

Featured Article

Lions at the Gate: Adult Education Research, Research-In-Practice, and Speculative Audacity

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The ability to control the production and distribution of knowledge becomes one of the most important sources of power. . . . Those who control production of knowledge also control the definition of truth, and in turn, the definition of reality. This—the ability to define reality—constitutes the fundamental source of power within the structure of domination.

LeCompte and deMarrais, 1992, p. 15

Research as Contested Territory

Research is a term that has been defined almost as many times as “Adult Education”—and with almost as many political connotations. I would personally prefer to think of research in the way that Zora Neale Hurston described it in her book, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1984): “Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with purpose. It is a seeking that he [or she] who wishes may know the cosmic secrets of the world and they that dwell therein” (p. 174). However, research is not always just formalized, personal curiosity. Francis Bacon told us that “knowledge is power” and power changes everything. Research is socially constructed knowledge, and, in academia, it is a huge part of the contested territory

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and identity that comprises the academic culture. For those of us associated with research, if and how research is legitimated—or discredited—is often of critical importance. Even in these postmodern times when everything is up for question, research studies by “credible universities” seem to remain as one of the last vestiges of credibility. Studies in *The New England Journal of Medicine* are cited regularly by the media, as are the (self-declared) scientifically-conducted political polls which seem to determine so much of daily governmental policy. Rather than Hurston’s description of innocent curiosity—the notion of simple poking and prying with purpose—research is often understood in modernist terms as our best attempt to frame, define, and discover “truth” in a systematic and rational way. However, with respect to knowledge as power and research-as-truth, we have here ominous possibilities for power and the abuse of power. As LeCompte and Marrais (1992) put it: “Those who control production of knowledge also control the definition of truth, and in turn, the definition of reality” (p. 15).

If it is agreed that researchers have influence over matters of knowledge and reality, it becomes vital for those of us in the field to ask: “Whose truth are we talking about? Whose reality are we being told to accept?” By asking questions that go behind assumptions like this, we take on the postmodern posture of radical skepticism (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991). We begin to question authority and the assumptions that underpin accepted authority. The modernist “metanarratives” that have guided society are put in serious doubt (Smart, 1993). By leaving the assurances of modernity and unquestioned authority behind, we enter a world of doubt. As Chambers (1990) puts it, abandoning the old authorities means that “we are left turning over the traces, unwilling to succumb to their fading authority yet at the same time unsure of what lies in their abandon” (pp. 1-2).

Lions at the Gate: New Ways of Seeing Old Issues

To begin to consider how we might want to position ourselves into the future as a field and as individual practitioners and researchers, it might be useful to look at a fable. I think the fable to follow lends itself to a discussion of positionality for the field and leads to an overview of how our field is changing, and should change, in respect to research trends. Above all, the fable gives a metaphor for speculative audacity, as Maxine Greene (1988) termed it, and the possibilities of hope. Following the

fable, I want to argue that there are alternatives to research as we now find it and as it is legitimated. With speculative audacity what is absent can be made present. To this end I will close with two recommendations. These recommendations can be dismissed as statements of faith, just as the fable can be seen as an antiquated, children's tale. However, that faith and memory are perhaps our best hope for the future is not an original idea. Even Marcuse in the bleakest moments of the Frankfurt School argued for memory and faith in order to move ahead to the uncertain future. Here is the fable of "The Man and the Lion," as told by John Henry Newman and quoted by Thomas Cahill (1995):

The Man once invited the Lion to be his guest, and received him with princely hospitality. The Lion had the run of the Man's magnificent palace, in which there were a vast many things to admire. There were large saloons and long corridors, richly furnished and decorated, and filled with a profusion of fine specimens of sculpture and painting, the works of the first masters in either art. The subjects [of the sculptures and paintings] represented were various; but the most prominent of them had an especial interest for the noble Lion who stalked by them one by one. It was that of the Lion himself; and as the owner of the mansion led him from one apartment to another, the Man did not fail to direct the Lion's attention to the indirect homage which these various groups and tableaux paid to the importance of the lion tribe.

There was, however, one remarkable feature in all of them, to which the host, silent as he was from politeness, seemed not all insensible; that as diverse as were these representations, in one point they all agreed, that the man was always victorious, the lion was always overcome. [When the lion had finished his tour of the great mansion] his entertainer asked him what he thought of the splendours it contained; and [the Lion] in reply did give full justice to the riches of its wonder and the skill of the decorators, but the Lion also added, "Lions would have fared better, had Lions been the artists." (Newman cited in Cahill, 1995, pp. 7-8)

I think this fable is interesting for a number of reasons. Of course it is always interesting to see lions going around talking. The vehicle of anthropomorphism is an enduring literary technique. However, the fable is much more than this because, through ironic distance, we can see the Man

in his palace through the eyes of the Lion. We identify with the Lion, I think. Through the Lion's eyes we see the vast difference between the complacent world of the Man and the Lion's reactions. Second, we see that the Lion is not so intimidated by the Man's world that he "loses all self-esteem." He is not intimidated; rather, he is quietly observant. Third, the Lion is reflectively critical of what he is seeing. Significantly, the Lion has the quiet confidence of knowing that he comes from a different lived-experience and a different history. These differences he obviously believes are valuable. The Lion is able to speculate on what could be otherwise. When asked to comment, he calmly steps up and employs what Maxine Greene (1988) calls "speculative audacity" (p. 128). He does not pander. He does not apologize. He begins by praising objectively the riches and skills of the artists. He then poses that "Lions would have fared better, had Lions been the artists." This is not a question. It is a statement of fact which the Lion poses as an alternative truth from a different perspective. He is challenging what exists—in a firm, rational way. "What is presented is not my reality." Does our field have the capacity and the integrity to do this?

What is Everyone's Reality?

The famous quantitative researcher and textbook author, E. Babbie (1992), tells us that "the fundamental basis of knowledge is agreement" (p. 17). Surely, here is a classic example of the traditional positivist academic researcher's oversimplification of things. For Babbie, and so many who write our research textbooks, it would seem that knowledge is "merely" a matter of agreement. However, what goes unsaid here is that the Man is seeking agreement from others in his own palace. The consensus Babbie is talking about is among knowledge creators and knowledge legitimaters like him. This may work when you have only the Man and others like him involved, but things are not this simple when the Lion enters. When critical thinking from a different perspective and history enters the dialogue, we have to ask: "Who is agreeing to what, and on whose behalf?" Suddenly, the complex realities we live in—taking our own field of adult education as a perfect example—become less tidy. Rather than Babbie's view of things, I prefer the vision of Pierre Bourdieu (1971): "Reality is not an absolute. . . . It differs with the group to which one belongs" (p. 195). How we constitute research and how we understand the ways we do it are vital for the future of research in our field. Phyllis Cunningham (1998) has addressed this issue well. As she says: "Each of

us constructs our own reality. What *we* assume to be true becomes a frame for making sense of the world *we* experience” (p. 135).

With deference to Mr. Babbie, the challenge for the future of our field is how to agree to disagree and still move forward together. The issue for us in research, and in so many other areas of practice, I believe, is, if we can respect that another’s experience, culture, and world-view are not just different, but equally real, equally true, equally authoritative. If we have the willingness to live with difference, we can flourish in the diversity that today’s civil society offers (Welton, 1995). As for the inherent fear of the unknown in the postmodern world, Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux (1991), both postmodernists, point out: “Read in more positive terms, postmodernists are arguing for a plurality of voices and narratives—that is for different narratives that present the unrepresentable” (p. 69). But how do we make the unrepresentable part of our world with respect to adult education research? How do we build plurality in our research?

Missing Steps in the Research Process and Debate

Looking at the fable of the Lion and the Man, while it is admirable that the Lion has both the *capacity* and the *audacity* to speak up in the presence of the Man, the fact is that we do not have many models for this in our literature. We have countless texts on how to be analytical. More recently, Stephen Brookfield has given us books and articles on critical thinking. Still, we have surprisingly little on ethical responsibility, in general—but even less on research. Like Zora Neale Hurston and her description of research as innocent poking and prying with purpose, authors such as Brookfield do not go much beyond personal choices on an individual level. Curiously, we have a field dedicated to serving others through a range of philosophical orientations (Merriam & Brockett, 1997), but we have difficulty finding discussion on where research *should* lead. All too often we seem to be left in an ideology of individualism in our research literature. Beyond the “how” and the “where” of adult education, it seems the “why” is ultimately each individual’s problem.

Being only partly facetious, the fable allows itself to be interpreted into some “good, clear, adult education process steps.” While this exercise lends itself to flow charts, circles, and diagrams in a textbook manner, the discussion to follow will spare the reader these textbook aids. This fable, I think, gives us the following “steps.” We see 1) *careful observation* of what is before us, 2) *critical analysis* of what is before us based on comparison with something other, 3) the *confidence* to value something

other, 4) *critical thinking* concerning what is, 5) *speculation* on what is missing and the consequences of this situation, and, finally, 6) the *audacity to speak up* where it counts. I am proposing that it is the “speculative audacity”—steps 5 and 6—that are absent in the process of our work and, more specifically, in our research debate and research classroom. It is as if most of our authors and much of our research literature says: “I go with the Lion only as far as the end of the tour. I will help you be critical. I will help you be analytical. I’ll even help you engage in a personal transformation along the way. But, when the tour ends, how you answer, why you answer, even *if* you answer, isn’t my jurisdiction. Indeed, helping you weigh the consequences of whether or not you will be rewarded or cast out of the palace for your trouble is the type of help our profession can’t help you with. At the end of the tour, you are on your own.”

A Conference on Research as an Example of Speculative Audacity

Since we are here at the 4th Annual Pennsylvania Adult and Continuing Education Research Conference, I suggest its history is a living example of speculative audacity. In 1993 the prestigious Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) was held at Penn State University’s Main Campus. Working for Penn State at the time, I was encouraging my adult education graduate students at the Monroeville Graduate Center—located in the eastern suburbs of Pittsburgh—to attend the AERC. It would involve a 3-hour drive and at least one overnight at a hotel or the conference center at the Main Campus. A few of the Monroeville students could take some time off work, could make arrangements with their families, and were able to pay the lodging and registration fees. When they came back to class in Monroeville and told the others how exciting and interesting the AERC was—not just meeting people whose names they heard or read in the literature, but being part of ideas and new research—the other Monroeville students began to engage in speculative audacity.

Suddenly, I became the Man. They became the Lions. I remember how three students in particular began asking, “Why can’t we have those same people come here to Monroeville and give those same papers?” As the Man, I drew myself up to my full academic height, and the conversation went something like this:

“Most of these important people came a long way. From all parts of North America. Even Europe. They would never come back to give the same papers.”

“But why not, isn’t that part of the researchers job?” they asked.

Going for sympathy, I said, “Well, sort of, but professors and graduate students are poor, believe it or not, and they wouldn’t be able to afford to come back here.”

“So why don’t we just invite those from Pennsylvania? Couldn’t they drive here? Couldn’t we have it on a weekend? Pittsburgh is a big place. And it’s on the turnpike.”

“Okay, maybe some from Pennsylvania would come to our little Center, but—sorry—there is no conference to come to, no reason to come here. They are not going to come here just to speak to this class. So let’s move on.”

“So, why couldn’t we host a conference here and invite as many of the Pennsylvania researchers as will come to give the same papers?”

When a resounding, “Yeah, why not?” arose from the class, like a scene from a Judy Garland-Mickey Rooney movie, I dealt the ultimate academic blow: “It just doesn’t work that way.... The fact is that professors and graduate students don’t just go around giving the same paper twice.... Well, maybe some of us do.... Look, let’s drop that point.... Who will do all the work for this conference?”

“We will,” said the Students to the Man.

Much to my chagrin, here was observation, comparison, critical thinking, and speculative audacity. In effect, they were saying: “Students would fare better, if students were the artists.”

That is when I talked to Gary Dean at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, located a few miles away. A fellow Man in a similar palace, but a man with a lion’s heart. Thanks to a grant from Penn State and the cooperation of Indiana University of Pennsylvania—two rival universities working together, itself a radical concept—we held our first Pennsylvania ACERC Conference on October 8, 1994, at the Monroeville Graduate Center. The conference we are now part of came about because of student speculative audacity.

Turning now to the three annual conferences before this one, it is important to see how the theme of speculative audacity has developed. The keynote speech in year one, 1994, was by Henry Johnson from the Faculty of Education at Penn State University. He talked about trends in the public school in a speech he entitled, “Educational Research: You Can’t Get There from Here” (Johnson, 1995). His message was that education researchers have over-sold their capacity to solve even the most basic issues. Despite millions of dollars spent, millions of articles written, and countless tenure appointments made along the way, the field of public

schooling still does not know what motivates kids. It still does not know the best ways to teach, remediate, or evaluate. Henry raised some serious questions about the promises made and sold by education researchers in academe.

In 1995, at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Gary Dean gave a keynote address entitled, "Reality and Adult Education Research: Do Opposites Attract?" (Dean, 1995). [See Dean, p. 19] Dean raised some uncomfortable questions about how adult education academics have a great tendency to do what their university's graduate school apparently expects them to do on matters of research. Not to misinterpret his comments at that conference, but he was suggesting that this is the way fundamental-agreements-on-knowledge take place. It is not a matter of what our students, our students' research questions, or even our own history says. As Dean put it, we in the academe do what the Palace expects us to do.

Moving to the 1997 keynote speech at the ACERC held at Penn State, Main Campus, in State College, Pennsylvania, I would like to suggest that what Hal Beder said was in the same vein as Henry Johnson's earlier speech—only now aimed at adult education. Hal argued that adult education used to have several "Big Questions." As I remember it, these included issues such as participation and self-directed learning. His point was that these larger questions got nowhere in our field. We still have resolved little on these issues, and the Kellogg funding which went to support the big studies has gone the way of the big questions. As Beder told us, we now have a plethora of small-scale, typically qualitative, research studies across our field on a multitude of small questions. He was arguing that there is no sum of the parts. Worse, there is now little or no chance of pulling them together to resolve the larger issues in this field. However, as Beder said, there is a second, even deeper, problem in adult education research which has nothing to do with either method or size of the research study. The deeper question, he said, is the same as it was expressed back in the early *Handbooks of Adult Education*. Research simply does not inform practice in our field—not then, not now. Beder pointed out that much of adult education practice feels it does not really *need* our research. Like Henry Johnson, Beder suggested that unless there is significant change, academic researchers will never be of much value to practice.

Moving to today's conference, I would like to shed a few rays of hope. Whether or not I will be pitched out of the palace, I would like to pose some statements of a speculatively audacious nature.

Imagine

The memorial on the lawn for John Lennon in Central Park has only one word on it: “Imagine.” While rich in its artistry and its science, imagine that we—as a collective group of researchers and future researchers—had the Lion’s ability to see the palace of academic research as a place which does not include all realities. Hal Beder said we have lost the big questions on the big issues. I think the questions chosen in the late 1950s and through the 1960s were decided upon largely for funding and political reasons. I believe those questions were studied to no particular conclusion on a large quantitative scale in order to show the palace we belonged. That we have now run out of funding on these big questions is not entirely a bad thing, in my opinion. Beder said the field does not really *need* our research. Surely the very artificially created questions he referred to only help explain why academic research has come to be so irrelevant to the field .

Second, just imagine, as we wander in the palace of academe, if we were to believe that our field had a history of real value. Imagine what it would mean if we were not intimidated by what we see. Imagine that, instead of finding the politically acceptable, we chose to be proud of the fact that we have our own research experience and our own rich variety of methods—our own consensus. However, the risk that is conjured up by some is that we will never achieve the longed-for credibility that we have sought for so many decades within the palace walls. Adrian Blunt (1994) put the dilemma this way:

University adult education researchers have traditionally experienced a “catch 22” situation, with practitioners holding a negative attitude toward research as they judge the results to have contributed little of value to practice, and at the same time the reputation of adult education researchers in the university community has suffered because of their focus on applied research. (p. 184)

Let us look at this alleged danger of us tarnishing “the reputation of adult education researchers in the university community.”

Dare We Rethink Our Research History?

Imagine for one speculatively audacious moment that practitioner-

based research was considered of value among our academic community of adult education researchers. Let us fantasize for a minute that what some call “research-in-practice” (Quigley & Kuhne, 1997), meaning those practitioners conducting systematic research in their work place, as well as academically-based researchers working in close collaboration with practitioners, were to be proud advocates of an alternative perspective within the palace. If we had this beyond-the-gates volume in the story of our history, if more researchers valued this alternative truth as part of our own rich tradition, my guess is that we would be in a much better position to argue that adult educators have a right to our more complete research experience reflected on the palace walls. We could take greater pride in our own research history, which I want to re-interpret now. However, what about our valued “reputation” in the academy, as Blunt has warned?

There are already some Lions in the palace. Here’s a contrasting view by Alison Tom and Tom Sork (1994) which appears in the same book from which Blunt’s chapter was quoted. As they put it: “In general, the research that has been done in the academy is research that the academic community, rather than the community of practitioners, agrees is important and interesting to do” (p. 45). Therefore, Tom and Sork say, “The challenge is for practitioners and academic researchers to move toward a point of mutual respect and collaborative construction of research questions so that the valuable aspects of university-generated research are retained while the relevance of research to practitioners’ problems is increased” (p. 45). The challenge may be how to work with our own field rather than how to please the Palace authorities.

Let us look at the palace history of adult education research. When I did my doctoral studies, I was told that our academic history began with the “Black Book” of 1964 and that our research history in the U.S. actually began with scientists like Edward Thorndike. I learned later that, like most of the early behaviorists, much of Thorndike’s research was conducted on rats and pigeons. The foundational years for purposes of the palace history were years of creating the foundations of a profession (Cotton, 1964). However, as Arthur Wilson made clear in a 1992 AERC paper, the early handbooks, which are probably the best record of our academic founders’ vision of the field, invariably equated “professionalism” with science. For Adult Education to have “professional conduct” in those early years—for adult education to have “legitimate research”—it had to be informed by, and had to conform to, the scientific systems of the natural and social sciences of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

The point here is not that one methodology is wrong, another is right. My point is that scientific positivism was the academic hegemony, and the ensuing methodologies from this hegemony were the only ones acceptable for our field in our earliest years inside the palace walls. Although time has eroded this strong hegemony, there should be no question that we guarded the palace door ourselves against the unworthy methods of the untrained. Lions were not welcome.

Heated evidence of this gatekeeping role can be found in Budd Hall's 1979 paper entitled, "Participatory Research: Breaking the Academic Monopoly?" and William Griffith's scathing reply, "Participatory Research: Should it be a New Methodology for Adult Education?" (1979). Hall begins by talking about participatory research in a village in Africa and how practitioners worked with a research methodology to solve issues that mattered to them. Griffith replied: "If a survey is designed and administered and the results are analyzed by *villagers untrained* [italics added] in research methodology, its value rises in the opinion of participatory research." (p. 34). For Bill Griffith back in 1979, participatory research was just "experimentation without control groups" (p. 33). Two decades ago, there was little question as to what many academics deemed "worthy."

However, imagine what it would be like if Thorndike and a half a century of positivism was not the dominant foundational research legacy of this field. Even if many then and now would not approve, there is a body of literature little known and rarely used in our graduate courses. There are participatory research publications by people like Rajesh Tandon, Walter Fernandes, and Budd Hall (*Participatory Research and Evaluation: Experiments in Research as a Process of Liberation*, 1981) and Hall, Gillette, and Tandon (*Creating Knowledge: A Monopoly?*, 1982). However, these sources and dozens like them in adult education (and public education) continually ask, "Who should create and own knowledge?" However, the questions have been asked, and kept, at a safe distance from the palace walls. If one looks at the writing generated through the years by the Highlander Research and Education Center or reads the work of Dr. Moses Coady of the Antigonish Movement; or if one looks at the copious writings through history of systematic knowledge creation within the workers' education movement (Schied, 1993), the women's movement (Cunningham, 1989), or the civil rights movement (Neufeldt & McGee, 1990), to name the most obvious; or if one turns to the even larger range of research publications on international development—or on economic and agricultural research—conducted by adult educators in developing countries up to and including work today (Deshler, 1989), it

is obvious that an alternative research history has been alive and well just beyond the gates.

One does not have to leave the institutional setting to find even more examples. The training and development literature, such as W. F. Whytes' book, *Participatory Action Research* (1991), will reveal reports on participatory research and participatory action research in Xerox Corporation and other major corporations. One can go directly back to Kurt Lewin's work with volunteer organizations in which he used action research in the late 1940s and onwards. The fact is that the field-based tradition of practitioner research in its many forms from so many venues of adult education would dwarf the mainstream research literature. However, if they are not allowed in, do they exist? Little wonder how the Lion's history was left off the palace walls.

The Walls are Coming Down

Happily, even the Adult Education old guard view is changing. The postmodernists would agree with T. S. Eliot that "things fall apart." Edward Taylor has shown in a 1993 AERC paper entitled, "Gatekeeping and the AEQ: An Inside View" how our methodology has moved from quantitative to qualitative through the 1980s. An AERC panel I organized at the University of Saskatchewan in 1992 with Roger Boshier, Vanessa Sheared, and Elizabeth Kasl showed how AERC papers moved from quantitative to qualitative with a definite shift about 1984 (Quigley, Boshier, Sheared, & Kasl, 1992). It showed that the research papers given moved from male dominated to an equal balance between males and females toward the mid-1980s. David Deshler, John Peters, and Phyllis Cunningham have been challenging the mainstream assumptions for years by asking what the participatory researchers like Hall and Tandon were asking back in the '70s: "Who owns knowledge?" and "Who should produce it?" Within the past decade researchers within feminist pedagogy, phenomenological research, reflective research, and the very deconstruction of research have all led to challenges of what was believed to be sacred within the palace. This has evolved to the point where Roger Boshier, once a staunch positivist, wrote in 1994: "In adult education, as elsewhere, there is no doubt that the postmodern turn has opened space for 'other voices'" (p.103).

However, while the door of the palace has opened a crack, the fact is that—just outside the gates—the lions are romping with more vigor than ever. The movement, which has people like me excited right now, is found in adult literacy education. Over the past ten years state-wide and institu-

tional research-in-practice projects using action research, participatory research, and practitioner inquiry have begun to appear. The results are being shared on a state-wide as well as on a national basis. One such project in Pennsylvania is the Philadelphia-based PALPIN—the Pennsylvania Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Network—which uses both a face-to-face model and the internet to connect research participants. A project now in its third year, called PA-ARN—the Pennsylvania Action Research Network—flourishing out of its home base in Pittsburgh to reach all parts of the state. PA-ARN produces a statewide newsletter, it publishes monographs on all of its completed projects for statewide dissemination, and the follow-up studies on both practitioner and supervisor satisfaction are enough to make a believer out of the most cynical (Quigley & Doyle, 1997a, 1997b).

Allow me to share a few more examples to make this point. Other state-wide action research programs include the work out of Literacy South, North Carolina; the Colorado Department of Education's Action Research Project; the Michigan State Literacy Resource Center Literacy program; and several state-wide and national projects out of California, some of which are on the internet. Columbia Teachers College continues with a program started in 1989 by Jack Mezirow called Promising Practices for Literacy (see Quigley & Kuhne, 1997). I have just completed a survey project looking at region-wide action research literacy programs in Australia (Quigley, 1998) where action research projects communicate through the internet nation-wide to share proposals and results on literacy. The Adult Literacy Research Network in Melbourne, the University of Technology-Sydney regional project, the Adult Literacy Research project in Adelaide, the Adult Literacy project in Hobart, Adult Literacy at Victoria University of Technology in Melbourne, and The University of Western Australia are all involved (Quigley, 1998). I also included several U.S. projects as well. Meanwhile, I am involved in the research-in-practice movement in literacy which is growing rapidly in Canada.

Going beyond North America, the UNESCO publication, *Alpha 94* (1994), edited by Jean-Paul Hautecouer, is an excellent source which reports on literacy and community action research projects around the globe, including southern Spain, where one has been developed by the gypsy population; Portugal; rural Italy; Turkey; Greece; Belgium; and the U.K.; as well as projects in 6 countries in East Europe and locations as far flung as Chile and the Northwest Territories of Canada. We have an alternative history of research based on the real needs of learners conducted by practitioner-researchers, sometimes in collaboration with academic researchers, sometimes not.

Research for the Future of Our Field

How should we proceed into the future? Sharan Merriam wrote something in her chapter on research in John Peter's and Peter Jarvis's *Adult Education: Evolution and Achievements in an Emerging Field of Study* (1991) which is unlike anything one could have found two decades ago in a major text or in any of the earlier handbooks. This chapter explicitly says the field must respond to a concern for ethics. This is a new term to be heard in our little wing of the palace. She says there is a *moral responsibility* in research. Perhaps the most influential writer in our field in North America, Merriam is talking about research criteria in terms other than external and internal threats to validity. The central issue is ethics and morals, not validity and method. She also equates research with other activities in graduate teaching: "Programs of graduate study should present research as a value-laden, moral activity—just as other things we do, such as plan programs, teach, and counsel learners, are moral activities" (Merriam, 1991, p. 61).

With changes such as these, the time is right, I think, to make some recommendations in this field. Here, then, are my recommendations for the future. First, we should teach graduate students to conduct research back on the job—not just teach research for the job of finishing a dissertation or a thesis. Adult education professors have been ready to challenge almost everything in the palace but research. The palace model of lecturing has been challenged with the holy koran of andragogy held high. We have railed against the administrative models of higher education as being dehumanizing to our adult learners on campus. We continually talk about the need for *relevance* in education. I am recommending we teach relevance in research and do so with methods such as action research and participatory research, to name but two that lend themselves to practice, so our students can do a better job in research, not just teaching and programming, back home. There is surely a moral responsibility to do so.

Secondly, we in the palace need to advocate for the inclusion of such research methods as action research and participatory research at the dissertation and thesis table. It is not good enough to advocate for participatory and action research in everyday practice and not advocate for them as valid, historically accepted methods for enhancing the knowledge base of this practice-based field.

If these two suggestions would become reality—that graduate adult education programs teach relevant research methods based on practitioner-based problems and elevate action research and participatory re-

search at the thesis/dissertation table—I believe we will have put our field on the shared road to practitioner-academic research (Tom & Sork, 1994). Rather than agonize over why practitioners do not value or use the research we create, we would be identifying and working on actual, jointly agreed upon problems. Surely working in collaborative ways through informed practice is what our field's traditions are truly about (Merriam & Brockett, 1997).

But what about Blunt's concern for our image in the palace? Will academics suffer if we focus on applied research too much, or—God forbid — if we open the gates and join with the masses? Sharon Merriam discovered in her comprehensive survey of the adult education research literature in 1991: “Interestingly, the debate in the current research literature is not over whether or how to bring about an integration of paradigms but rather about the extent to which research methods characteristic of particular paradigms can or should be mixed and matched” (p. 60). We are beyond finding “best methods,” if her findings are to be accepted. The debate now is how to create the best knowledge “by mixing and matching” methods. Can the issue of who should be “allowed” to do this work be far behind?

In closing, I believe we can use speculative audacity to have our paintings—all of our paintings—on the walls. As Merriam has found, we can argue for the particular research methods characteristic of particular paradigms even if those paradigms are not fully understood—or fully accepted. In these times we can agree to have disagreement and still go forward. I have spent almost thirty years as an adult educator on both sides of the Canadian-U.S. border. The first twenty were as a practitioner. Somehow, for those twenty years I managed to “cope,” to do my job as a teacher, a programmer, a community-developer, an administrator, and a public servant in government—all this with little or no reference to adult education research. I was not unusual. Research was something that went on in universities. It was not part of the reality of the many adult education groups to which I have belonged through time. How I wish it would have been otherwise. How I wish I could have been able to inform what others and I were doing with research—research we created together. How much better if I had been able to modify and apply the research of others in these settings. Why can we not have a future with research built by practitioners and researchers together? As John Erskine once put it, “Until we can see the world through another's eyes, we haven't budged an inch.”

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