants that would be valuable for directing and framing future research but, taking the data as a whole, it appeared that participant responses addressed the following descriptive questions:

1. What was the participant's understanding of the term and concept of worldview?

2. What did the participant consider as factors involved in the development of a personal worldview?
3. How did participants discern diversity and worldview differences in the educational setting?
4. How had worldview entered into their preparation or delivery of courses?

There were a variety of understandings concerning the term and concept of worldview but considering the responses of all of the participants across both sets of interviews, the data indicated that there were 3 different kinds of awareness. Participants could be aware of worldview in the manner of a head knowledge, or as an experience of worldview, or as something that applied to situations in life or in the practice of teaching. These kinds of awareness did not appear as different stages or levels. That is, a participant could manifest all three kinds, each to a different extent. In the midst of a wealth of data and insights, these kinds of awareness represented an organizational framework for the presentation of findings and data but, in addition, participants offered information about factors that hampered or contributed to the development of a worldview awareness. The appearance of such factors emerged as a finding of the research without any direct interview questions soliciting this type of information. Consequently, the data were reviewed with particular attention to comments that addressed what appeared to be constraints and opportunities affecting worldview awareness. All the data were considered within this framework of three kinds of awareness that developed upon a landscape of constraints and opportunities.

Safeguarding the Credibility of the Study

In reference to qualitative research, both experience and related literature indicate that there are six basic strategies that can ensure credible data (Merriam, 1988, p. 169). Five of these six strategies were used. For this study, safeguards included (a) triangulation, (b) a research log, (c) member checks, (d) advisor/peer review, and (e) consideration of researcher bias as well as the assumptions and limitations of the study.

In order to keep data for this study from undue bias, four aspects of *triangulation* were employed. Namely, there was triangulation with respect to (a) location, (b) background, (c) method, and (d) time. Although the research was conducted in the same geographic area, all but one of the participants were employed in either of two post-secondary institutions. Half of the research group (9 participants) came from a university offering degree-granting programs up to the PhD level, and 8 people came from a community college offering certificate and diploma programs. One of the participants was a community worker. This configuration, along with the possibility of participants having previous experience in other settings, provided some variety of institutional culture. Invitations had been sent to educators engaged in a wide variety of disciplines and programs. Among the 18 participants, 13 different fields of study were represented, which provided minimal overlap and what seemed a reasonable spectrum of academic backgrounds. As well, the participants represented different levels of academic attainment, ranging from some who had only college diplomas to those with doctorates. Another background factor was that 10 of the participants were female and 8 were male. Concerning triangulation achieved through method, participant responses were generated

in two ways, including two interviews and a personal portfolio. With the first interview accomplished and the portfolio in hand, participants were given about four months to reflect upon the matter of worldview until the occasion of meeting for a second interview. The timing of the interviews was such that participants were first met during a time of summer recess and then after resumption of courses that placed most of them in busy teaching schedules. Thus there appeared to be sufficient triangulation to safeguard the credibility of the data collected.

As well, I maintained a *research log* of the stages of development of the process before, during, and after data collection. This included information about communications and meetings with the thesis supervisor, documents exchanged with the participants, and notes with points of personal reflection about the research and the topic of worldview. Through the process of recording these thoughts, conversations, and stages of activity, I was repeatedly confirming in my mind what was taking place. This type of documentation was also accompanied by self-imposed questions like “Is this true?” “Is this what happened?” “Do I understand correctly?” which were important to the integrity of the research and researcher.

The third means of assuring the accuracy of data was through *member checks*. After the transcript of each interview was prepared, it was sent (along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope and cover letter) to the participant in question with a request that any errors, omissions, or corrections be noted on the pages. Participants were also informed that they could make any changes to their portion of the dialogue to make it a more accurate representation of their thinking. If no changes were necessary, participants were asked to use a tear-off portion of the cover letter and return that piece of paper to

report that everything met with their approval. Both interview transcripts were treated in this manner for all 18 participants. Thus, as participants verified that transcripts were accurate or, in a few cases, noted where changes had to be made, the study gathered 36 reliable sources of data.

As part of the member check, I reviewed the entire dialogue of both transcripts for each participant. This was done with attention to drawing out salient comments concerning worldview. The verbatim comments thus extracted were written into statements by which I expressed to the participant, "This is what I understand you are telling me." This interpretive data reduction was placed in a two-column format with the right column of each page being available for participant comments. The interpretive document thus produced was sent to each participant along with the two fully-corrected transcripts. Each participant was asked to verify the accuracy of the statements in the interpretive document and was invited to write any revisions or make new comments in the right-hand column. The cover letter with this package indicated that the participant should keep the two transcripts of interviews for inclusion in the portfolio but requested return of the interpretive document. At each stage of the process where interaction took place with the participants, care was taken to allow for freedom of expression and to derive accurate information for inclusion in the research data.

Another means of safeguarding the accuracy of the research data was through *advisor/peer review*. In developing the research tools and process, consultations with the thesis advisor helped to confirm that data were being collected and treated in a way that followed an appropriate methodology. Recommendations and perspectives expressed by the thesis advisor were recorded, discussed, and considered for the refinement of

the research design, data collection, and data analysis. General discussions were also conducted with interested persons, other than participants or the thesis advisor, concerning the nature of the research and matters pertaining to worldview.

A final strategy to safeguard credibility involved reflection upon my *own biases as a researcher* as well as upon the *assumptions and limitations* that were part of the study process. In a section entitled “The Investigator’s Worldview” Merriam (1988) stated, “How the investigator views the world affects the entire research process—from conceptualizing a problem, to collecting and analyzing data, to interpreting the findings” (p. 53). One of the personal biases carried into the research was that my understanding of worldview had arisen and been developed through the particular discipline involved with theological and missiological studies. My initial thinking about the concept had been informed by Western writers and educators whose beliefs could be described as conservative, evangelical Christian ones. The primary outcome of this was that, for me, Christian literature and resources were more familiar, available, and prominent. A second personal bias was that I believed worldview to be a significant concept that could make a contribution to educational theory and practice. This bias meant that particular care had to be exercised to contain my enthusiasm for the concept as well as to maintain conditions throughout the interviews that would encourage participants to freely and openly express their thoughts and feelings.

The study was also approached with some acknowledged *assumptions*. One was that the term worldview was not very well known among the participants. This assumption was based on the observation that the word was not often used in literature or in professional conversations. Hence, I designed the initial part of the first interview

anticipating that some of the participants might need an explanation of what worldview means by standard definition. Following from this was the assumption that the concept of worldview was understandable with minimal explanation. For those participants who had not been familiar with the term, I assumed that, having been provided with a brief explanation, they would be able to engage in conversation about worldview within the course of the first interview. Another assumption pertained to practice and to my experience of diversity in the classroom. I expected that it was also part of the experience of the participants of this study. I assumed that, at some time in their careers as educators, the participants would have experienced something of a challenge in dealing with a mixture of students in a particular class setting, something that would have stimulated thinking like, "How do I deal with this assortment of individuals?" One other assumption was that my interest in the topic of worldview would be somewhat matched, at some point in the process, by a similar interest among the participants. In this, I hoped that the participants would become engaged in thinking about worldview before the conclusion of the data collection.

There were also some *limitations* to the study that had to be acknowledged. One was that many who responded from the college were colleagues who knew me from professional interactions. I had to consider that this prior acquaintance might affect the nature of interaction and responses through the interviews. Although reasonable efforts had been taken to ensure triangulation, I had to recognize that four of the university professors came from one teaching field and had offices in proximity to one another and probably met at faculty and department gatherings. An interesting matter that arose early in the first interview was that 2 participants questioned whether they were in fact

involved with *adult education*. This posed an interesting uncertainty because the invitation to participate had referred to my desire to gain the perspectives of adult educators and my approach to participants made use of the expression adult educator.

Ethical Considerations

The research was developed and procedures were conducted according to the standards established by the Brock University Sub-Committee on Research with Human Participants as set forth in Appendix C of the Master of Education Revised Program Guide, which includes the Brock University Faculty Handbook Section III:8. Permission to proceed with the research as designed was granted by the Brock University Ethics Committee as indicated by the letter included as Appendix G. Permission to approach the college instructors was granted by the college's Director of Human Resources with further co-operation from the Director of the Division of Continuing Education. Approach to professors at the university was made with the co-operation of administrative assistants with the university's Faculty of Education.

The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis in private settings generally suggested by the participant. The sessions were audio taped and these tapes, along with transcripts and other records, were maintained in a locked facility. Documents sent to participants were marked *Personal & Confidential*. To safeguard the identity of participants, documents containing responses were assigned a letter designation from A to T according to the sequence of first interviews. Thereafter, reference in published documents made to a participant was in the form of Participant A, Participant B, et cetera. Quotations included in Chapter Four follow this pattern of designation using pseudonyms and, as an example, words spoken by Participant M during the second interview will

appear thus (Mary, II). In some cases, participants would know one another as colleagues, but particular care was taken by the researcher to guard against speaking with any participant about another person involved in the research. Similarly, any discussions about the data with the advisor or peers referred to those who were interviewed as *a participant* or as *the participants*.

Summary

The research methodology sought to gather data through two sets of interviews with a self-selected group of adult educators who were teaching in either a community college or a university. Questions asked during the interviews were designed to probe their understanding of worldview as a term and concept. Participant responses revealed that worldview awareness could be of three kinds and that development of any awareness occurred upon a landscape of constraints and opportunities. These themes constitute the framework for the presentation of results in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This study was undertaken with a group of adult educators to examine their awareness of *worldview*. This construct was initially identified as being both a term and a concept that was part of the human experience and that might also apply to the field of adult education. To conduct the investigation, 18 participants (8 college instructors, 1 adult trainer, and 9 university professors) were interviewed twice in a period separated by about four months. Analysis of the data suggested that participants understood worldview to mean a variety of things, and that awareness could be of three kinds: noetic (strictly relating to the mind or intellect), experiential (derived from personal or professional experience), and integrative (incorporated into life or into the practice of teaching).

Furthermore, as participants discussed worldview and their experiences, it became apparent that worldview awareness developed upon a landscape of constraints and opportunities. These kinds of awareness and the landscape constitute the organizational framework for the presentation of findings and data in this chapter.

Awareness of Worldview

Participant responses suggested that awareness of worldview was of three kinds that differed according to their nature. One kind was a noetic awareness, which was apparent when participants expressed their understanding about either the term worldview, or about the concept, or about what might be a corresponding concept under another expression. The second kind of awareness was evident as participants described worldview either in their own experience or as they saw worldview manifested in the experience of other people. Third, an integrative awareness was demonstrated by

participants who had made use of worldview or a synonymous concept in general life situations or, more specifically, in education.

The interview data did not suggest that the three kinds of awareness could be treated as three progressive levels. Although there was evidence that, within each kind of awareness, different participants had different degrees of understanding, no attempt was made to rank or grade the understanding except in the case of noetic awareness. It was only within noetic awareness that responses were assigned to one of three levels, which were determined by the apparent familiarity with the term worldview. Because there was no previous base of research, this qualitative study was an emergent design. Participants responded to initial questions about worldview as a term and concept, and the data suggested that three levels existed within what is described as noetic awareness.

Noetic Awareness

At the outset of the study, it seemed important to discover what the expression worldview meant to participants when it was introduced into our discussions. It also seemed appropriate to learn what other concepts they might be using that bore some relationship to worldview. Early in the first interview, participants provided simple responses indicating their awareness of the term. It then became a matter of finding out what notions were evoked and what concepts the participants attached to the word worldview. Some offered this information without being prompted by any further questions. During the initial stages of the first interview, participants demonstrated their awareness of worldview as a term, as a concept, and through related concepts.

Term awareness was the starting point for exploring the participants' familiarity with worldview. That is, I was interested to know if they had heard the expression worldview

and what the term meant to them. Initial responses could be assigned to one of three levels of term awareness. Participants indicated, directly or indirectly, that they were aware of (a) the component words, (b) the word being used on a previous occasion, or (c) the meaning of worldview in accordance with a standard dictionary definition.

All 18 participants were conversant in English and able to recognize the components (*world* and *view*) of the compound word. A basic level of term awareness was indicated by six participants who said they were not familiar with the term worldview but still speculated on its meaning during the first interview. They were able to work with the component words and to come up with what they considered related terms or descriptions such as “global context” (Ann, I), “connectedness or interrelatedness” (Bob, I), “interactions and relationships globally” (Dawn, I), “global or global issues” (Ed, I), and “putting the world in perspective with respect to the business and accounting fields” (Hugh, I).

Another six participants indicated that they had previously encountered the term worldview and saw the expression as more than the sum of its parts. These participants demonstrated familiarity with, but did not present certainty about, the term. They were considered to be at the second level of term awareness. Two indicated uncertainty about the specific context (Jane, I; Ruth, I). Two said that it was something relatively new (Lou, I; Ken, I). One participant admitted that it was something about which he had not given much thought (Cal, I), and another indicated that his use may not be in accord with my use (Paul, I).

The third level of term awareness was represented by the remaining six participants who provided confident responses that they had encountered the term on occasions prior to our first meeting. For example, one participant said,

Well, I suppose it's not a term that I would use comfortably in conversation but what it might mean to me would be the view of the world that you have that controls how you act and the assumptions that you make. So it would be the overall understanding of everything. (Gail, I)

Four of these participants (Gail, Mary, Sue, and Tina) showed an understanding of the word that corresponded to the conventional meaning derived from a dictionary definition, and two others (Fred and Olga) related it to the origins previously established in the German expression *Weltanschauung*.

Asking participants what the term worldview meant yielded some responses that demonstrated preliminary insights into concept awareness, which is the second level of the noetic kind of awareness. *Concept awareness* was considered to exist if a participant understood worldview to have any meaning beyond being a compound word or as something defined in a dictionary entry. Participants described worldview in words with which they were familiar and in ways that they felt were related. For example, they described worldview as “a way of thinking” (Fred, I), an “overall understanding of everything” (Gail, I), a “paradigm” (Ken, I), an “ideology” (Ken, I; Mary, I), an “ideological orientation ... how you make sense of the world” (Tina, I), and a “general perspective” (Sue, I). Of the foregoing, five had an initial third level term awareness.

Eventually, other participants displayed some concept awareness through continued dialogue after being provided with the dictionary definition. An example of this occurred

when one participant indicated that he had not encountered the term worldview but was familiar with the component words (Hugh, I). By the end of the first interview, he offered his understanding that

Worldview is a more abstract concept where each and every person has their own way of viewing the world brought about by their upbringing and the morals that are instilled in them as a child and the environment that they grew up in. Studies show that the environment has a large, large influence in controlling the individual's character, and how that character develops, I think, actually influences how one perceives the world or interprets the world. (Hugh, I)

Some participants were not in the habit of using the term worldview and yet revealed a level of understanding about the concept such that they could relate it to *corresponding concepts*. They showed preference for or had more familiarity with terms such as “meaning perspectives” (Sue, I), “ideology” (Mary, I; Tina, I), or “paradigm” (Ken, I; Mary, I). For three of these participants (Sue, Mary, and Tina), this was an immediate and confident response.

In the case of one participant, this matter of awareness bridged all three levels (term, concept, and corresponding concept) within a short span of time during the first interview. The dialogue proceeded as follows:

Interviewer - What does that term [worldview] mean to you?

Participant - Actually, that's only the second time I've encountered it so it's relatively new to me. The first time I encountered it was talking about baseball and a soccer person was talking about “What was the worldview of baseball?”... So, with

the caveat that I haven't really thought about worldview very much, I think of it much as ideology.

Interviewer - Are there any other images that you would associate with that term?

Participant - You could call it the conventional wisdom or, to use the term coined by Kuhn, you could call it the paradigm. (Ken, I)

Such ability to discuss related concepts was an indication that this participant had developed an understanding of worldview that was operational beyond the context of the interview sessions. This exchange suggested that, although some participants may not have previously been using the term worldview, they were readily able to work with the concept.

Experiential Awareness

Questions raised during the first interview gave participants an opportunity to move beyond considering worldview simply as a term or as a concept. When asked to describe what factors or influences they thought might contribute to the formation of a worldview, participants began describing worldview as something related to human experience, observed either in an individual or in a group of people. Such responses represented a second kind of awareness as some participants answered by sharing from personal experience, either from observations of their students (Dawn, I; Lou, I) or from reflecting on their own childhood (Dawn, I; Fred, I; Nora, I). Appendix H sets out, in tabular form, an overview of the responses from all but two participants (Ann and Paul), with whom the interview dialogue did not provide data fitting into this category. The responses of participants indicated that experiential awareness could be considered broadly as either an awareness of the worldview of others or as an awareness of one's own worldview.

Awareness of the worldviews of others was the prevalent type of experiential awareness noted in the data. As participants spoke of worldview as an aspect of the human experience, they tended to group people into categories or types of people. For example, as one participant was reflecting on the matter of worldview, she used three such categories by saying “when the worldview of the student clashes with the worldview of the teacher, clashes with the worldview of management” (Gail, II). These categories were generalizations that could commonly occur in discussions about education and classroom experience. Initially, some participants spoke in such general terms and in such a way as to suggest that members of a category all shared the same worldview. However, while participants did generalize about students as a category, the more they shared, the more they made distinctions among students in terms of worldview differences. In expressing an awareness of the worldviews of others, certain distinctions recurred in the responses of many participants. These distinctions were based upon factors such as time frame, experience, motivation to learn, location, background, and field of study.

Participants indicated a belief that passage of time affected worldview. *Time frame* distinctions were of two varieties. One variety made reference to earlier periods of history while the other variety considered differences between recent generations of students. In both varieties, the change of worldview was seen to have an impact upon the process of education. The two participants who taught English referred to literature written in the Victorian era (Gail, I) and in the post-colonial era (Mary, I). Both indicated that the worldview of the era was communicated through an author’s work and that it would be different from our own (Gail, I; Mary, I). Indicating the importance of this in teaching,

one said that

I feel like I am constantly urging them [students] to be sensitive to the worldviews of different writers and writers that come from different contexts and not to impose their own and make judgments on characters, on writers, et cetera, without considering the context. (Mary, II)

Other participants illustrated a second way that time frame affected worldview. Two people said that perspectives had changed between recent generations (Fred, II; Ken, II), and one opinion was that

Students coming in--looking at the seventies--for them, self-development was more of a goal so they were more flexible and more willing to change views to what were considered different ones. Whereas students now are much more results-oriented and just less open to consider different worldviews. (Ken, II)

Some participants even felt that there had been a change in the attitude of students within shorter spans of time (Nora, II; Paul, II). One example was a personal insight:

But they [students] are a product of their generation.... They seem to expect things to come easily and quickly and without a lot of effort. And if it requires too much attention for too long, they'll cop out and come very quickly for help, rather than try to hammer things out on their own.... I have a sister who is 19 and I'm finding that although we're related she is much more like my students than she is like me. (Nora, II)

One professor recounted that, in his teaching, he cited an example of economic policies of the 1980s that was well within his experience and the experience of many mature

students but, to young undergraduates, it seemed like reviewing the history of a previous era (Cal, I). Another professor recalled a time when she started using the example of a person who had been a recent and prominent public figure but then had to resort to another example of someone who was more current. She said,

I think that it's important that any instructor, anyone who is trying to convey information...should try to find the best way to convey that. You should be speaking the same language and that just doesn't mean both speaking English--using the same expressions. A good example--I, for years, have taught micropaleontology--micro-fossils. There are some that look just like the picture in the book, perfect examples, well preserved and so on. And I used to say, that is the "Christie Brinkley" of that species. Well, this year, for the first time I had someone say "Who?" So I had to pick a younger model. So I now say "Claudia Schiffer."... It means to me that is the thing that people dream of as the ideal. (Nora, II)

Related somewhat to distinctions in worldview differences based upon time frame were those distinctions the participants attributed to *experience*. Many of them grouped students according to the amount of life experience they had gained since leaving secondary school. Differences were noted between recent high school leavers and those who were identified as returning or mature students (Dawn, II; Gail, II; Hugh, II; Ken, II; Mary, II), with a clear distinction reflected in the following response:

But having the adult students in the class makes an entirely different dynamic and the class, in terms of sensitivity to these issues, that people are much more sensitive to them when you have a range of people with a range of experiences than with the sort of 18 to 23 year old undergrad population that you tend to draw at this university....

There's a different dynamic. I think it's easier to deal with people who have had life experience and are less willing to entertain the idea that there is just one way of seeing the world so I think that it is more of a problem with the younger student population that you get from this area particularly. (Mary, II)

Some participants who made a distinction on the basis of experience also said that they appreciated the presence of mature students in the classroom and that it created a different dynamic in the teaching-learning situation (Hugh, II; Ken, II). While distinctions were made between different years of students who had come to university immediately after high school (Nora, II; Tina, I), similar distinctions were not made between mature students. One professor said,

I don't think [there was] that much [difference in their worldviews] because most of the mature students were pretty similar. I didn't notice that much diversity in their worldview--by gender even. They were all relatively the same age--in their 30s. They were working and finishing up their degree or picking up a degree or to upgrade. And their worldviews were similar. (Ken, II)

This raised the matter of whether distinctions had been made on the basis of gender (Appendix H), and some participants even emphasized that gender difference was not a factor in their thinking, whether it concerned mature students or younger, undergraduate students (Ken, II; Nora, II).

While the presence of mature students was spoken of by some participants in positive terms, mention was made in three cases (Dawn, I; Gail, II; Ruth, II) about an older person having to take retraining due to unfortunate circumstances. As was stated by one participant, this may have fostered a negative outlook:

A lot of those people coming back who are older are intimidated by the material.

They're afraid of it because, in many cases, they left school and went straight into the work force. To them an educational institution is not a place they ever expected to be back in. So a lot of their hostility and a lot of their bruising isn't really directed at the teacher. (Gail, II)

One participant made a particularly succinct comment relating worldview with experience when he described these returning, mature students as ones having "experience and ... a developed worldview" (Hugh, II). Another participant pointed to the importance of experiences when she said, "worldview is a really important concept in thinking about reflection because we all reflect based on our experience, and our experience is, as far as I am concerned, what frames that worldview" (Sue, II).

Some participants indicated that a feature distinguishing returning, mature students from recent high school leavers was the higher level of *motivation to learn* displayed by the former (Bob, I; Dawn, I; Ken, I). One person described a sense of purpose on the part of mature students as though it was a worldview difference:

I prefer adult learners in the sense of more mature students--in that there's a sense where they want to be here. They want to learn. Not that some of the post-secondary students don't, but I think that they [mature students] are paying for their own education and they have those goals and do come back to school to be retrained.

(Dawn, I)

Level of motivation was also seen to vary according to the level of study (first year students versus third year and graduate students). Some participants indicated that there was a change in their classroom presentation and relationship with students based upon

the commitment of the students to learn (Fred, II; Nora, II; Tina, I). One participant was frank in stating,

I wouldn't mind teaching a large lecture hall of third year students. I do mind teaching a large lecture hall full of first year students because of their attitude ... their commitment. They're mostly people who aren't interested in the topic to start with. It's one of their electives. (Nora, II)

As well, the matter of motivation for students currently enrolled in school seemed much more driven by workplace considerations. As one participant said, "I think, unfortunately, most of the students come to the college for the end, not for the means to the end. It's 'Give me that piece of paper so I can go out there and get that job'" (Ann, I). Some professors felt that the motivation for learning had changed over the past few generations. They observed that students of this day were much more intent than their predecessors upon learning and succeeding in school primarily to secure good jobs (Cal, I; Fred, II; Hugh, II). One participant who had over 30 years of teaching experience said,

Young people today have grown up with more concern about jobs, making it out there, more concerns about unemployment, more concerns about getting yourself a good education and so on.... Certainly students today are not the same as students of 20 years ago. (Cal, I)

Thus, motivation for learning was seen to have a generational aspect.

Background as a broad descriptor was evident in discussions about what factors might be important in shaping a person's worldview (Appendix H). As participants shared their experiences and perspectives in education, it became obvious that some considered ethnic and socio-economic background, country, and even region of origin

as particularly significant factors that contributed to students having different attitudes and outlooks. For example, one college instructor said,

Background makes a difference--the country of origin, in that respect. Heritage can make a difference. And I viewed students a little differently than I used to. I've always believed that a person is a person and therefore is treated equally as a person regardless of the race or the colour or the creed, whatever the case may be. But I do know that certain attitudes that have developed throughout the world through different--I guess you could call them either races or, if you want to call them different heritages, you can see the difference more readily in watching students of different heritage. (Lou, II)

The teacher of Spanish language and culture regarded her ethnic background as the very thing that she was responsible for delivering to her students who lived in such a multicultural country as Canada.

I try to relate my culture to their cultures, in a sense, and I take into consideration as much as I can because my main concern is to deliver my culture to them because that is what they are coming to study--so my world of vision and other worlds of vision in Latin America. But, of course, you cannot let aside the students. You always have to relate to them. So relating my personal experience to their personal experience, I think that that becomes more fun and it is not the dry and abstract grammar. And also you give them something that they remember. (Olga, II)

Few educators in this study were as involved in consciously bridging cultures as was the case for this instructor, who had come from Spain. Nonetheless, the matter of *location* was a factor about which some commented. A professor of English felt that the

worldview of undergraduate students at that university was “monolithic” compared to what she had encountered at an overseas university where there was more diversity amongst the students (Mary, II). A professor from another department echoed a similar sentiment but his was based on the observation that there was a sameness in socio-economic class at the university compared to other Canadian universities at which he had taught (Ken, II). For these two educators, differences were experienced through the opportunities to teach in different countries or regions. It was suggested that there might also be differences among students who came from different provinces of Canada and, as well, differences between those who came from large urban centres and those who grew up in rural areas (Lou, II; Dawn, II). These instructors expressed an awareness of worldview differences based upon location. The awareness had developed as they, themselves, had changed location during their careers and also as students from a variety of locations had entered their teaching experience.

In expressing how they would conduct courses, some of the university professors made distinctions among students based upon *field of study* or discipline. These distinctions revealed a particular awareness of worldview that affected the relationship of the educator with the students. One participant described his experience by saying,

That group of students [Business students], as a general rule, has quite a relatively homogeneous worldview and different than the worldview of, say, our straight Economics students and, to go a little bit with the example, the difference with the Labour Studies students is even further away than the ones in Business or Economics. So that most of my colleagues are very conscious of worldview. There are big differences. Absolutely, if you are going to try and do a good job you have

to take that into account in different courses. I'm very conscious of my different audiences, of course, whether it's a service course for Business versus a straight course or Labour Studies course. (Ken, II)

Others made similar distinctions based upon their encounters with students from different disciplines. For example, an economics professor had been able to institute a new course which was open, without prerequisites, to students from other departments and, of the total enrollment of 50 students, almost half were not Economics majors. In the midst of the semester, he said,

It's proving to be a very interesting course to teach because I'm coming across all sorts of different perspectives from the students.... We actually have students up to and including fourth year Economics students in there who are just taking it for fun. But, for me, the interest is in seeing the different perspective views of these students. So, the fourth year Economics students are producing exactly what I would expect them to produce--neat, little economic analyses--but the biologists are saying all sorts of other things about what went on. (Paul, II)

Another professor had also noted that students from different disciplines "look at the same thing and they'll address the problem in different ways because of the way that their field has taught them" (Nora, II). She went beyond describing this simply as knowledge and skills applied in a limited sphere when she said, "Well, your view of how things work is determined by your background. If you consider yourself a Biology major or a Geography major, that is a large part of who you are" (Nora, II).

By making distinctions between students in terms of time frame, experience, motivation to learn, location, background, and field of study, the participants were

expressing an awareness of the worldview of others. Within this experiential kind of awareness, there would also be cause for participants to reflect upon their own worldview.

Awareness of one's own worldview, although not as dominant in the data, appeared when participants spoke from their own growing-up experience and when they spoke from the perspective of their field of study or discipline. When asked what factors or influences contributed to worldview development, some responded with examples out of their own experiences as children and adolescents (Dawn, I; Fred, I; Nora, I). In considering whether worldview is a cultural holding or a personal perspective, one participant reflected upon his own upbringing:

I grew up in Toronto in the 60s and 70s. I had exposure to an enormous variety of influences. My father's background is Italian and my mother's Canadian-Scottish. I lived on an unusual street in Toronto. Essentially it was on the border between Forest Hill which is largely old eastern European Jewish and on the west were Italians and increasingly people from the Caribbean. My high school had ... 70 nationalities in that school and so it's hard to imagine me or anybody not being influenced by that. So even if I had an intensely strong upbringing that defined my character, all of these external influences would have had a big role to play in how I defined my worldview. (Fred, I)

In considering the matter of worldview amongst students, some participants spoke about their own experiences as young university students (Cal, I; Fred, II).

With a more current view, at times in the interviews, participants identified themselves through different descriptors (e.g., parent, teacher, student, expert,

photographer, judge, guide) and spoke from distinct perspectives (“as an economist;” “as a narrativist”). Although interview questions were framed to lead participants into a broad consideration of themselves as educators, many responses were referenced in terms of their particular discipline or field of study. Not all participants may share the following sentiment, but the possible influence of subject expertise was strikingly indicated in this comment:

Basically, I see myself as an economist who does research and the teaching part is part of university. It’s a part of the job and we do learn about teaching but certainly I see myself as an economist who does some teaching as opposed to a teacher--an adult educator. (Ken, I)

The participants did not make many direct statements providing insight into their awareness of their own worldviews. This type of awareness was seen by inference and largely as they described themselves in the practice of teaching. Consequently, a third kind of awareness flows from these descriptions of experiential awareness.

Integrative Awareness

Unlike experiential awareness, in which the participants observed worldviews and took note of features and categories, the third kind of awareness, integrative awareness, emerged as they applied worldview in descriptions of their teaching practice. Some participants clearly expressed a sense of responsibility as educators to do more than convey information. They felt they had the responsibility to effect a change in the worldviews of their students. For example, one said that he felt it was his responsibility to impose the economists’ worldview upon students in his introductory classes (Ken, I). Another felt that her role as an educator was to share her experiences and Spanish culture

(Olga, II). Two professors, one a teacher of English literature, the other an economist, felt that it was needful to open up students to a broader consideration of alternate worldviews (Mary, II; Fred, II). One participant, who worked in an intensive one-to-one relationship with adult learners, said, “So I do believe that our task is to change the worldview of those people and let them move forward and move through the doors that are there” (Ruth, II). Although one college instructor was dealing with students in a technical field, he still felt that part of his role was to serve as an “attitude adjustor” (Lou, I). These data suggest that, as educators, they were trying to change students’ worldviews.

The onus for change was not placed solely upon the students. Recognizing that others had different perspectives, backgrounds, experiences, and worldviews, some participants expressed an integrative awareness when they said that they were prepared to take measures or make adjustments in their practice to accommodate students. As an example, an Economics professor said, “I would adjust the whole course right down to the goal, the topics, the topic choice, evaluation--to try and tailor the course to their worldview and to help the students get as much value from the course” (Ken, II). While participants indicated their flexibility in many ways, one participant may have identified the substance of an important contribution made by an educator when he said, “As a college instructor, what we’re expected to do is bring our experience to the classroom. And that experience, I would say, would be a developed worldview” (Hugh, II).

That statement implies that educators have a developed worldview, yet some participants had entered into a discussion of worldview with no prior exposure to the term. On the other hand, some had a good grasp of the term and concept. Through both sets of interviews, participants revealed their awareness of the term and concept and

began to describe their understanding of worldview in the human experience and in the practice of teaching. The participants had shown that awareness could be of three kinds (noetic, experiential, and integrative) which varied according to their nature. By the end of the second interview, the data indicated that the use and perceived usefulness of worldview, as a term and concept, varied amongst the participants. Review of the data suggested that worldview awareness in toto had developed according to the constraints and the opportunities encountered by the individual participants.

Constraints and Opportunities

As the 18 participants spoke in the interviews, they revealed their worldview awareness but, as well, they provided insights about the constraints and opportunities affecting the development of their awareness. This study was not designed with questions to specifically explore this matter of constraints and opportunities. However, the significance of these elements emerged as participants spoke about their experiences.

Constraints

The notion of the ideal was tempered by the real experiences of the participants. All illustrated how their work as educators met with challenges and how these challenges affected the direction and progress of teaching. Relevant to this study are those things that made it difficult to develop worldview awareness. These have been labeled as *constraints*, and are considered under the broad categories of institutional constraints, circumstantial constraints, self-imposed constraints, other-imposed constraints, and discipline-related constraints.

The priorities, regulations, or limitations set by an educational institution were identified as *institutional constraints*. These are the types of things that inhibited the

participants from learning more about worldview and specifically about personally held worldviews. Participants alluded to such institutional constraints as they described their experiences in education. For example, those who said that they had never heard the expression worldview were, by implication, indicating that, in their own education, they had not been presented with the term or concept. This means that a succession of institutions, texts, and educators had not regarded the concept of worldview sufficiently important to be intentionally incorporated into the course of study. Most of the 9 participants who had achieved a doctorate had heard the term before though only 6 were at the third level of noetic awareness. About half of the participants indicated uncertainty about the term. Two participants who were currently studying in undergraduate degree programs at the university (including courses in Psychology, Sociology, and Education) confirmed that they had not been consciously aware of the term before our first interview (Bob, II; Jane, II). One said,

I hadn't identified that word before we had our first meeting. So I'm not clear as to whether I was seeing it in the past and hadn't identified it or it was just coincidentally that I was starting to come across literature where it was being used....

I believe it's actually my Psych text where I've come across it a few times.

I know in our last meeting, I hadn't encountered it at all in the Sociology text.

(Bob, II)

Aside from the content with which students had been engaged in their courses, they were also engaged within the social structure of the institution of learning. It was the perception of one participant that in a college or university there are group-held worldviews that are at variance with one another. She said,

The thing that I thought about for awhile was the issue of what happens when worldviews clash. For example, when the worldview of the student clashes with the worldview of the teacher, clashes with the worldview of management. And that seems to me to be a crucial area for any kind of educational endeavour. The expectations that people have, the views of what it is all about and what it should lead to seem to me to be essential to the kinds of problems that we have. So that you might have an administration worldview that sees the importance of money and bodies and therefore not losing people as opposed to sort of a teacher view or student view which might be different again. The teacher doesn't want to lose students but, at the same time, doesn't want to promote students who are inadequate. Presumably, most students would rather stay in however bad they are. They've scrambled a pass and remain and just couldn't care less. So you've got three rather different and conflicting worldviews there. (Gail, II)

While education appears as the common goal for these three groups (students, teachers, and management), this participant raised the issue of there being different personal and professional interests and different power holdings that may act as constraints.

Another participant looked at circumstances beyond the walls of an institution. Alluding to laws that protect privacy of the individual, he said,

We are under quite a lot of restrictions about how much questioning we can do of any student. So, whilst I can get a discussion going in class, I feel it would be an intrusion to start asking these students questions about their background. I'm trying to avoid that and therefore it's hard, I find, to pick up these different perspectives that students have--perspectives which would be defined, to some extent, by their

experiences that they bring to university when they come here. (Paul, II).

Institutional constraints, whether they be due to priorities, regulations, or limitations, were seen to be long-standing, formal ones that arose because of the nature of the institution. In some respects, institutional constraints also gave rise to circumstantial constraints that were of shorter duration and less formal in nature.

As educators spoke about the conditions in which they functioned, they alluded to some that could be construed as *circumstantial constraints*. Some participants pointed out that, while the general goals of education have not changed, the circumstances for educators are changing (Ann, I; Mary, I). One participant highlighted that changing circumstances had been affecting her role as an educator:

Obviously, I have to acknowledge that I'm working within a power dynamic and I ultimately mark them [her students]. But I do try to get away from simply lecturing and this notion of just trying to fill their heads with my knowledge. And it's important, as well, at the moment because the parameters of what we are doing are changing all the time. Not only because of economic constraints which means that the practicalities of our roles are changing, but also because interdisciplinary programs and interdisciplinary research are becoming much more commonplace.

(Mary, I)

Changes in the roles of teachers and to the parameters of their work may act as constraints in developing worldview awareness because of the need to focus on these day-to-day practicalities. Of course, one of the constants for the educator is to provide instruction, but some circumstances of instruction might act as constraints that prevent meaningful interaction. For example, a professor said,

You may find that I have a lot less insight into the thinking of my economic students.

I don't interact with them in the seminars. Most of our courses, we just get up and lecture and basically do the "chalk and talk" thing and there are very, very few opportunities for students to express their views. (Ken, I)

This professor saw a relationship between meaningful interactions and gaining insight into students' views. Another professor gave an example of a particular situation that also points to circumstances having an effect upon interactions. He said,

I would like to see more interaction but it's difficult. It was something that I originally intended to have in the classroom. When I saw the numbers expand from twenty to fifty, I felt that I wouldn't be able to have the degree of interaction that I originally wanted. I also have one of those rooms along the A*** corridor which is very regimented. The seats are locked together in rows. I teach a third year course in Environmental Economics in that room also. I did that course last term and wanted to get some interaction going--argue opposing topics and getting the students to discuss them--but that was a smaller class. Amongst fifty students, for an in-class discussion, you get too many non-participants in a room like that. In the T*** corridor--those are very, very good rooms for interaction because their seats are all close together--they're U-shaped. I guess the students sitting in the front row on one side can't see the students behind, but nearly all the students can see each other and that really helps interaction enormously. I find good discussions going in those rooms. (Paul, II)

In this case, the professor's desire to hear more from students was frustrated by two circumstantial factors: the higher-than-expected enrollment and the physical structure

of the room. Such circumstances can even discourage an educator from developing meaningful interactions with students. For example, undergraduate classes can have a large number of students (Nora, II; Tina, II). As one professor said of the circumstances, “They’re big lecture halls and you’ve no eye contact with them [first year students] and they all start chatting with each other and then it can be very distracting. It’s not a pleasant experience” (Nora, II). Whether because of student numbers, the structure of the facility, or other conditions of teaching, some participants found it difficult to have direct personal contact with many students. Under such circumstances, it may be practically impossible to get to know students and to gain insights into their personal worldviews.

In addition to classroom duties, participants noted that they had other responsibilities and were engaged in other pursuits. These, too, acted as circumstantial constraints but of a more personal nature. Between the occasions of the first and second interviews, some participants indicated that lack of time and busyness prevented them from giving more attention to the research portfolio and reflecting on the matter of worldview. Busyness characterized the lives of many participants who, in addition to maintaining their own courses of instruction, also had to fulfill family responsibilities (Ed, II), administrative responsibilities (Nora, II), and personal quests such as continuing education (as was the case for Ann, Bob, Ed, Jane, and Ruth). The comments of one participant point to a general malaise associated with busyness and that is to have inadequate time for reflective thinking. She said,

I haven’t had the amount of time that I would like and I bet this is what everyone will tell you, that “I would like to just sit down and think through this.” I did look at your portfolio but I wasn’t able to pull it out today to review it and think about

it--which had been my intent. I find the demands are just too much these days.

We hardly have time to sit down and think things through and be reflective. It's interesting. I think that one reason my students like this course so much is that it forces them to make time--they have a legitimate reason to sit down every week and reflect. I have no illusions here. I don't think they keep doing this after the course is over. (Sue, II)

Circumstances surrounding the educator such as changing roles, conditions in the classroom, and personal life situation were seen as factors that might act as constraints to the development of a worldview awareness. While there were some circumstances that had a constraining influence, the responses that the participants made to circumstances might also have exercised some constraint on developing worldview awareness.

Participants, in their practice as educators, made choices that reduced or limited opportunities for an increased worldview awareness. These were considered to be *self-imposed constraints*. While no participant said that he or she did not want to know more about worldview, each made choices about factors such as role, use of time, and focus of attention. As an example, 2 participants took the position that it was their professional responsibility as educators to teach the students but not necessarily to befriend them (Cal, I; Gail, I). One participant said of herself,

I am the instructor. I'm "old school." I'm the teacher. They're the students. Although that would be modified in the way that I approach somebody who needs help. I see myself strictly as somebody there to help them in the field that they're in and not just somebody that wants to be "friendly" or to deal with matters outside of what I am teaching. (Gail, I)

This view of oneself as an educator represents a choice of defining that role in a particular way that would affect the type of exchanges that occur and the relationship that exists between teacher and student. As a matter of making a choice, it may also become a self-imposed constraint in so far as the distance between this instructor and her students could hinder her developing an awareness of the worldview of the students.

While the age of an individual cannot be considered a self-imposed constraint, how the educators dealt with a generational difference was also a matter of choice. These educators were, in most instances, older than their students. Some participants found that a generational gap existed between themselves and many of their students because of an age difference. Things that shaped their own experience might continue to be used by instructors as examples in classroom teaching (Cal, II), but here, too, a choice could be made to acquire current examples that would be more meaningful for the current generation of learners, as was the case of the “Claudia Schiffer superseding Christie Brinkley” example (Nora, II). A participant pointed to sensitivity about language and context by saying,

Okay, so you have to communicate and that means speak the same language and put things in a context that is meaningful which is determined by their worldview, and their worldview includes everything about them, every experience they have ever had. People who are nineteen, right now, grew up in a different world from the world I grew up in, even though it was Canada both times. (Nora, II)

It appeared that when such a generational difference existed, the educators were faced with the decision to continue with past practices or to consciously select language and examples that would be effective in current communication. This also required

purposefully examining and reflecting upon the culture of the day. But, as some participants indicated, not all choices belonged to the educator.

In the teaching-learning situation, *other-imposed constraints* posed barriers to the participants in the attempt to develop an awareness of the worldview of others. This particularly pertains to the behaviour of students. A few participants expressed the feeling that students themselves, for various reasons, may not wish to let the educator gain insight into their lives and worldview. Students who regard the teacher to be an authority figure (Fred, II; Ken, I) may assume a guarded posture or even be hostile based on previous encounters with people in authority (Gail, II). In this case, students might be disinclined to share personal information. One participant characterized the attitude of some students as “Don’t come to me. I’ll call you” (Ann, II) and elaborated by saying,

I think it has to do with self-esteem. I think it has to do with, perhaps, the desire to remain anonymous as long as possible. It could be many things. They could simply not like the instructor. It could simply mean that maybe they’ll do it at home and “I’ll get it on my own.” The fear of asking for help—I think that’s very prevalent with the eighteen to twenty-four year olds. I wish I had asked for help when I was in that age group. (Ann, II)

Participants also indicated that those who attended college simply for better career prospects may be disinclined to open up in the classroom and share personally because it seems irrelevant to their goal. Concerning students at community college, it was observed:

What they want is to make a living so I think that their focus is very job-driven, very tangible and it’s not so much the experience of an education—and the experience of

the education would give more of a worldview. I think it would if they would just relax and just absorb all of these things. But they are so focused on that one thing.

(Ann, I)

Even when some students were expressive of their own worldview, they sometimes dismissed alternate worldviews. A participant characterized some students as “digging heels in and insisting that their worldview is the only one that can be entertained”

(Mary, II). Hence, these students, too, might be reluctant to engage in dialogue or sharing that would expose their worldview to examination by others.

Thus far, consideration has been given to constraints (institutional, circumstantial, self-imposed, and other-imposed) that, by their nature, could be described as negative and hence restrictive in the development of worldview awareness. But participant responses revealed that strong positive influences can also constrain worldview awareness. Participants were approached in the interviews primarily to share their perspectives as adult educators but, often, they spoke from the perspective of their teaching subject. With each reference that participants made to their particular field of study, there was a growing pattern of *discipline-related constraints*. These were things that participants had gained from their subject area and, while they contributed to effectiveness in teaching, also acted as constraints in the development of worldview awareness. The two features that appeared to operate in this way were personal expertise in a discipline and unity of thought in the field of study.

According to one participant, one of the possible roles of an adult educator is to be an “expert” (Ann, I). This expertise has developed through commitment to a field of study and immersion in the conceptual and technical aspects of it. Some participants

evidenced the effect of this at the most elementary level of term awareness when they speculated on the meaning of worldview in terms that arose out of their teaching subject.

As an example, one said,

Worldview means putting the world in perspective with respect to the business and accounting fields.... Worldview basically is taking a look at the global perspective--how it affects your field and outlook and to find a good balance. I think of the word global because of my background in the global economy. (Hugh, I)

Other initial responses to the term were also referenced to the area of expertise (Ann, I; Tina, I). The expertise that places an educator in the teaching situation also caused a particular worldview to be perpetuated in the minds of at least some of the respondents in this study. One participant, for example, indicated that the concept of worldview appeared in the introductory chapters of Economics texts he uses with undergraduates. He said, "Since I have taught first year Economics, I often started the lectures, 'This is how economists think about the world' in order to get the students into the right mindset" (Fred, I). He used this strategy so that students just beginning in that field were presented with the economists' worldview and would then be more likely to adopt that worldview as a frame of reference.

Furthermore, prevailing theories within a field were seen to shape an understanding of worldview. A participant said that, "in sociological theory, there are three perspectives, three dominant perspectives: functionalism, conflict, and symbolic interaction. And those, I would call three worldviews" (Ed, II). He reiterated this later in our discussion. This data excerpt suggested that those who are proponents of

their discipline may be inclined to adapt the term worldview to suit their field and may be disinclined to think of it in ways that are different.

Research data suggested that, while most educators welcomed divergent worldviews as a means of stimulating discussion, some fields of study were marked by *unity of thought* that led to a consistency in the worldview on the part of people trained in its schema. Some participants indicated that this unity of thought was even being developed before students finished their undergraduate years (Ken, II; Paul, II; Tina, II). It was such that participants could predict that students working in particular disciplines would approach data with a particular set of analytical skills. A professor who had experienced this stated, "I do know that when biologists and geologists talk or geologists and geographers, they look at the same thing and they'll address the problem in different ways because of the way that their field has taught them" (Nora, II). Another participant, a professor of Economics, who had been marking reports submitted by students from different disciplines, said, "The fourth year Economics students are producing exactly what I would expect them to produce--neat, little economic analyses--but the biologists are saying all sorts of other things about what went on" (Paul, II).

Where a discipline is characterized by unity of thought, as in the case of Economics (Ken, II; Paul, I), it raises the question of how that might stultify worldview awareness. This possible effect was communicated by the following:

Certainly amongst many of my colleagues again, in the business school, there's the sense that "We have the truth." And it is an important thing that we are communicating. If you believe that what you are teaching does have any relevance, and I personally believe that Economics does have some relevance and it's not the

kind of old wishy-washy “This could be true” or “This could be true” but that there are demonstrable facts. There is a bit of the doctrinaire--“This is better than this.

So do this better one and subscribe to this worldview.” (Ken, I)

A colleague who also recognized the potential limitation said,

Until very recently, we didn’t look at how other disciplines viewed issues.... We had the dogma and it tended to make us, in some respects, think that we knew what we were doing and they just didn’t. So Economics has a very strong worldview--very well defined, very articulated, very influential. But, at the same time, when you build walls, you can’t see beyond them often.... So Economics does have a strong worldview and one that, fortunately, as the discipline matures, is being increasingly reconsidered. At least people are thinking about it. I don’t know how much it’s actually impacting theory but it is being considered. (Fred, I)

These data suggested that a vibrant confidence in a discipline might have a restrictive influence on worldview awareness and be counted amongst other constraints like those that are institutional, circumstantial, self-imposed, and other-imposed.

Opportunities

When participants of this study responded to interview questions, they shared from their knowledge and experiences. Responses to early questions about the term and concept of worldview were drawn from a base of knowledge though, as already indicated, only one-third of the participants showed an initial, confident grasp of the term. For much of the time after noetic awareness had been explored, the participants responded out of their personal experiences. If worldview awareness can be increased through such experiences, then innumerable opportunities for increased awareness are possible. Participants were

not queried specifically about these opportunities but, indirectly, suggested some of the means.

The *opportunities for developing noetic awareness* came through both transference of information and experiences. Individuals could develop term awareness and concept awareness by information gathered through the media (Cal, I), literature (Bob, II; Ruth, I), conversation (Ken, I), and instruction (Fred, I). In some cases this occurred through formal study, as in the case of a participant who was reading Bruner's *Acts of Meaning* for a Master of Education course (Ruth, I), but awareness could also develop in more casual contexts. The one case of instruction occurred in the home of the participant who responded to worldview by saying,

There's a German word for that--*Weltanschauung*? Something like that. I remember reading--of course, my wife speaks German and I turned to her and said, "What does this word mean?" and she said, "It means 'worldview.' It is how you think about the world ... how you approach the world." Wow! That's really a good word because it's very important for how I think about Economics. (Fred, I)

Participants also spoke of how they had been engaged in conversations and personal encounters that increased their awareness of worldview (Fred, II; Mary, II; Nora, II).

For example, during the second interview, a professor related,

I have thought about it [worldview] off and on, having been made aware of it, and I listened in on a discussion where people were, in fact, other than you, addressing the question of whether or not the science that was done at any given time and at any given location, was constrained by the sociology and so on of the area. So whether or not the same facts two hundred years ago would have led to the same theories,

et cetera. Whether western science and eastern science were the same and would they be different because of societal issues. So, it has cropped up a few times and I do think it is a construct within which we organize the information that is incoming and we do tend to organize it based on things that we're not even conscious of.

(Nora, II)

Although there was no indication that worldview was a topic of instruction, some participants shared insights indicating that their field of study represented or fostered a particular worldview (Ed, II; Fred, I; Ken, I; Nora, II). As one professor of Economics stated, "So Economics has a very clear worldview and in contrast to a lot of other disciplines, for example, psychologists, sociologists, and social scientists, they don't have nearly the same unity of thought; at least, that's my understanding" (Fred, I).

Only a few participants identified their discipline as something that, by its nature, encouraged worldview awareness (Mary, I; Olga, II; Sue, I). It is interesting that these three participants have had involvement in languages or linguistics. When the one participant who worked in the Faculty of Education was asked whether she had encountered the term worldview in any of her reading or studying in adult education, she said,

Yes. Certainly in terms of what the learner comes with and also in terms of the adult educator's perspective. We all come with a worldview and we may come with a critical worldview, for example, so we see things in terms of empowering or powerlessness and so on. I've seen it used in that way. I've also seen it, again, in terms of what the learner brings. (Sue, I)

In these cases, the question that was asked to probe noetic awareness frequently generated a response related to experiential awareness. Participants seemed ready to move from dealing with worldview as a term and concept to recounting experiences in which it seemed to apply.

They related *opportunities for developing experiential awareness* that, collectively, spanned time beginning in youth and touched upon different stages of life and were as current as the brief period between the interviews. Drawing upon their recollections, participants were able to come up with examples by which they explained their understanding of worldview. Even as participants dealt with concepts surrounding worldview, there was a readiness and even a tendency to use personal experiences to reinforce the point that was being made. For example,

The opportunity was made [at university] so that things, ideas, concepts were presented to me and I was free to work through them and make up my own mind based upon a larger body of information, not just the one that I had been given as a child.... I think that you can only develop an individual worldview by realizing that the view you thought you had was very much shaped by the world you lived in so I think for me as a child and as an adolescent, when I went to university, it became obvious to me that my views had been shaped very much by the people I had been around all my life. And therefore, what I thought was an individual point of view was my point of view but was shaped by my social background. So my individual worldview changed somewhat by the additional information opened up to me by my adult education. So your individual worldview can only be as individual as your experience allows it to be. I don't think that you can separate the two things.

You may have your individual worldview change as you are open to more and more societal input. (Nora, I)

Two participants indicated that changing work locations had been a means by which they grew in worldview awareness (Ken, I; Mary, II). One participant said,

When I was teaching at the University of L****, for example, before I came here, I had a much more diverse constituency of students and so it was more a self-checking mechanism where I was trying to be sensitive to all the different views that played in my classroom. Whereas now I feel the sort of monolithic worldview is out there and I am trying not to be insensitive to the ways in which the world has shaped their view. (Mary, II)

It was as participants reflected upon their own experiences in growing up and in teaching that they revealed a developing awareness of worldview. This was the case even if the initial response to the term had been somewhat uncertain or different from the standard definition. One participant who had not been familiar with the term but who had been able to relate worldview to his experiences said of our first meeting, "It did open my eyes a bit to taking a look at it from a wider standpoint in a way I used to view a student" (Lou, II).

In this study, the data indicated that opportunities for developing experiential awareness lay in the ability of the individual to use both personal and professional experiences as instructive case studies by which they could relate to the concept of worldview. Although it was not determined if participants had previously articulated those experiences in terms of worldview, the transcripts reveal that, in a dynamic way during the interviews, first-hand experiences were being linked to the concept as each

participant reflected and spoke. Participants had shown a readiness to move from dealing with worldview as a term and concept to recounting personal experiences and they seemed equally prepared to discuss worldview in the context of their teaching practice.

Recounting teaching experiences sometimes spanned the categories of opportunities for developing experiential awareness and *opportunities for developing integrative awareness*. The difference would be that experiential awareness recounted observations whereas integrative awareness illustrated how a participant would or could apply worldview awareness to a personal or teaching situation. Even though many participants had not used the term worldview, as they reflected upon their experiences and upon the concept, they indicated ways in which it was already integrated into their life and practice.

Although it did not appear that any of the participants specifically made worldview a topic of instruction in their curriculum, it was still a concept that appeared in their teaching practice. Two participants (Gail, Mary) had already recognized that the authors of the literature that they presented to their students had a worldview that was communicated through their writings. One said,

I study literature so obviously it's my interest that Jane Austen's worldview was controlled by the time that she lived, the country that she lived in, the class that she came from and, obviously, some of her own experiences would have influenced that as well. And that would be the same for any writer and I assume for any reader.

(Gail, I)

The other participant who taught about English literature said,

Obviously, the kind of research that I do in postmodernism and in postcolonialism is so bound up with looking at different realities and different worldviews and different

perspectives and trying to get students able to imagine themselves in other subjectivities or how the act of reading engages you in an encounter with other subjectivities. So, it is a concept that I program very strongly in my teaching and often use the term worldview. It may not be in the way that you are encountering it in your research but that's how it is played out in my classroom. (Mary, I)

In the second interview, she gave further insight to an integrative awareness when she said,

I always try in my courses and in my interactions with students not to impose my worldview on them and to leave room for dialogue between different worldviews. I don't know if anything has particularly changed over the past year in my teaching. I think it is something that I very consciously try to build on and build into my syllabuses and into the ways that I interact with students and into the ways that I assess them as well. (Mary, II)

Another opportunity for developing integrative awareness occurred as one participant incorporated reflection through journal writing as a course requirement. This was directed for the students' benefit but designed by the educator as part of her practice. She said,

I'm teaching a course called *The Reflective Practitioner* and I guess worldview is a really important concept in thinking about reflection because we all reflect based on our experience, and our experience is, as far as I am concerned, what frames that worldview or what creates the meaning schema. So, yes, I've thought about it a great deal. Certainly, in dealing with people's journals--and they're writing their journals--you're really getting a little bit of a window and trying to put together, from the information that's there, "What kinds of meanings do they bring to this?" and

“How does that influence how they’ve interpreted whatever situation they’re reflecting on?” (Sue, II)

One participant had the freedom to design a new course and introduced it in the period between the two interviews. When asked whether the concept and term worldview had entered into his thinking or had influenced the way he had prepared or delivered a course, he said,

I think so, clearly, since we had that discussion back in the summer, it was a concept in the back of my mind as I was thinking about this course. I found it much easier to try to incorporate my view--my ideas on worldview, into a course like this where I have so much more control on the content of the course. (Paul, II)

Awareness of the applicability of worldview coupled with freedom of curriculum design was the opportunity for integration in this case. Integrative awareness was also stimulated by research and academic engagement. One participant responded to a question saying,

I’ve looked over the material [the portfolio provided at the end of the first interview] and thought about it and perhaps even unconsciously I have been made more aware of the implications of the concept of worldview. Even now, talking about this course
 **90, I think immediately I make the connection. (Tina, II)

The teaching-learning situation was, in itself, an opportunity for developing integrative awareness simply because of the interactions in that setting. One participant, in her reflection upon her own job and the roles she had to fulfill, said,

The thing that struck me this year and I couldn’t say whether it came from having talked to you about worldview earlier or not--I think there were some other contributing factors--and I am not sure that worldview is quite the word for it but

perhaps it is. A teacher has a kind of conflict in his or her notion of what her job is. That is, what the teacher's world is, if you like--the view of the teacher's world. So I began to think about it as being rather a schizophrenic state in which--I have always been aware of the problem but I think I began to see the split very clearly this year--in which part of my view of myself in my world is as a judge. That is, a student has to be judged, has to be given marks, which have to represent something that's relatively objective in so far as that is possible in human terms. Yet, at the same time, I am also seeing myself in my world as a coach, where I have to encourage the students to do their best. And sometimes encouraging the student to do his or her best may not fit too well with being a judge. (Gail, II)

In contributing to the interactions between teacher and student, the former brings experience and a developed worldview into the classroom (Hugh, II). The learner also brings his or her worldview to the teaching-learning situation. As one professor said, "I think I've always assumed that something like worldview affected people in the sense that I've always accepted that the people in my classes had different backgrounds and they had different interests" (Nora, II). The educator develops integrative awareness by talking and listening to others "for all situations, to find out truly what the worldview of my audience, whatever it is.... Everybody has different needs" (Ruth, II).

Synthesis of Results

Worldview awareness can be developed through a great number of opportunities which occur upon something like a landscape to be explored. At some stage, a person may not have any understanding of the term and that would correspond to a centrally located hollow or depression on the landscape. Rising out of this dimly-lit space with its limited

view, a person becomes aware of the term and the associated concept. One might quickly realize that worldview is something about which there had already been some sensitivity but without definition. Then, upon this landscape, there are ready and easy paths which are opportunities for growing in awareness. There are aspects of worldview that exist and could be made part of the person's awareness but which are made more difficult to explore because of constraints. The motif of a landscape to be explored is one that is suggested by participant comments like "looking outwards, looking at what lies ahead of us" (Gail, II) and "to expose them [students] to the breadth of existence, the breadth of alternate points of view and, in doing so, enrich them" (Fred, II) and "I want to let them see that there are possibilities for them and show them their choices.... And just to expand their horizons so that they then can develop their own worldview" (Ruth, II).

The place of the centrally located depression (Figure 1) represents a state of awareness that is limited by the surrounding walls. It is a somewhat darkened situation but the appearance of light entering from above suggests that there is something more to be seen. Rising up above the immediate barriers one comes to a certain level where it is possible to see an expanded vista all around. This also reveals that there are opportunities to be explored in many directions. Although the landscape is open, it is not without some barriers and obstacles that act like constraints in the process of pursuing opportunities. The responses of the participants indicated that noetic, experiential, and integrative awareness develop through a variety of opportunities on different occasions but that there are constraints that might hinder that development.

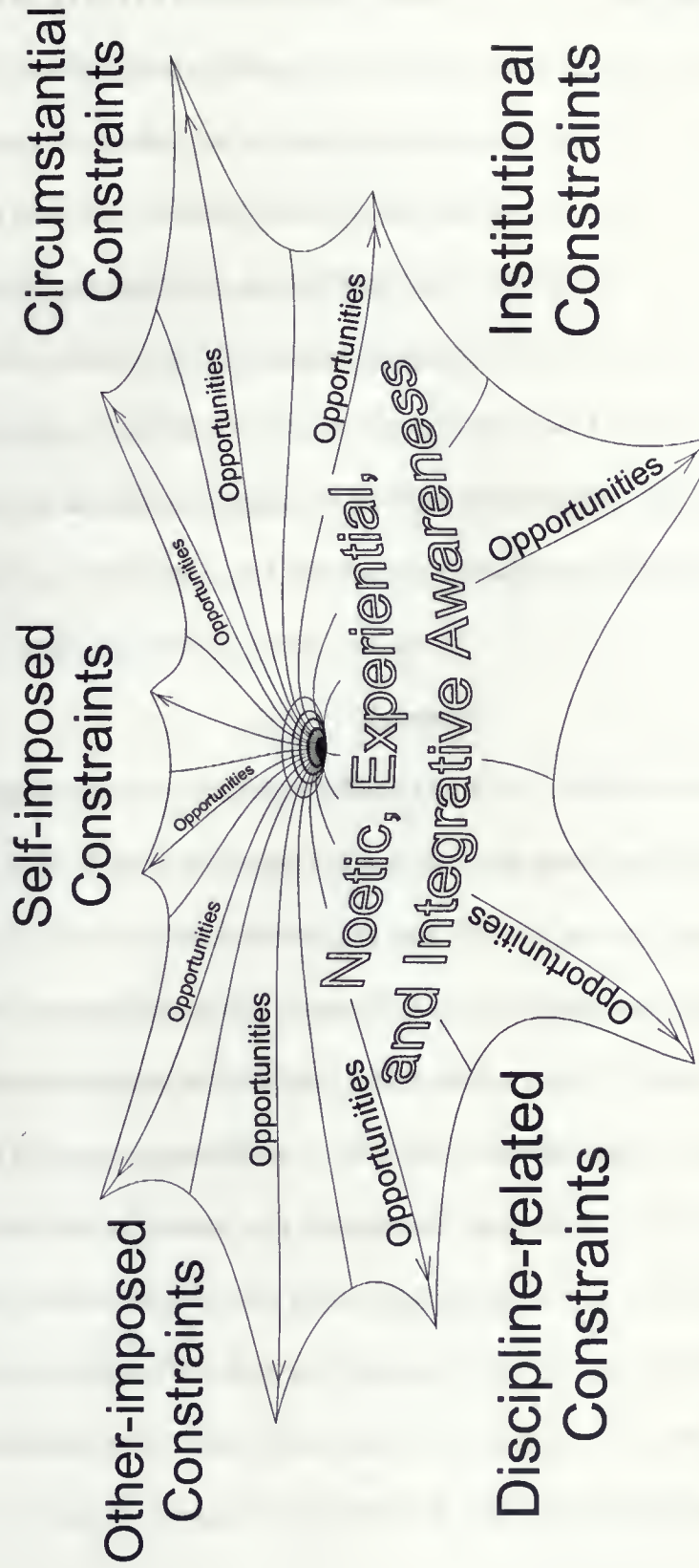


Figure 1. Conceptual diagram of worldview awareness on a landscape of constraints and opportunities.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was designed to discover what understanding there was among a group of adult educators regarding the term and concept *worldview*. I also expected to gain insights about how worldview related to their experiences and practice in education. Participants' responses indicated that there are different kinds of worldview awareness and also suggested the image of such awareness developing upon a landscape of constraints and opportunities. This chapter will present an overview of the study, the conceptual framework that arose from analysis of the data, some insights that participants provided about their own worldviews, and, finally, the implications that the study has for theory, research, practice, and for our current times.

Summary

Research conducted between July 1998 and December 1998 involved two sets of interviews with 18 adult educators. Eight of the participants were instructors from a community college who were involved in either full- or part-time teaching. Another 9 participants were professors at a university. One participant was working in adult basic literacy and employment skill training with a district council. These 18 people, who were working in the same geographic area, indicated a willingness to participate in research that was described as dealing with the personal perspectives of adult educators. Part of my curiosity was to uncover what a priori knowledge the participants had about the term worldview and what notions they had attached to it. Consequently, the term was not used until it was introduced through a statement and a question at an early stage of the first interview. The initial responses are noteworthy. Only six of the 18 participants

demonstrated a confident knowledge about the term that corresponded to either the conventional meaning derived from a dictionary definition or to the origins previously established in the German expression *Weltanschauung*. Six others indicated that they had heard the term before but initial descriptions were vague or at variance with a standard definition. The remaining 6 participants admitted that they had never heard the term before. These data showed that only one third of the participants had a good prior understanding of the term worldview.

During the first interview, participants had opportunity to talk about their roles as educators, about their understanding of worldview as a term and concept, about factors that might be part of a worldview, and about the characterization of worldview as an individual perspective or as a group-held perspective. At the conclusion of the interview, a portfolio (Appendix E) was given to each participant as one thing to encourage reflection upon the theme of worldview and the practical implications for adult education. I contacted the participants by telephone about 6 weeks after this interview to see whether they had any questions and then allowed them enough time to resume teaching in the Fall semester of 1998 before I contacted them again to make arrangements for a second interview. My intentions for that meeting were to find out how worldview might have entered into preparation and delivery of courses and what thoughts or comments they had, at that time, concerning the concept. The tone of discussion throughout the second interview was set more by the participants, and each one had opportunity to take the initiative in expressing his or her thoughts and feelings and in speaking about experiences.

Analysis of the Data

Participant responses were considered longitudinally as they developed within each interview and across both interviews. As well, information and insights offered by all of the participants were compared to discern common themes. Data analysis indicated that they initially understood worldview to mean a variety of things. As the interviews progressed, it also was seen that worldview awareness could be of three kinds. One was a *noetic awareness* that related strictly to activities of the mind or intellect. Then there was an *experiential awareness* that was uncovered as participants described personal or professional experiences. The third kind of awareness, an *integrative awareness*, was demonstrated as some participants spoke about how worldview was incorporated into life or into the practice of teaching. As participants discussed worldview and their experiences, they began to provide insights about those things that fostered or inhibited worldview awareness both for themselves and as they had observed it for others. As a result of these anecdotes and comments, it became apparent that worldview awareness developed upon a landscape of constraints and opportunities. The 36 interviews were rich in data and suggested some possibilities for further study, but at the heart of the findings were those three kinds of awareness (noetic, experiential, and integrative) and the landscape of constraints and opportunities. This, then, constituted the organizational framework for the analysis of the data and for discussion of the findings.

The research design was intended to explore what other educators knew about the term and concept. This head knowledge about worldview I called noetic awareness. Only one third of the participants responded confidently in the manner of saying, "Yes, I know what you are talking about." If the term worldview were introduced into conversation,

most adults would recognize the two component words. Participant responses to worldview ranged from a basic recognition of those components with a subsequent speculation on the meaning of the term, to a definite understanding which included, in two cases, knowledge about the derivation of the concept related to *Weltanschauung*, an expression coined by Kant during the German Enlightenment. With regard to this matter of noetic awareness, participants used their familiarity with language, their expertise in their academic field, and their understanding of related concepts to respond to the question, “What does the term worldview mean to you?” Understanding of the term could also be influenced by popular, current usage of worldview (also presented as *world view* and *WorldView*) that has related the term to news and reporting of events around the globe. *The Chambers Dictionary* (1993) defines worldview as “outlook on or attitude to the world or life” (p. 2014). Equipped with this understanding, how, then, would educators place the concept in their experience?

Exploring noetic awareness was a fairly straightforward matter and was a reasonable starting point. What I really hoped was that the participants could help me to see ways in which worldview might be related to the practice of teaching. Before moving discussion of worldview into the educational context, they were asked to consider factors that might influence or shape a person’s worldview. While it was reasonable to expect participants to draw upon their experiences as adult educators, a number of them were inclined to first reflect back upon their own stages of human development to build a list of such factors. They also reflected upon their lives and times and then considered the times and views of the current generation. In some cases, they touched upon issues of location and culture.

These responses demonstrated an experiential awareness. Because the participants had been approached as adult educators, they understandably made many references to their own teaching experiences. More personal anecdotes were considered indicative of an experiential awareness. Where their expression was of the sort, "This is how worldview is played out in my practice," there was a sense of transition to another type of awareness. This third kind of awareness was deemed to be an integrative awareness. Even though most of the participants would not have used worldview initially in our discussions, responses during both the first and second interviews indicated that many participants had some sense of the integration of the concept of worldview in their practice. As well, it was seen as a concept that could be used as a means of analyzing and describing how that practice was conducted. For the most part, the participants were able to provide meaningful examples of what worldview meant in their experiences and of how it was found in their teaching practice.

The interviews were part of a research design that was a qualitative case study and emergent by nature. I had not asked any question like, "Why is it that your awareness of worldview has developed as it has?" yet, through the participants' individual and independent responses, I began to conceive of a landscape upon which those three kinds of worldview awareness had developed. The landscape seemed to be one of constraints and opportunities composed of those things that respectively inhibited or enhanced worldview awareness. The image of a landscape may have been suggested by the expression of "expanding one's horizons." It did seem that, for an individual, the means of developing awareness could occur to different extents in many directions, on different occasions, and in different phases of life. The factors that participants identified

suggested that opportunities for developing awareness seemed innumerable. On the other hand, things they spoke of as constraints were more specific and easier to identify and label. In that regard, constraints coalesced into 5 broad categories of institutional, circumstantial, self-imposed, other-imposed, and discipline-related constraints. These aspects of awareness and the landscape of constraints and opportunities represent the conceptual framework that will serve as the backdrop for the discussion of key findings of the study.

Discussion

If one were to introduce terms like *hermeneutics*, *exegesis*, or *redaction criticism* into a conversation, it would not be surprising to find some people saying, "Please explain what you are talking about." This example demonstrates that different fields of endeavour have their own peculiar terms and technical jargon. However, I had not regarded worldview as a technical term belonging to any specific field and felt that adult educators from a variety of disciplines might have encountered it through their own studies and practice.

Questions asked in the one-to-one interview sessions with the 18 participants were designed to probe the understanding that they had about worldview as a term and concept and to see how it might fit into their practice of teaching. An expected outcome was that I would gain insights that focused on the matter of worldview, and that certainly did occur. Yet, considering the data within the whole experience of conducting the interviews, there was a second, unexpected outcome. This was discovered in the nature of the participants' comments, comments that were individually self-revealing and that, collectively, appeared as patterns of description. This second outcome is related to worldview and

stimulates more thinking about it, but the experiences and perspectives of the participants are what take centre stage. In a sense, this outcome was a matter of discerning aspects of the worldviews of the people who were interviewed. To prepare a foundation for that discussion, I want first to consider worldview as a term and concept.

When people meet and one has some information in mind but is uncertain about whether that matter is common knowledge, it would be safe to pose questions like, “Have you heard about ...?” and “What do you understand it to mean?” Such questions were asked in this research. The variety of participant responses did reflect a range of noetic awareness concerning worldview with about one-third of them demonstrating a confident understanding of both the term and concept. Yet, as each person was equipped with a brief dictionary definition of worldview, discussion moved on to consider some factors that might shape a worldview. The contributions from this juncture were abundant and demonstrated more confidence about the concept. They related worldview to personal experience both in life and in the practice of teaching (experiential and integrative awareness). While familiarity with the term may have been slight at the outset of the interviews, these adults had no difficulty in relating the concept to different phases and aspects of life. The three kinds of awareness represented different ways of approaching worldview, but it did not appear that they necessarily developed in a sequence nor could they be regarded as levels of awareness. Participants who initially said that they were not familiar with the term worldview (hence, had no noetic awareness) were able to contribute to my understanding of experiential awareness as they cited examples from different phases of their lives.

The discussion of worldview in the context of life and practice was more confident and pervasive than one might imagine after some initial hesitant responses to the term. A striking case was when one person admitted that it was only the second time that he had heard the term (the first was in the context of a discussion about sports) but then, a few minutes into conversation, he related it to the term ideology and to Kuhn's concept of paradigm and then he talked of how a worldview was manifest in the lives of his students. This particular case demonstrates that experiential awareness and possibly integrative awareness about worldview had been developing apart from the label of worldview. This result resonates with McKenzie's (1991) characterization of worldview construction as "a naturally occurring process" (p. 91) and his belief in a tacit worldview that is "not articulated.... [but] may be, and often is, expressed in action or deeds" (p. 66). Other participants also gave similar evidence that experiential awareness and integrative awareness can precede noetic awareness. This result suggests two things. First, people have something that can be described as a worldview awareness, but they seldom talk about it using that expression. Second, a succession of institutions, courses, texts, and instructors may have been dealing in worldview matters without presenting the term or concept as a usable tool. Both are indications that worldview has had only nominal treatment in educational settings. It is possible to keep this in perspective by considering what there is in the broader range of literature that might serve as a resource for learning about worldview.

Attempts to locate the use of the term worldview do not result in many references that further understanding about it in the sense of a "contemplation of the world" (McKenzie, p. 1). Using worldview and world view as keywords for an Internet search of

sites like www.amazon.com, ERIC (<http://ericir.syr.edu/Eric>), The Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/catalog>), and through search engines (e.g., www.metacrawler.com and www.hotbot.com) reveals that there are not many books or resources dedicated to specifically discussing worldview as a concept. Focusing a search for worldview in the titles or as keywords of literature in the field of education yields only a few possibilities. By scanning library shelves and flipping through the pages of likely resources, one might find some references to worldview (also possibly presented as world view, world-view, world-and-life view). For example, Jarvis (1985), Knowles (1990), and Merriam (1988) used the term, but they did not explain it nor was it listed in index entries. When the term was used, it was more of an incidental label and the reader then has to consider the context in order to understand the author's meaning. For example, Jarvis (1985) used the expressions natural world-view and learned world-view (1985). Knowles (1990) equates world views to metaphysical systems (p. 15) and then applies the term to describe either a mechanistic world view or organismic world view. In a more recent work, Mitchell and Sackney (2000) made reference to a mechanistic worldview and a wholeness worldview, and they both provided a discussion of worldview and had it listed in the index. In most cases, though, there are few catalogued or indexed references to worldview, and they must be discovered and scrutinized to see what they contribute to a noetic awareness. While it is gratifying to find such references, they occur like points of light on a dark landscape. However, one other resource in adult education must be given special attention.

Leon McKenzie's work (1987; 1991) on adult education and worldview construction represents the only specific, sustained attention given by an educator to the concept. He stated that

It is fruitful to frame the higher purposes of adult education in terms of worldview construction.... [because] worldview construction is a comprehensive concept.... [and it] involves the ongoing development and maturation of understanding: understanding of the world, of others, of self, of understanding itself. (p. vii)

McKenzie recognized that worldview is a complex topic but saw it as so basic to the human experience that it merited attention by adult educators. Concerning the paucity of references to worldview, he wrote,

I am not at all surprised most people in adult education have not the slightest idea of the meanings that attach to "worldview." They have not studied Kant, Goethe, [von] Humboldt, Dilthey, or Heidegger. You should be prepared to define the concept for those with whom you speak. (L. McKenzie, personal communication, August 1, 1998)

I believe that, beginning with his article in 1987 and culminating with a chapter of his book being included in a collection of selected writings on philosophy and adult education (Merriam, 1995), McKenzie made a significant attempt to introduce this matter of worldview construction into the discourse of adult education.

From my search for references to worldview, it appears that use of the concept has received only limited attention in adult education and it is still on the margins of discourse in most disciplines. There are three circumstances that might explain this. One is that the word has been relegated by a number of authors to a subsidiary level of

importance where it is used only to aid in the description of other concepts (e.g., Jarvis, 1985; Knowles, 1990; Merriam, 1988). Also, as McKenzie (1991) points out, there are cases where “theorists have recognized the association between education and worldview construction without expressly using the words ‘worldview construction’” (p. 109). Seldom have theorists mentioned worldview or explained it. Second, if participants of this study are typical, educators might have had more exposure to alternate terms like ideology, paradigm (Kuhn, 1962), or meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991). For the latter two, the theorists had specific intent and a special application. At times, worldview is used alongside those terms, showing that they are not synonymous (Kuhn, 1962; McKenzie, 1991; Merriam, 1991). Hence, terms such as constructs, ideology, meaning, meaning perspectives, metaphysical systems, models, and paradigm have some relationship to worldview but do not provide the same coverage. The third circumstance that has possibly affected the use of the term worldview is that it has been accepted as a bona fide expression only within certain limited circles. Concerning this last point, it may be helpful to briefly review the development and use of the term.

Worldview has notable philosophical roots in the German word *Weltanschauung* and has been used at various times by particular streams of writers. After Kant’s introduction of the word, other German philosophers such as Goethe, Heidegger, Schelling, and von Humboldt used the term (McKenzie, 1991, pp. 2-3), and its appearance spans a period from the Enlightenment up to the 1970s. Starting in the late 1960s, it is possible to trace attention given to the concept of worldview in the English language by numerous Western Christian writers (e.g., Colson & Pearcey, 1999; Erikson, 1985; Long & McMurry, 1994; Nash, 1992; Schaeffer, 1976; Sire, 1976; Sproul, 1986; Veith, 1994;

Walsh & Middleton, 1984) who were dealing with matters like apologetics, theology, and cultural issues. While the term has been used in books dealing with anthropology (e.g., Redfield, 1953), counselling (e.g., Wei-Cheug & Pope-Davis, 1993), cross-cultural studies (e.g., Treviño, 1996), the environment (e.g., Feagan, 1994), and religions (e.g., Smart, 1983), by far the most extensive recent use has been by Christian writers. It appears that worldview has received ongoing attention but in fairly exclusive ways and, more recently, apart from the mainstream of academic endeavour. As a result, the concept has not yet been disseminated in a significant way through literature, discussions, or the practice of education.

Most of the participants confirmed this by indicating that worldview was a term that they had not encountered or had used infrequently. In spite of this, they were able to quickly grasp the meaning after hearing a brief dictionary definition and were able to relate the expression to many aspects of life and practice. One might consider the analogy of a visitor from a foreign land entering a market place and viewing a variety of goods, many of which are familiar. The goods are there but not really available until that visitor is given the currency of the realm. With that coin in hand, the market place is more accessible and is open to more possibilities. Similarly, with noetic awareness, the participants of this study demonstrated the possibilities for explanation, acquisition, and integration. Consequently, it can be assumed that many of them have had a developing experiential awareness of worldview that was better understood and articulated once they were familiar with the term and concept. Furthermore, it is possible that some might also have an integrative awareness apart from a noetic awareness. However, because integration is a deliberate aspect of life and practice, conscious familiarity with and

use of worldview would likely precede most aspects of that third kind of awareness. This is what I observed taking place during the course of both interviews. The participants spoke about how they saw worldview awareness develop in their own experience, how they saw it manifest in the lives of others, and how worldview was integrated into their lives, particularly in the practice of teaching. From these descriptions, it appears that developing a worldview awareness occurs on a landscape of constraints and opportunities.

The constraints identified by the participants were gathered under the 5 broad categories of institutional, circumstantial, self-imposed, other-imposed, and discipline-related constraints. Institutional constraints were seen to be long-standing, formal ones like the priorities, regulations, or limitations set by an educational institution that inhibited the participants from learning more about worldview and specifically about personally held worldviews. Institutional constraints could also give rise to circumstantial constraints. Circumstantial constraints were of shorter duration and less formal in nature. These had to do with the roles (both personal and professional) that an educator had to fulfill or the circumstances under which the practice was carried out (e.g., class size, physical setting). In the circumstances that they faced in life and practice, choices were being made constantly, and some of these reduced or limited opportunities for an increased worldview awareness. These were considered to be self-imposed constraints. Yet, realizing that interactions are part of the practice of teaching, certain other-imposed constraints raised barriers in the attempt to develop an awareness of the worldview of others. An example would be when students might not want to let the educator gain insight into their lives and worldview. Institutional, circumstantial, self-imposed, and

other-imposed constraints appeared, by their nature, to be negative. However, participant responses revealed that strong positive influences could also act as constraints to developing a worldview awareness.

The one category for this type of positive influence, which I labeled discipline-related constraints, had two discernible aspects: personal expertise in a discipline and unity of thought in the field of study. Both of these were positive influences that participants had gained from work in their particular subject area yet, while they contributed to a particular kind of effectiveness in teaching, they could also have a constraining effect on how a worldview awareness developed. Both acted in a way of providing such a distinctive and well-defined frame of reference that a person's ability to approach new information or alternate worldviews was shaped by that already familiar and ingrained perspective. Kuhn (1962) recognized this to be true of paradigms in the scientific community, and Mitchell and Sackney (2000) indicated this to be a problem associated with the mechanistic worldview applied to education. This issue has also been taken up by Douglas (1986), who addressed how unity of thought in a field constrains individuals in her discussion of collective thought within institutions.

As certainly as there are constraints that can inhibit the development of worldview awareness, there are other experiences that represent opportunities for an increased awareness. While constraints were suggested by reference to particular instances and examples, opportunities were implied in the responses of participants when they demonstrated noetic, experiential, and integrative awareness and when they described factors contributing to the formation of a worldview. While initial questions caused participants to refer to their base of knowledge, which related mostly to noetic awareness,

for the most part, they responded out of their personal experiences. These accounts contributed to building a picture of experiential and integrative awareness. The sense that there was still more to be discovered about opportunities suggested the image of a landscape of opportunities upon which the three kinds of awareness develop. Participants indicated that opportunities for developing noetic awareness came from information gathered through the media, literature, conversation, and instruction. I was told that some disciplines, like Economics, foster a particular worldview and some, like the study of English literature, explore alternate worldviews. There was no indication, however, that worldview had specifically been a topic of instruction in any of the fields represented by the participants of this study. This result suggests that opportunities for developing noetic awareness were haphazard and largely dependent upon the types of encounters and interactions that had occurred in the lives of the participants, including interactions through participation in this research. That is not, however, to say that formal opportunities for developing noetic awareness do not exist.

I have discovered, in two contemporary situations, courses designed to foster worldview awareness specifically of the noetic kind. The University of Phoenix's Doctor of Management degree program in Organizational Leadership has a course called "Inventing the World: How We Construct Meaning" and while the course description (<http://online.uophx.edu>) does not include the term worldview, the subject matter would contribute to worldview awareness. Another formal opportunity might be found at The Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. A Master of Worldview Studies (M.W.S.) program is offered there, which is "designed to explore a Christian worldview and its possible implications for important areas of cultural concern, including (but not limited

to) specific disciplines” (<http://www.icscanada.edu/calendar/2001-2002/programs.html>).

In spite of these two examples, however, it appears that courses and programs designed specifically to develop a noetic awareness of worldview are rare. More likely occasions for being presented with the concept would be in courses and readings that deal reflectively with the individual human experience or with cultural phenomena.

While opportunities for developing noetic awareness appear as discrete learning experiences, opportunities for developing experiential awareness seem far more numerous and span a multitude of life situations beginning with the earliest recollections of one’s youth. Participants provided responses about factors (Appendix H) that go into shaping a worldview, and my own earlier work produced a schema (Appendix A) that has 11 general areas and about 80 possible influences. Tracing a typical life situation and the course of human development, leads to the realization that such phenomena as family, peers, school, church, clubs, recreation, work, and the media represent spheres of activity in which experiential awareness might be increased and shaped. Participants specifically cited family and cultural background, attending school, having more independence in university, and witnessing human diversity in different settings as examples of formative experiences from their own lives.

While participants referred back in time to relate worldview to previous experiences, they also gave some indication of how those experiences continued in the present to shape their own unique and personal worldviews. For example, some spoke of how the meaning of a particular experience acted as a formative influence at a time and place removed from its first instance. There was also some evidence that, during an interview, a participant’s reflection on an earlier experience resulted in further understanding about

that experience. A number of participants showed an ability to use both personal and professional experiences as instructive case studies for relating to the concept of worldview, and sometimes this occurred in a dynamic way during the interview. Regardless of how it occurred and as varied as the examples were, participants were ready to relate worldview to their experiences, and the landscape of experiential awareness for each person appeared to have its own unique and varied set of opportunities. This personal and experiential approach to worldview was confirmed by McKenzie (1991), who maintained that both worldview construction and worldview examination are naturally occurring processes that are stimulated by coming into daily contact with people who have different “philosophical, religious, political, economic, and ethical interpretive understandings.... different knowledge bases.... [and] lifestyles” (p. 91).

In recounting their experiences, participants also made comments about how worldview was applied in their practice of teaching. The distinction between experiential awareness and integrative awareness was not always sharp, but when the person spoke of using worldview as a tool or label, it was seen as an opportunity for developing integrative awareness. These appeared to be more conscious and deliberate than cases of developing experiential awareness. Though none of the participants gave indication that they taught specifically about worldview, there were ample cases where a worldview was what they were conveying in the teaching-learning situation either as a perspective of the field of study or as a personal expression out of their lives. Some conscious effort was made by a few participants to apply worldview in practice, but in more cases, worldview was in the background as an influence affecting how teaching and learning occurred.

This finding implies that worldview could be more directly integrated where personal reflection is encouraged or where the discipline or field of study has its own dominant worldview. In the way that participants spoke and apart from any particular application, they provided some insights about their own worldviews.

Discussions with the participants served to identify the three kinds of awareness and created the sense that they develop upon a landscape of constraints and opportunities. Yet, in addition to these conceptual insights about worldview, the participants revealed two tendencies in their own thinking and behaviour. One was the tendency to generalize about students and the second was a strong inclination to use their particular discipline or field of study as the frame of reference during the interviews.

The human tendency to generalize has been noted elsewhere: "When we're faced with lots of cases, we are forced to make generalizations as a way of tying together what we know in a useful form" (The Institute for the Learning Sciences, 1994). As an example of how that tendency to generalize was demonstrated in this study, one professor characterized the worldview among undergraduates in her institution as being monolithic. She and another professor saw a sameness among the students at their institution, which was in distinction to other situations where they had experienced more diversity. As a further example, some participants identified and distinguished between subgroups within their institutions and indicated that these categories represented different worldviews. My own early experience in adult continuing education was an encounter with diversity in the classroom. Faced with that type of challenge, I reached back and drew upon my prior familiarity with the concept of worldview. My thinking was that possibly it might serve as a means of approaching the diversity and improving my effectiveness in the classroom.

Even with that desire to see students as unique individuals, there was a tendency to regard students according to types based upon things like skill level, attitude, and background. That had been my own inclination to generalize through increased contact with students in the same teaching context. While some of the participants did speak of a worldview as an individual and personal perspective, many of the responses showed that they too had an inclination to generalize and use the concept of worldview when speaking of sub-groups of students.

This tendency to use worldview as a descriptor of a collective holding or group perspective is reflected in the literature as well. Many authors (e.g., Banks & Stevens, 1997; Colson & Pearcey, 2000; Long & McMurry, 1994; Nash, 1992; Walsh & Middleton, 1984) have used the term worldview to characterize sub-groups within a society and to describe a group perspective. This relates somewhat to the notion presented by Berger and Luckmann (1966) when they talked about reality being socially constructed. While they made the allowance that “the individual... is not born a member of society” (p. 149), successive socializations induct the individual into that society, who then “not only takes on the roles and attitudes of others, but in the same process takes on their world” (p. 152). Similarly, Douglas (1986) cited “the Durkheim-Fleck idea of a social group that generates its own view of the world, developing a thought style that sustains the pattern of interaction” (p. 32). She said that an institution, which she defines as a “legitimized social grouping” (p. 46), tends to have ready-made classifications for the individual to use. She asks, “How can we possibly think of ourselves in society except by using the classifications established in our institutions?” (p. 99). These examples demonstrate the strong tendency in different sources and disciplines to represent

worldview as a group holding, and this tendency seems to be supported by observations that participants in this study used worldview as a means of generalizing and classifying sub-groups of students.

There also appeared some situations related to the practice of teaching that might further reinforce the tendency to generalize. For example, participants mentioned things like changing parameters in education, a changing role as an educator, a high number of short-term contacts with students, the requirement to lecture before a large and somewhat anonymous mass of students, and busyness induced by personal and professional demands. One can imagine that, faced with these things, the tendency to generalize and to characterize students in terms of a group worldview might become a convenient, if not necessary, practice. Furthermore, if part of socialization involves some pressure to adopt categories of classification (Douglas, 1986), then it appears that the tendency to generalize will be part of the work within an educational institution and the development of collegiality in that setting.

Regardless of the pattern of use in literature and the tendency of practitioners to generalize about worldviews, any suggestion about the uniqueness of individuals raises an important question: Does each person have an individual worldview? That leads to another question: What provision can be made to allow for worldview to be a personal perspective while still recognizing that there are shared aspects of worldview? McKenzie (1991) speaks about *traditions* as that shared perspective. He says, "A tradition is something that is lived out and is communicated in its being-lived-out to those who come within its circle of influence" (1991, p. 20). He allows for worldview to be an individual holding when he states, "A person is not solely defined by a tradition but instead works

out his or her definition in terms of a dynamic interaction with tradition” (1991, p. 21). Comparable to traditions, one participant used the expression *heritages* to talk about those experiences and values that are held in common by a group of people. This discussion demonstrates that there are ways of upholding worldview as an individual’s outlook and attitude while acknowledging perspectives that are shared by a number of people. In other words, generalizing is, at times, a necessary approach, but there are times when an educator needs to be sensitive to an individual student’s experiences, attitudes, and assumptions.

The second tendency that participants demonstrated about their own behaviour was a strong inclination to use their particular discipline or field of study as the frame of reference during the interviews. The invitation to participate in this research and the questions that initiated the first interview definitely addressed each participant as an adult educator. Yet most of them began without hesitation or explanation to use the terms and perspective of their own discipline or field of expertise rather than speak in terms of adult education. Particularly at the post-secondary level, an educator has probably given more time and attention to his or her subject area than to training to become a teacher, and this became evident as a number of participants indicated that their field of expertise was something that had been significant in shaping their own way of thinking. Even the first, simple responses to questions about worldview were infused with references to their particular expertise or teaching subject. Some university professors even observed the significant influence that a subject area was already exerting on undergraduate students. They said that these young students had already developed an outlook that was shaped by their particular study interest and that they approached learning experiences with a

different worldview than was evident among students coming from a related, but slightly different, study interest. This observation was endorsed by a number of participants who had worked with students from different disciplines. The responses of the participants showed that they had a definite tendency to use their particular field of study as a frame of reference and, in many observations of students, they saw this tendency being repeated. This raises the question, "Do people adopt a worldview that is associated with a discipline or a field of work and use that as a personal integrative perspective for all of life?" If that is the case, then it seems important to further examine worldview in the field of adult education and in the experiences of practitioners.

Implications For Theory

The research approached adult educators with the intent of discovering their understanding of worldview as a term and concept. In doing so, I was looking at two things: the word, worldview, and the perspective of the participant. This section will consider the implications to theory according to those two aspects. Although, from both the participants' and my experience, worldview did not appear often in the literature or in the conversations of adult education, once it was used with a basic definition, participants were able to relate it to a variety of ideas and experiences. Obviously then, worldview formation or construction can be assumed to occur continually, either consciously or unconsciously, in the human experience (Holmes, 1983; Long & McMurry, 1994; McKenzie, 1991; Nash 1992). Simply put, worldview formation is within the experience of every person even if noetic awareness is non-existent. To make the construct useful in adult education requires the development of a coherent theoretical framework. This task is especially important in light of Garrison's (1994) admonition: "If adult education is to

be recognized as a worthwhile field of study it must generate relevant, distinctive, and coherent theoretical frameworks” (p. 1).

Worldview offers a basic and understandable construct that has great potential for theory building because it has inherently great scope in that it spans continua or separated phenomena and it is inclusive. The scope of worldview was demonstrated as it was adapted for use by people from a variety of disciplines and fields of study; as it described phenomena ranging over time and place; as it was applied to different stages of human development; as it was attributed to a variety of influences; as it pertained to individual experience and to a collective perspective; as it spanned cultures, sub-cultures within societies, and sub-groups within institutions; as it related to personal and professional experiences; as it provided a static snapshot of a phenomenon as well as described a dynamic process; as it was easily understood yet ripe for philosophical contemplation; and as it related to the three kinds of awareness and was suited for philosophical speculation, experiential descriptions, and integrative applications. Although it may not have been his intent, McKenzie (1991) hinted at this scope. He began his work by examining the philosophical origins of worldview and then moved on to discuss worldview construction in terms of the experiences of knowing, thinking, and understanding. Thereafter, he placed it within practice in an educational design called participation training (p. 74). In essence, he alluded to what I have described as noetic, experiential, and integrative awareness and showed the scope and relevance of worldview for theory and practice in adult education.

Although worldview was first coined and considered many years ago, its use in theories about adult education is very recent. In creating new knowledge, some theorists

gravitate towards creating new terms and neglect what might appear as commonplace. At times, theories that appear in academic circles are elitist and obscure and, when they go in that direction, are less accessible to the practitioner. While some might be inclined to think that theorizing is not meant to be practical, hard-to-understand and hard-to-use theories in the practice of adult education serve uncertain ends. Within the limitations of time and data collection for this study, the results yielded several implications for theory. The first implication is that worldview awareness is of at least three kinds, noetic, experiential, and integrative awareness with each kind providing different types of opportunities for people to gain new appreciation for their experiences both in life and in practice. These three kinds of awareness develop on a landscape of opportunities and at times encounter constraints (Figure 1.). This landscape implies that, while every person's experiences are unique, there will be at least some commonly shared aspects that provide opportunity for shared understanding of another's worldview formation.

The second major implication for theory deals with the perspective of the participant. All of the participants were approached as adult educators, but they shifted their focus to speak from the perspective of their individual discipline or field of study. Assuming that what they were sharing was a portion of their worldview, then the field of endeavour acted as a discipline-related constraint and exerted a strong influence in shaping the worldview. Furthermore, in the manner of a symbiotic relationship, the worldview acted as a lens through which the individual examined and reacted to information and experiences. There may be a number of key influences that shape an individual's worldview, but specialized education also constitutes one of the opportunities on the

landscape and must be considered as part of a theoretical framework related to the worldview construct.

In addition to implications for building theory pertaining to worldview itself, the construct has a wider applicability in its capacity to inform theory building in other academic endeavours. Within an educational setting, for example, the educator's worldview, as it pertains to the field of study, is conveyed to learners who, in turn, imbibe it. Because the worldviews of theorists and of workers in a field influence direction for a society's institutions (Lindsell, 1976), the implication is that the educator's worldview should be uncovered and examined for its impact on the theories the educator is attempting to instil. The need for examining assumptions in research and theory has already been addressed (Boshier, 1994; Merriam, 1988), and this study suggests that examining the researcher's worldview could prove even more beneficial. That is because one's worldview is not only a more comprehensive, all-embracing aspect of a life than a set of assumptions, but it may also unconsciously affect the derivation of those assumptions. The same can be said about uncovering worldviews for those who are working within the same paradigm. Shared assumptions and paradigms may form a common ground for developing research and theory, but the wider implications and applications are to be understood only as one deals with worldviews both of the originator and of those who are likely to adopt the theory. Of course, a theorist is not liable for the ways in which people use knowledge, but by examining worldviews one becomes more sensitive to values and implications that are part of the framework.

To conclude this section, it appears that worldview, as a term and concept, has considerable potential in developing theoretical frameworks that are both significant and

suitable for use in adult education. As well, worldview, as a personal perspective, consists of three kinds of awareness that develop upon a landscape of opportunities affected by constraints. Among educators, the discipline or field of study appears as a key influence in shaping the individual's worldview. While this research sought to understand more about worldview as a word and in the perspective of the participants, there is a range and depth of research that still can be conducted.

Implications for Research

Although the concept of worldview has been in use for a long time, there has been little research done concerning the concept in the context of education. Boshier (1994), Merriam and Simpson (1995), and Patton (1990) have already indicated that there is a relationship between worldview and research, but they do little more than comment on its existence. Boshier (1994) did state that "All educators base research on assumptions about the nature of the world and their role within it. Sometimes those assumptions are implicit and so deeply embedded in consciousness that they are never brought forth for explicit examination" (p. 89). In this statement, Boshier is pointing to the underlying importance of worldview without using the term itself. To borrow from him, worldview is deeply embedded in consciousness and has not been brought forth for explicit examination. Considering that worldview is still underdeveloped as a concept within research, two things appear necessary.

First, there is a need to conduct more research about worldview itself. It does not appear necessary to revisit what has been done in this study to assess what educators know about the term. Infrequent use of the term worldview in conversations among educators would indicate that noetic awareness is scant. The references in the literature

confirm that the term is on the margins of educational discourse. Future research should build upon both McKenzie's work in worldview construction and the findings of this research about the kinds of awareness and the things that influence worldview thereby carrying these forward into new realms that foster increased understanding about worldview as a concept.

Second, more research should be done on the nature of the relationship between worldview as it impinges upon research. Understanding this relationship is likely to enhance dialogue among researchers and the process of research just as was the case when Kuhn (1962) addressed the scientific community concerning the influence of paradigms. Although Kuhn's work focused on a particular discipline, it entered the thinking of academics in many fields and benefited research and writing in general. The results of this current research indicated that expertise and unity in the field of study shape how one approaches information. Any exploration of that relationship can be expanded to consider how people in different disciplines conduct research and how that might shape their formulation and presentation of findings. In another way, understanding the influence of worldview in different fields has become more important.

Educators are increasingly exposed to interdisciplinary research and co-operative ventures that require them to work with others who have significantly different backgrounds and perspectives. The 18 participants of this study represented a small sample that included those from a number of fields of study and from different types of institutions. Considering that sample, it was seen that worldview was something to which they could relate even when it had different implications for the variety of people involved. This offers promise that worldview would also be a relevant topic when

educators meet with people from different backgrounds and perspectives. There would be benefit from research that seeks to find out how worldview might be used as a concept to bridge perceived differences between disciplines, departments, institutions, and sectors.

Not to neglect the learner, the participants spoke of worldview differences that existed among students they had encountered. Some participants certainly felt that they were influencing worldview through their teaching, but this study did not explore how that was occurring in the experience of the learner. Research should be conducted to understand the relationship between worldview and learning. Attention has already been given to transformation in learning (Mezirow, 1991) but not in terms of worldview. Accepting that worldview is fundamental in the human experience, research should address matters like what role worldview has in terms of making learning meaningful and whether people can be taught or trained effectively without affecting their worldview. If worldview is of any significance and if learning is the goal of education, then research into the relationship between the two could produce an important understanding that will better equip the practitioner for the task.

Implications for Practice

The observation that worldview has had only minimal treatment in the field of adult education was somewhat troubling. It raises the question of what value the concept has in practice. This study demonstrated that the term worldview and the related concept are comprehensible to educators, and those who were unfamiliar with the term were quick to make use of it without extensive coaching. This suggests that it might also be a readily accessible concept for most people. Hence, relating aspects of educational experiences to worldview might become a basis for communication and discussion among

administrators, teachers, students, and, on occasion, concerned family. This use could also extend to include disciplines, departments, institutions, and sectors (for example, labour, management, and government).

Specific to education, both the literature and the apparent level of noetic awareness point to a need to disseminate more information about worldview. It seems necessary to give the term and concept more exposure in places where practitioners are likely to look for help in developing professional competencies. Such opportunities might best be provided through specific education about worldview like specially designed modules and courses included as part of pre-service training. Clearly, more articles and books could be written about the use of worldview in educational practice to reach into the graduate levels. One outcome of having an increased awareness and better understanding about the concept would be an ability on the part of the educator to articulate his or her own worldview. With that ability and confidence, worldview awareness might be introduced on appropriate occasions into the teaching-learning situation.

While some participants made generalizations, describing students according to types and groups, a proper worldview awareness could also help in dispelling misconceptions and stereotypes, thereby enabling people to be more sensitive to the views of others. Increasingly, Canadians are challenged to think about and adapt to diversity. For decades, diversity was regarded as a condition of multiculturalism but, more and more, we are being made aware of different types of diversity and a variety of competing interests. The paradox is that worldview both represents the essence of diversity of human experience and provides a possible means of working more effectively in the midst of that same diversity.

While educators might want to fully respect and work within situations of diversity, they still function with a personal worldview and sometimes are charged with the responsibility of delivering a worldview in the teaching-learning situation. Through various comments, participants raised the issue about the educator's involvement in changing the worldview of the learner. One participant felt that his responsibility as an instructor was to bring a developed, personal worldview to the students. Another questioned whether educators are responsible for delivering something of their worldview in the teaching-learning situation or whether they should just deliver subject and course content. Related to this was the feeling of practitioners in certain disciplines that there is an obligation to convey to their learners the worldview that is foundational to that discipline. McKenzie maintained that "adults will construct interpretive understandings about the world without educational interventions" (p. 109), and this occurs every day apart from awareness about worldview as a term and concept. Certainly, recognition that worldview is part of the human experience and that it can affect what occurs in the teaching-learning situation is a compelling argument for increasing worldview awareness through deliberate actions. McKenzie (1991) affirmed that it is appropriate for practitioners to pursue direct, explicit worldview examination as an ethical imperative.

Implications for Current Times

Two implications that do not neatly fit into sections on theory, research, or practice need to be discussed. These implications are involved in each of the three categories and also go beyond the field of adult education. In the review of literature, through ongoing observation prior to and during the period of this research, and in the responses of the participants, I found worldview to be located on the margins of educational and other

disciplinary discourse. One implication of this is that understanding of the concept and of the three kinds of awareness has not been adequately developed. Noetic awareness, which appears to be pivotal in heightening experiential and integrative awareness, could probably be increased greatly if more educators familiar with the term worldview would use it in meaningful ways in their practice. Essentially, there is need to consciously move worldview from the margins of discussion and writing and to incorporate it more centrally as part of everyday thinking and dialogue.

The second implication concerns some aspects of the times in which we live. Once it may have been reasonable to talk about the basic values of western civilization (Clough, 1960), but that seems no longer possible. Values pertaining to any society appear to be in flux because of globalization and the extensive movement of people and the exchange of ideas across boundaries. As well, there is flux in ways of seeing because of new technologies and the transition between modernism and postmodernism. Considering the impact of such things upon culture and upon the conditions of people and their environment, and considering the rate at which, and the way in which, times are changing, there is much to affect the human experience. In one sense there may be more melding, but, at the same time, there is less predictability. It appears unwise to approach people as though they are just another part of a large category. It appears more appropriate to look at people with the notion of understanding personal worldviews. Although this implication is not confined to adult education, this field is perhaps the most influential one by which to increase worldview awareness.

Conclusion

Through this study, I have attempted to gain insights into what a sample group of adult educators knew about worldview as a term and concept and how they saw it related to their practice in education. The data suggested that worldview awareness can be noetic, experiential, and integrative and that these developed upon a landscape of constraints and opportunities. As I had observed through my own studies in education, my conversations with other educators, and my search of literature and literature databases, worldview has received little attention and, consequently, has been on the margins of educational and most disciplinary discourse.

The participants of this study initially understood the term to mean a variety of things that were more or less consistent with the variety of meanings that have been applied to it either historically or through popular usage. As they moved from a basic definition to reflect upon the concept of worldview in their lives and practices, they showed that it was a readily adopted and eminently usable concept. Participants were seen, in many cases, to use the concept in a way that was influenced by their particular discipline or field of expertise. While they related to worldview as a personal concept, some used the term in making generalizations and applying those as descriptions of people they had encountered in their practices. Nonetheless, the participants demonstrated that worldview can be used as a descriptive and analytical tool when applied to work in adult education.

Although discussion and research concerning worldview has been minimal in education as well as in other academic fields, and while the term is seldom used in conversation, the presence of worldview is large in the sense of the part it plays in our everyday lives. The findings of this study point to a need for more deliberate

consideration of worldview by theorists, researchers, and practitioners. Through these efforts, worldview awareness would surely be increased and, as the term and concept are moved from the margins to a more central location in educational discourse, its potential for contributing to the teaching-learning situation could be realized.

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Appendix A

Factors that Might Influence an Individual's Worldview

An Wholly Other

independent?
transcendent?
powerful?
wise?
benevolent?
knowable?

Others

family
work/co-workers
institutions
certifying bodies
society/countrymen
friends/acquaintances
unknown yet aware
historical/political figures
models

Faith/Beliefs

authority
absolutes
truth
reality
eternity/infinity
(time/space)
ultimate questions
supernatural/spiritual

Personal Freedom

creativity
imagination
vision
history
decisions

perceived volitionality
addiction/dependency

Models

predecessors
peers
successors

Time
(changing)

Self

Space
(changeable)

Personal Attributes

roles
temperament type
personality
intelligence
perceptiveness
ability/skills
creativity/imagination

Personal Attitudes

needs
wants
aspirations
goals
priorities
self-esteem/self-image
self-worth
beliefs
values/mores
biases/prejudices
attitudes
assumptions

Settings

home
work
social
recreational
educational
marketplace

Opportunities

family/social

employment (unemployment)

recreation/cultural/leisure

study/learning

Resources

time
space
knowledge
physical strength
heritage/inheritance
history/decisions
finances/materials
relationships
models
faith
personal attributes
vision
resourcefulness
success/failure
determination/will

Physiology

health/fitness
development/life cycle
maturity
strength/vitality
weakness/frailty
disabilities
senses
dexterity/co-ordination
determinants?

Gender Issues

sexual orientation
gender identity
models
mid-life crisis
menopause

Bret Maukonen, revised 1998

Appendix B

Figure 1 - Personal information sheet

Name of participant:

Areas / subjects which you teach:

Number of years involved in adult education:

Your areas of specialized post-secondary study:

Presently serving on the faculty of:

I appreciate your interest in participating in this research project. Your involvement will entail two meetings, each of which are likely to take less than one hour. The meetings will be recorded on audio tape. Your comments during the meetings are your property and subject to your subsequent revision.

At the conclusion of this interview, there will be some information sheets to stimulate further reflection. Please feel free to insert additional pages into your portfolio to make notes about the topic of discussion or about any reflective thoughts or questions that occur between the times of our first and second meetings.

A transcript of the proceedings from this first meeting will be made available to you within four weeks following this date.

This meeting is taking place on:

at the location of:

beginning at:

ending at:

The second meeting would best be scheduled:

Participant's Address:

Home Phone: ()

Business Phone: ()

x

E-Mail:

Please advise the researcher if either your address or phone number change in this calendar year. Thank you.

If you want to contact **Bret Maukonen**, call (905) 834-7454 or e-mail: maukonen@itcanada.com

Appendix C

BROCK UNIVERSITY Faculty of Education Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: "Worldview Sensitivity and Adult Education"

Researchers: H. Bret Maukonen

Name of Participant: _____
(Please print)

- **I understand that this study in which I have agreed to participate will involve two one-to-one interviews with an intervening time of reflection. The purpose of the study is to solicit my insights and perspective as an adult educator. The discussion will be audio taped for transcription by the researcher.**
- **I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty.**
- **I understand that there is no obligation to answer any question/participate in any aspect of this project that I consider invasive.**
- **I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my name is not associated with my answers. I understand that only the researchers named above will have access to the data.**

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the study, you can contact Bret Maukonen at (905) 834-7454 or Dr. Coral Mitchell at (905) 688-5550, extension 4413.

Feedback about the use of the data collected will be available during the month of December, 1998 through the abovenamed persons. A written explanation will be provided for you upon request. Thank you for your help! Please take one copy of this form with you for further reference.

- **I have fully explained the procedures of this study to the above volunteer.**

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Questions for Initial Meeting

Direct: Before we begin, I would like you to read and fill in this Informed Consent Form and a personal information sheet.

Direct: I see from the personal information sheet that you have . . . (in reference to the participant's teaching experience).

Ask: How do you feel about your role as an educator?

Ask: As you reflect upon your involvement in education, what do you find to be most important or rewarding aspects for you?

Ask: What do you see as the role of an instructor in relationship to the students?

Direct: In the past, I encountered a term in my reading and studies referring to a concept that I find interesting. I have been wondering about how other adult educators may have encountered this term and concept. The term is "worldview."

Ask: What does that term mean to you?

Ask: What image does the term "worldview" bring to mind?

Ask: In what contexts have you encountered the term?

Ask: Have you ever heard it used in reference to education, specifically, adult education?

Direct: A simple dictionary definition of "worldview" is an "outlook on or attitude to the world or life" (*The Chambers Dictionary*)

Ask: Does this definition spark any recollection of having heard or used the term "worldview" on a previous occasion or are there other terms that you have heard used or have used yourself that seem somehow to relate to this concept of "worldview?"

Ask: (If to the affirmative) Could you please describe such related terms.

Ask: Considering your experience in adult education and in other areas of activity, what factors seem to be important influences on how people view the world and life? You may wish to consider things that you have observed in colleagues, learners, your friends, and your family as well as factors that may have influenced your own worldview.

Direct: Some people define "worldview" as a cultural holding while others refer to it as an individual's personal perspective.

Ask: What do you think about these two different approaches to the term?

Direct: I have prepared a portfolio of information for participants of this study on worldview sensitivity and adult education. I would like you to glance at the pages now and ask any questions that you might have about your participation in this research.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Otherwise, I will contact you in . . . (date or period specified) to deliver a transcript of the proceedings from this interview. Thank you for your participation in this initial interview.

Appendix E

Contents of Portfolio

Figure 1 is Appendix B

Figure 2 - Information about Figures 3 through 8

Figure 3 - Definitions of “worldview”

Figure 4 - General scenarios

Figure 5 - Comparing worldviews

Figure 6 - The character of a class of adult learners

Figure 7 - Possible factors affecting a personal worldview

Figure 8 - The place of “worldview” in your thinking and practice as an adult educator

Appendix E

Figure 2 - Information about Figures 3 through 8

Figures 3 through 8 have been provided for your use in stimulating reflection upon the matter of worldview. These are added to your portfolio and, over the next few months, I hope that you will continue to consider this theme and how it affects you as an adult educator.

A transcript of the proceedings from this first meeting will be made available to you within four weeks. You may amend or modify anything that has been recorded as your offering during the discussion. Please notify the researcher of any changes that you would like to make.

This meeting took place on:

The second meeting (in September or October) would best be scheduled around:

If you want to contact **Bret Maukonen**:

call (905) 834-7454

or e-mail: maukonen@itcanada.com

The researcher will be calling you around the mid-point between the times of the first and second interviews. The purpose of the telephone call will be to find out if you have any questions about the transcript, the figures which are part of your portfolio, or about the study in general.

Please advise the researcher if either your address or phone number change in this calendar year. Thank you very much for your cooperation and interest in this research.

Appendix E

Figure 3 - Definitions of "worldview"

These are a few of the definitions and descriptions of "worldview" that I have discovered. Perhaps they may be helpful as you reflect upon the concept.

1. "outlook on or attitude to the world or life" (*The Chambers Dictionary*)

2. Cultures pattern perceptions of reality into conceptualizations of what reality can or should be, what is to be regarded as actual, probable, possible or impossible. These conceptualizations form what is termed the "worldview" of the culture. The worldview is the central systematization of conceptions of reality to which members of its culture assent (largely unconsciously) and from which stems their value system. The worldview lies at the very heart of the culture, touching, interacting with, and strongly influencing every aspect of the culture. (Kraft, 1979, p. 53).

3. "a vantage point in time and culture that conditions a person's experience of the world" (McKenzie, 1991, p. 1).

4. The nature of metaphysics is conceptual synthesis. And a metaphysical fact, then is a concept which plays a key role within that system . . . A metaphysic is a world-view. And everyone has a world-view, for everyone has an idea of what reality is about. A world-view is a scheme that ties together the varied experiences we have. It is a frame of reference which enables us to function by making sense of the manifold of experience . . . it is an attempt to tie them together into some pattern which will enable the person to function in a reasonable fashion; it will enable him to understand what is going on about him and to act accordingly. Consciously or unconsciously, in crude or sophisticated fashion, everyone has some sort of world-view (Erickson, 1985, p. 141-142).

Appendix E

Figure 4 - General scenarios

Scenario 1

In a reference book with an alphabetical listing, this was the introduction to the article on "worldview."

A high level discussion between the prime minister and premiers of Canada and the leaders of the aboriginal communities gets bogged down. The native leaders insist that the morning session begin with prayer from one of their elders. And before the prayer can be sung, there needs to be a rather lengthy introduction describing the role of the elderly in native communities. After the prayer the leaders then want to pass the peace pipe amongst all the participants. So far the prime minister's patience is being tried, but he remains gracious, though he is starting to worry about the time. But during the first speech of the morning (already forty-five minutes later) one of the native leaders reminds his governmental discussion partners that the land of Canada was given to the aboriginal peoples as a gift of the Great Spirit and that they have responsibility to care for this gift as an inheritance to their children and their children's children. At this point the prime minister's patience runs out. Interrupting the speaker, he exclaims that this interjection of religion into a political discussion about land and constitutional rights is totally out of order and will only serve to grind the discussion to a halt. The native leaders sit in silence for a moment, totally dumbfounded by this outburst. (Banks & Stevens, p. 1135)

Considering the constituencies represented by the prime minister, the premiers and the native leaders, how many worldviews do you think are represented in this scenario?

Scenario 2

Consider the case of three generations of a family living in this country.

A. The grandparents are first-generation Canadians.

B. Their three children are "baby boomers." Two are married.

1. The eldest is a female and she is married but has not had any children.
2. The second is a male, married with two children.

C. His two children have finished high school.

- a. One, a male, has already completed college and is working in industry.
- b. The young lady got married but is still a full-time student in university.

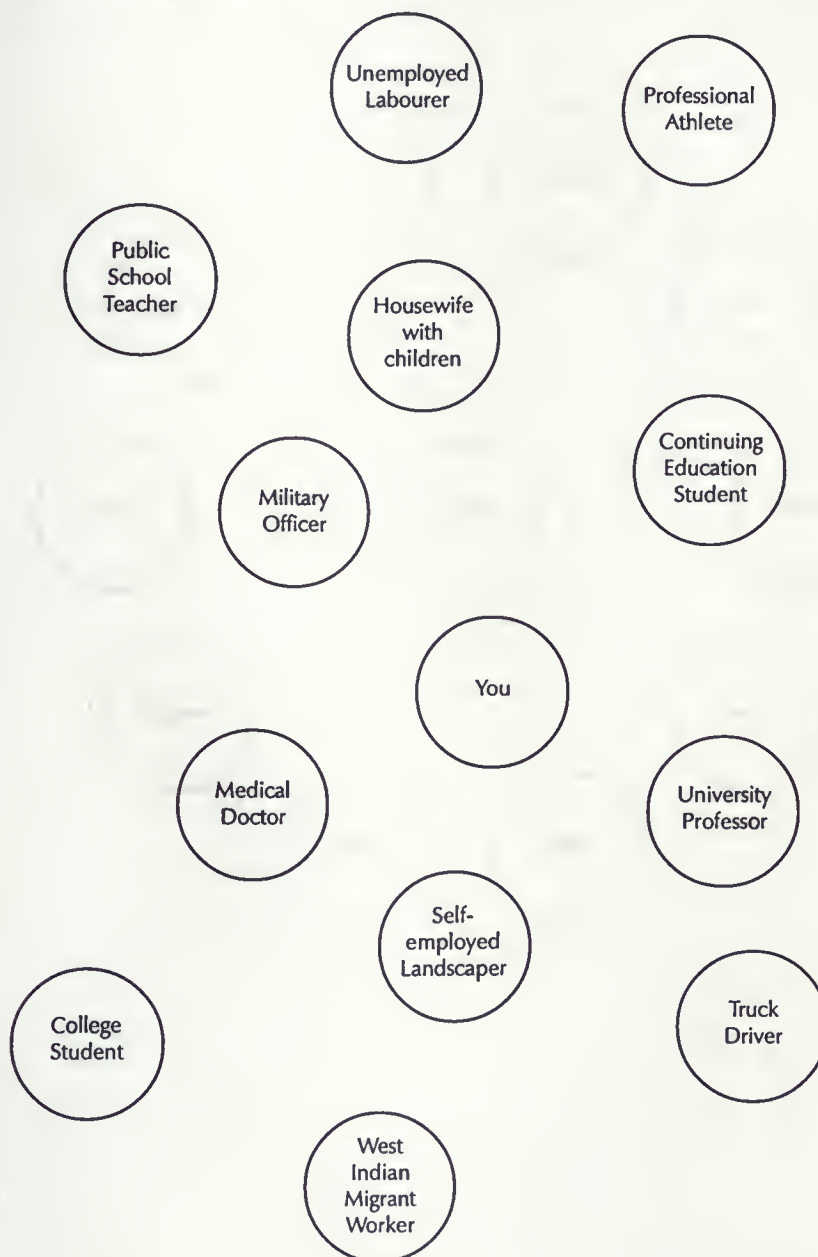
3. The third, born some years after his sister and brother, remained single.

Do you think that there would be any fundamental differences between the worldviews of the people in this family or across the three generations? And if so, what might account for such differences?

Appendix E

Figure 5 - Comparing worldviews

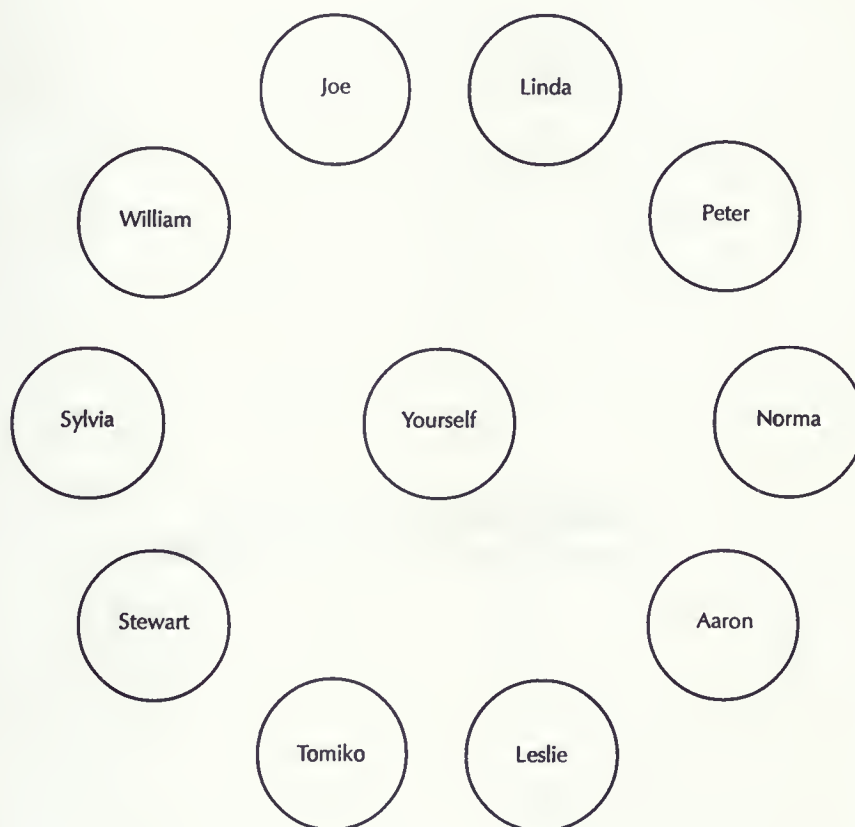
Each circle represents a person. Based on this limited information about roles and activities, which of these people do you think are likely to have similar worldviews? You may wish to join those circles by drawing connecting lines between them and make any notes or comments concerning your rationale.



Appendix E

Figure 6 - The character of a class of adult learners

You are involved as an adult educator in this newly-formed class of students. You do not know any of these people prior to coming to the first session. In approaching this situation, what things are you likely to take into consideration as you begin to lead them in a learning experience?



Appendix E

Figure 7 - Possible factors affecting a personal worldview

Over the next few months, please consider the attached diagram, especially which of these factors contributes to worldview formation as you understand it.

Are there any other factors which you feel should be included?

Inserted here was an 8½ x 14 inch foldout
with the information that is presented in Appendix A

Appendix E

Figure 8 - The place of "worldview" in your thinking and practice as an adult educator

Over the next few months, please consider the matters that we have discussed and covered in this first session. I would be particularly interested in later hearing your thoughts about how worldview considerations affect your personal theory or philosophy of education and your approach to adult learners.

Appendix F

Questions for Second Meeting

Ask: Do you have any questions about this study as we begin this second interview?

Ask: How has your understanding of worldview construction been affected by participation in this research?

Ask: How has your consideration of worldview affected your view of yourself as an educator and your appreciation for adult learners entering a learning situation?

Ask: How do you think greater sensitivity to worldview might influence your approach to preparation, delivery, and evaluation of educational opportunities?

Ask: How might an increased understanding of worldview affect relationships amongst colleagues in adult education and among educators and learners in group learning situations?

Ask: Has there been any observable, intentional influence upon your personal philosophy of education or any deliberate application to your practice as an educator? (If to the affirmative) What type of change?

Ask: Are there any other comments that you would like to make at this time?

Direct: A transcript of this second interview will be made available to you and you may, as in the first case, make amendments to your offering in the discussion. A full report of this research will be provided after the thesis document has been approved. Thank you for your participation.

Appendix H

Factors and influences	Participants																		
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	K	L	M	N	P	O	R	S	T	
age/stage of life									X	X									
background				X							X								
contact with foreign cultures						X		X											
culture				X											X				
early socialization						X												X	
economic structures											X								
education (level of)					X	X						X	X					X	
educators															X				
ethnicity					X	X	X		X		X					X			
experiences					X				X							X	X		
family/family background					X		X			X	X		X		X			X	
family values				X		X			X		X								
field of study									X										
flexibility									X			X							
foreign experience		X																	
friends/friendships						X									X				
gender																X			
generation			X																
geographical knowledge		X																	
government															X				
ideology															X				
income level										X									
information																X			
meanings commonly held																	X		
media						X	X	X							X				
occupation					X														
opportunities													X						
parents																		X	
peers/peer group											X		X						
personality									X										
religion				X		X					X								
school																		X	
social class										X									
society/social influence																X			
traditions				X		X			X										
travel						X													
upbringing				X		X													
a host /endless/complex			X		X		X												

Table 1. Factors Contributing to the Formation of a Worldview

