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People in discursive spaces : entry-level humanities education for non-traditional adult learners

Czank, James M.

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People in Discursive Spaces:
Entry-Level Humanities Education for Non-Traditional
Adult Learners

by

James M. Czank

Faculty of Education
Lakehead University
Thunder Bay Ontario

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Abstract

In Canada there are programs that offer non-traditional adult learners an entry-level university educational experience. These programs have various names, for example, Humanities 101, University 101, Discovery University and University in the Community. They are intended to better the lives of learners and claim to focus on the liberatory and emancipatory potential of education (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010a). This institutional ethnography investigated how the experiences of those involved in the programs related to the fundamental concepts associated with such programs through an analysis of program documentation and interviews with people participating in the programs. The findings suggested that the current offerings of Humanities 101 are delivered as an extension of formal education in that they support objectification of students and asymmetrical power relations, which continue to affect the adult learners and the classroom.

Key words: Discourse, Adult Education, Humanities Education, Power, Institutional Ethnography, Non-traditional Learners.

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Chapter 1

The foci of this study were two Canadian free entry-level humanities programs for non-traditional adult learners. Such programs have been offered in several places across the United States, Canada, Australia, and Mexico (Groen, 2005). Here in Canada, these programs are typically referred to as Humanities 101, although programs have also been called Discovery University and University in the Community. They arise in opposition to narrowly conceived conceptions that link adult learning with economic advancement. Instead they purport to advance notions of success tied to “strengthening local communities” and “social and community justice” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2009, p. 101).

Each of the twelve programs in Canada offers a unique interpretation of delivery and content, but all seek to provide non-traditional adult learners with access to “significant texts, ideas, professors and classroom dialogue” (Meredith, 2011, p. 8). Most of the Canadian programs resist the use of the traditional humanities canon, recognizing the value of incorporating feminist, indigenous and post-modern perspectives into the curriculum (p. 9). Meredith referred to the Canadian programs as “nourishing learning environments,” in a unique position to “counter neo-liberalism and lend their experiential knowledge to a struggling public education sphere that is being overwhelmed by the forces of capitalism” (p. 58).

The students of these programs are often typified as socially or educationally disadvantaged and marginalized beings (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010b, p.10), with characteristics that often include: “an experience with homelessness, low-income, social isolation, long-term physical or mental illness and/or past negative experiences with the formal learning environment” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2007, p. 1). They are identified as such even before entering the programs since they come as referrals from social service agencies that deal

with people with the above characteristics. Thus, on a very factual level, the terms “disadvantaged” and “marginalized” have become accepted as descriptors of the students of Humanities 101. They must be identified as such to participate in Humanities 101.

Each of the two courses involved in this research was offered one night a week over the course of a semester. They both ran for approximately three hours per week. Neither program limited itself to a Humanities focus but each offered expanded course content that included professional studies, social science, and science. There was a series of lectures, but the topic, and the instructor, changed every week. The classes took place in the larger and more encompassing space of the university and within the socio-political-cultural realities of the communities involved. The programs each had a director who was aided by additional staff. These people organized and assisted in the supports put in place to help the adult learners overcome some of the hurdles they faced in attending. For example, transit fare, child care, and course materials were provided, and classes typically started off with a meal to encourage student participation.

In this study the concept of Humanities 101 was treated as an institution and institutional ethnography methods were applied to examine how Humanities 101 was carried out, shaped, and understood. The intention was to examine the influence this institutional idea had on the people involved. The experiences of the people involved in these programs and the literature surrounding these programs were examined to interpret the overall concepts behind free entry-level humanities programs for non-traditional adult learners and how the interpretation of these concepts was understood by the people involved. The question that distinguished this research was simplified to this: *How do the experiences of those involved in Humanities 101 relate to the institution known as Humanities 101?*

In this study I frequently refer to “Discourse.” The term discourse typically means regular communications (either written or spoken) that provide a definition to a historical moment, situation, or episteme. The word, used as a noun designates a treatise on a subject, and used as a verb refers to speaking or writing (Yon, 2000, p. 3). In this study the word Discourse, when capitalized, was used to mean “Discourse” as described in the work of Foucault. It is the way it has been used in other institutional ethnographies. In this sense it means a “strategy that gives rise to a certain organization of knowledge,” and a “coherence, rigor, and stability, theme or theory” (Foucault, 1972, p. 64). In this document I capitalize the word Discourse to indicate that I am using the word in the Foucauldian sense to distinguish it from popular usage.

My Position as a Researcher

Our research and writing interests emerge from and reflect our lives (Richardson, 2001). Like many of the students of Humanities 101, I first entered university as a non-traditional mature student. I enrolled when I was somewhere around 30. I came from poor working class roots, which, comes with “its own set of social symbols, feelings of political (in)significance, dispositions, and values, stemming from a perceived subordinate position in society” (Dunk, 1991). I grew up thinking of the university as a place where I did not belong, as a place only for privileged and super smart people. I have lived around the poverty line, and I know what it is like to feel insignificant and subordinate on both a cultural and social level. I was never an overly conventional person. I have known bikers, bouncers, thieves, drug dealers, and “lunatics” (the scale of “lunacy” ranged from the comical to the criminal). I called many of them friends. On the other end of the spectrum, I have rubbed shoulders with entrepreneurs, executives, prominent intellectuals, and politicians. It is in a rather exotic mix of influences that I have become me (Wagamese, 2011, p. 158).

My life experiences provided me with a certain amount of “cultural capital” when it came to this study. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) referred to cultural capital as “the disposition(s) of one’s mind and body.” It comes at us in an objectified form as cultural goods – the pictures we associate with, the books we read, the instruments we use, and the institutions we take part in. An extension of this would be the people we associate with, the stories we tell, the things we value, and the institutions we do not take part in. It is through our culture that reinforcing properties are conferred upon us. This is not to claim that I could identify with everyone’s situation and location. The struggles I have faced in life do not reach the rigor of some. I do not know what it is to live in complete poverty, nor to suffer through serious addictions, nor to live as a visible minority. Still, my life experiences helped to break down barriers between myself and many of the research participants.

In hindsight, it is not surprising that a program created to help disadvantaged and marginalized adult learners overcome the hurdles they face, not only educationally but socially as well, was of interest to me. Where I differ from many of the Humanities 101 participants is my inspiration to enter university came in the form of Pirsig’s “Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance” (1974). The book is punctuated by a few philosophical discussions, including an attempt at defining the metaphysics of Quality. It challenged my thinking and pushed me to critically evaluate my life. Shortly thereafter, I enrolled in philosophy at Lakehead University.

Philosophy introduced me to new ideas and theories. A good example was Marx, and his account of how and why our society is the way it is. A myriad of different philosophers has influenced my thinking, including Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche. In my various roles with Humanities 101 I have tried to share their ideas with the students, including life

lessons from Plato's "Allegory of the Cave." I see the allegory as a good platform to challenge the students thinking and push them to critically evaluate their life.

I became involved with Humanities 101 as part of my university education. I have volunteered with Humanities 101, fulfilled my graduate assistance hours through it, taught classes, and assigned projects. I have served as a program assistant, and during the 2016 – 2017 university year I served as an acting Program Director. During my involvement I have encountered tragic personal stories and shared in the sense of accomplishment and success the students felt when they completed the program. I have pushed them to use their voices, to tell their stories, and I have shared my own. Therefore, in this context, I am an insider to this study. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) suggested that a researcher is an insider, when she or he shares the characteristics, roles, and/or the experiences being studied with the participants. "Insider research refers to when researchers conduct research with populations of which they are also members, so that the researcher shares an identity, language, and experiential base with the study participants" (p. 35). I am an insider to this research based on my experience with Humanities 101.

Before entering into this study, I was familiar with the logic and theory of liberatory forms of pedagogy as I had published and presented papers in the area. What was new to this research was the interaction with people participating in the process, enabling me to make connections between theory and the participants, the sine qua non of this research project and its broader contexts. Rather than unpacking the themes in the arguments and meaning, I take the next step toward fitting claims and accounts and experiences with theoretical settings.

The Reasoning Behind the Research

During my time with Humanities I have witnessed disjuncture between the everyday organization of students' lives and the implementation of Humanities 101. At various times students articulated a perception that the program was not engaging in a meaningful examination of their reality and was not meeting their needs. There were times when students openly vented their frustration with the subject matter. At other times they would simply remain quiet and sit disengaged.

A recollection of the first time I noticed disjuncture: A student pointed out how the topic of a class was not all that relevant to him. He faced hurdles and suffered in his everyday life, and he was adamant that the topic was not addressing this, nor did it align with the reasons for him being in Humanities 101.

I undertook this study to understand this disjuncture. I examined the material informing the programs and conducted interviews with students, instructors, and administrators. I observed the programs in action. Then I used the data to unpack and examine the reality of a subset of entry-level humanities education for non-traditional learners. I explored the experiences of those involved with Humanities 101, and examined how those experiences related to the fundamental concept of Humanities 101. Although individual programs do differ according to the challenges, opportunities, and unique needs of students and communities, the framing of the data and my experiences with Humanities 101 was relevant beyond the unique programs studied.

Overview

This report follows a “clear logic of inquiry” (AERA, 2006) by following established standards for reporting on empirical social science research:

Research should follow a clear logic of inquiry that allows readers to trace the path from 1) the initial statement of the problem, issue, or interest; to 2) the review of the relevant scholarship and intellectual orientation of the study; to 3) the research questions initiated and/or developed in the study; to 4) the description of the site, group, and/or participants (demographic information); to 5) the methodology guiding collection and 6) analysis of data evidence; to 7) the interpretation and presentation of outcomes and understandings gained from the research process. (pp. 34-35)¹

As guided by these standards, this chapter was intended to provide Item 1: the initial statement of the problem, issue, or interest. The remaining chapters combine the elements described above as follows:

Chapter 2 Literature Review - Item 2 (The review of the relevant scholarship). The literature review is comprised of two parts. The first part is an account of the theories and ideas which inform entry-level courses in the humanities for non-traditional adult learners. The second part provides a contextual overview of entry-level courses in the humanities for non-traditional adult learners. It details the Clemente Course, Humanities 101, and the programs as they are practiced in Canada today. It also includes a look at other studies involving Humanities 101.

Chapter 3 Methods and Methodology - Items 3 (research questions developed) and 5 (methodology). The details of the research process, including an introduction to the design of this study includes information on the collection and analysis of data, coding, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 Findings - Items 4 (description of the site and participants) and 6 (analysis of data evidence). Included in this chapter is an account of the findings, including summaries of the

¹ I added the numbering system to this quote to treat these processes as separate items clearly articulated in the organizational flow of this document.

program documents, the interviews, my personal reflections on a Humanities 101 program, and a discussion of the data and its significance.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions- Item 7 (interpretation and presentation of outcomes). This chapter includes critical analysis, a conclusion and recommendations that could be applied to humanities programs to make them more integrated with the espoused needs of the students themselves, and a statement on future research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

This Literature Review is comprised of two parts. The first part develops a background for understanding the context and delivery of entry-level programs in the humanities for non-traditional adult learners. This includes the Discourse, in Foucault's sense of the word, which forms the characterizations typically ascribed to the approach. The second part offers a description of specific examples of entry-level programs in the humanities for non-traditional adult learners, and some of the research related to this study. I start with the original course (the Clemente Course), then describe Humanities 101, and each of the twelve programs now operating in Canada.

Humanities Programs and Adult Education

“The Canadian Encyclopedia” explains adult education as a body of organized educational processes reflecting a “specific philosophy of learning and teaching based on the assumption that adults can and want to learn, that they are able and willing to ... and that the learning itself should respond to their needs” (English & Draper, 2013, para. 3). In the broadest sense, adult education is the experience by which adults acquire knowledge, skill, and understanding. It is a way to provide adults with technical and practical skills.

Adult education has been viewed as a means of social reform and criticism (Cincinnati et al., 2016; Sandberg et al., 2016; Stein, 2014; Carpenter & Mojab, 2013; Gibb, et al., 2013; Nesbit, 2013, Nesbit et al., 2013; Meredith, 2011), a venue for liberation (Groen & Kawalilak, 2014; Meredith, 2011), an opportunity for citizenship education (Schugurensky, 2013; Meredith, 2011; Nussbaum, 2009), and an ongoing event in “transformative learning” (Groen & Kawalilak, 2014; Hyland-Russell & Groen, 2008; O’Sullivan et al., 2002; Kegan, 2000). These

characterizations of adult education form the background and delivery model of entry-level programs in the humanities for non-traditional adult learners, like Humanities 101.

Adult education and social reform. Groen and Kawalilak (2013) traced adult education in Canada from earlier eras to our current academic culture and milieu, and suggested that contemporary adult education in Canada is about voices of indignation and social critique of the situations that people find themselves in (pp. 29-35). Nesbit, Brigham, Taber, and Gibb (2013) situated adult education in Canada in much the same way, and said adult education is only understandable as it relates to its purpose, which “rests on a particular view of peoples’ beliefs and capabilities and the sort of society they wish to create” (p. 355).

What the above scholars are characterizing is adult education with a focus on social reform, the intent of which is to create an “involved, informed, and creative society” (Nesbit et al., 2013, p. 355). Nesbit (2013) even likened adult education to a social movement, because of its roots in social reform. Adult education has been aligned with race (Atleo, 2013; Brigham, 2013), gender and sexuality (English, 2013; Grace, 2013; Taber, 2013), class and socio-economics (Butterwick, 2013), and more generally with emancipation movements, organized labor, and human rights.

In some cases, this form of adult education fulfills the public mission of Canadian universities by increasing their capacity and ability to deliver continuing education to adults who cannot or do not wish to enroll in degree-bearing programs (Nesbit, 2013, p. 9). It opens universities to non-traditional adult learners, defined by Nesbit as: “women, ethnic, and racial minorities, and those from working-class backgrounds” (pp. 8-9). The entry-level programs in the humanities for non-traditional adult learners that are the focus of this study are prime examples of this.

One of the elements that distinguish such approaches in adult education from traditional and formal notions of education is the web of relationships involving families, places, communities, and cultures they often entail (Nesbit, 2013, p. 7). The thought is that, by acknowledging these elements of a person's life, education can address the complexities of a person's life. This opens adult education up to appreciating and redressing inequality and the development of critical consciousness. Nesbit, Brigham, Taber, and Gibb (2013) underscored this as an ethical stance of adult education. This ethical stance has become a large part of the Humanities 101 idiom.

The focus on social reform as part of adult education is often "directive." In the work of Sandberg et al. (2016), this direction takes the form of shaping adult students into desirable subjects. Adult education is regarded as a space for displaced and abnormal citizens to gain temporary stability. Similarly, Cincinato et al. (2016) treat adult education as a key condition and component for individual and social development, and Stein (2014) sees adult education as a critique of social, educational, and political policy with an eye towards improvement. In "Teaching Adult Education History in a Time of Uncertainty and Hope" (Brown, 2010) adult education was ascribed the defining purpose of supporting democracy and social change, and assisting adults in achieving self-actualization. This sort of adult education is invariably and inseparably tied to the ethical stance detailed above, that is, the experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and capabilities of its students, and their place in society.

The focus of such approaches to adult education is either the expectation that education can change the lives of the people being included in the programs by helping them to adapt to the Discourse evident in the society around them, that is, the focus is on changing the individuals,

not changing society. Or, adult education is about changing society to better meet the needs of the individual.

The step from changing the individual to fit society to changing society itself has long been a tenet of more critical and radical forms of adult education. As described by Carpenter and Mojab (2013), in more critical forms of adult education the spotlight is on social critique, resistance, and change. In this sense, education is treated as an opportunity to activate docile or passive people. It is about active bodies embedded in social processes, described as “revolutionary praxis,” defined by actions underpinned by revolutionary ideas and ideas given life through revolutionary action (p. 167). Groen and Kawalilak (2013) described it as turning the gaze of people outward, to focus on “collective conscientization, praxis, and action for social change” (p. 82).

There is a distinction to be made between critical forms of adult education and what is commonly known as critical pedagogy. Carpenter and Mojab (2013) and Collins (2006) have identified the difference. Collins (2006) described critical pedagogy as the “socialism of the academe” (p. 121), distinguishing it from critical adult education which involves active engagement with the politics of change and action. Collins work does not diminish, what he called, the contributions of critical pedagogy in understanding the ways “unequal relationships of power [function], the predominance of technical rationality, [or] the commodification of everything we value” (p. 121). He simply emphasizes the active and engaged politics of change and revolutionary praxis inherent to critical adult education. The critical notions of adult education are grounded in Marxism, and neo-Marxists such as Gramsci, Althusser, and Freire (Groen & Kawalilak, 2014, p. 86).

Critical pedagogy does belong in a conversation about adult education with a focus on social reform. It belongs to the critical characterizations applied to Humanities 101. Critical pedagogy evolved out of the desire to give shape and coherence to the theoretical landscape that underpins the emancipatory potential of education. It arose out of the desire to stimulate the capacity of educators to engage with the realities and impacts of “capitalism and gendered, racialized, and homophobic relations, on students from historically disenfranchised populations” (Darder, et al., 2009, p. 2). Critical pedagogy operates through the related ideas that education is inherently political, never neutral, and a site of power and liberation. Knowledge is treated as historically and socially rooted, interest bound, and a construction deep-seated in a nexus of power relations. As such, critical pedagogy teems with ideas of resistance, counter-hegemony, dialogue, and dialectics (Darder, et al., 2009; McLaren, 2009). Critical pedagogy advocates an exploration and critique of how education perpetuates and reproduces power relations, and operates within a Discourse that removes the burden of failure from individual students, and looks for other and more systemic reasons for these failures (Merriam & Brockett, 2007, p. 45).

The roots of critical pedagogy lie in the critical theories of the Frankfurt School of philosophy and social critique. Critical pedagogy is also directly associated with Freire, who, according to Johnson and Morris (2010), brought “a fiercely Marxist approach to [it]” (p. 79). The reasons they gave for their assertion include Freire developing a pedagogical method and philosophy of education to counter the “hegemonic oppression” of banking approaches to education, and Freire providing educators with methods and context specific approaches that allow teachers and students to use dialogue in an effort to achieve critical consciousness (‘conscientização’ or conscientisation) (pp. 79-80). Critical pedagogy has a body of literature

that aims to provide a means for the oppressed to reflect and act on their socio-economic circumstances (p. 79).

Popular Education is a “current” in adult education that was created as an “option for the poor” (Arnold & Burke, 1983, p. 7). It too was derived from the Freirean notion of *conscientização*, or education for critical-consciousness. It too has been used to define Humanities 101 (Meredith, 2011). It is also commonly conflated with critical pedagogy. Popular education shares its methodologies and techniques with other forms of adult education, especially critical forms of adult education and critical pedagogy, with the qualification that “while many adult education programs are designed to maintain social systems, even when unjust and oppressive, popular education's intent is to build an alternative educational approach that is more consistent with social justice” (p. 7).

Differing from critical pedagogy, popular education is its own alternative educational paradigm. Popular education is an educational approach by social groups to gain autonomy and promote their independence as social actors. Education occurs in a horizontal fashion rather than the vertical fashion of more formal learning environments, including critical pedagogy. From a methodological standpoint, popular education deals with what has been called “active and participatory modalities” (Hadad, 2003). The term popular conveys a concern for the interests of “ordinary” people. As Flowers (2004) explains, the notion of “popular” refers less to the idea of education *for* the people, and it comes with an assumption of conflict between the interests of the powerful and ruling classes, and the interests of ordinary people and grassroots community groups (p. 2).

As Arnold and Burke (1983) suggest, the “role of the facilitator” in popular education reflects the main characteristics of popular education. It is pedagogy where everyone teaches,

and everyone learns, so leadership is shared. “The experience of the participants is the starting point – so there is a joint creation of knowledge; there is no 'expert' - but rather mutual respect for the knowledge and experience all participants bring to the process” (p. 13). With the participants the facilitator develops the ideas and skills that they turn into an action. A central tenet of popular education is a commitment to action on the part of everyone involved.

Great Thoughts of the Past: A Liberal Education

Contrary to focusing on voices of indignation and critiquing situations people find themselves in, a liberal education is about the cultural achievements of the past and preparing students for the “exigencies” of the future (Freedman, 1997). Some of the stated intentions of the programs involved in this study would appear to place them firmly in the context of liberal education. There is support for this. According to Meredith (2011), there is enough of a connection between humanities education and liberal education to use the terms interchangeably. Both areas are crucial to democracy and adequately reflective citizens; and, as Nussbaum (1998) identified, “both arise in the spirit of Socratic self-examination and Senecan self-cultivation” (p. 45).

Groen and Kawalilak (2013) referred to liberal education as the “predominant orientation in the Western world” (p. 78). A decidedly non-vocational approach, liberal education is about the greatest thoughts of Western cultural traditions, its history, literature, art, and philosophy. Liberal education theory is premised on the maxim that knowledge can set you free (Lange, 2006). The role of educators, and the point of education, is to fully develop the rational and moral capacities of the learners and foster the virtues of justice, fortitude, temperance, and prudence (p. 96). As such, liberal education has even been referred to as a cultivation of humanity (Emberely & Newell, 1994). The “essential capacities” of a liberal education, as defined by Nussbaum (1998), situate the pedagogical approach:

1. The capacity for critical examination of oneself and one's traditions. Socrates' "examined life" requires the ability to reason logically, to test what one hears, reads, or says for consistency, accuracy, and judgment. (para. 24)
2. The ability to see oneself as a human being bound to other human beings, tied by common needs and aims. (para. 29)
3. The capacity for "narrative imagination," that is, the capacity to think what it might be like in another's shoes and to have empathy. (para. 35)

Because a thing like education is inseparable from how it is done and performed, it is also useful to take into account hooks' (1994) insight into the teaching perspective of liberal education. She said liberal education means sharing in the intellectual and spiritual growth of one's students, and teaching in a manner that respects and cares for their well-being.

Returning to the notion of the greatest thoughts of Western cultural traditions, liberal education has been linked to the ancient humanists, such as the Renaissance humanist Vergerio, who said:

[The] meaning [of a liberal education] is... [studies] which are worthy of a free man [sic]; those studies by which we attain and practice virtue and wisdom; that education which calls forth, trains and develops those highest gifts of body and of mind which ennoble men, and which are rightfully judged to rank next in dignity to virtue only. (Vergerio, as cited in Nussbaum, 2009, p. 71)

Similarly, in Seneca:

An education is truly liberal – by which he means connected to freedom (*libertas*) – only if it is one that liberates the student's mind, encouraging him or her to take charge

of his or her own thinking, leading to a Socratic, examined life, and becoming a reflective critic of traditional practices. (Seneca, as cited in Nussbaum, 1998, p. 38)

In this context, the intent of education is neither social reform nor resistance. The intent of education is a better understanding of the self in the context of society. Central to this are the humanities.

The humanities confront issues of interest to liberal educators and theorists. These issues of interest are defined by Nussbaum (2002) as “the problem of how to live with dignity as a rational animal, in a world of events we do not fully control” (p. 39). Although different humanities disciplines have different content and methods, differences which also abound within each discipline, it is all held together by this theme and problem.

Like adult education and social reform, the nature of liberal education is directive. In Groen and Kawalilak (2013) this is referred to as the positive growth experience of liberal education. The idea is that we, as humans, have a potential for goodness, and that we have an underlying quest to become self-actualized, a felt need to create a better world, and a desire to achieve the highest good (p. 36). They also identified an assumptive nature of liberal education, especially as it has to do with individuals’ views on development, education, and change (p. 36). Much of this informs the orientation of the programs involved in this study.

The prominence of adult liberal education has to a large degree been eclipsed by other educational approaches and orientations that are more in keeping and congruent with contemporary times (Merriam & Brockett, 2007, p. 33). Yet, the liberal and humanities tradition remains in Great Books programs offered by universities, in continuing education programs, and community-based programs like Humanities 101 (p. 34). Nussbaum (2000) went so far as to suggest that traditional humanities have an increased relevance in our modern era due to our over reliance on technical and vocational ways of dealing with matters that concern our humanity.

A Concern for Citizen Life: Citizenship Education

Humanities programs have also been described as organized with the intent of showing poor and disenfranchised people the way to the life of a citizen, that is, “citizen life” as public life or the *vita active* (Meredith, 2011, p. 53). This brings citizenship education into the picture. Construed broadly, citizenship education is the preparation of people for their roles and responsibilities as citizens. In particular, it has to do with the role education plays in the preparatory process of effective citizenry (Kerr, 2000, p. 201). The movement between the classics and the modern world, as described by liberal educators, presupposes a citizenship outcome. But citizenship education includes a broad range of political and pedagogical institutions, goals, and practices that go beyond liberal and humanities education. Citizenship education is education for citizens inclusive of at least four dimensions: status, identity, civic virtues, and agency (Schugurensky, 2013, pp. 68 – 72):

1. Citizenship education premised on status emphasizes formal membership to a political community.
2. Citizenship education premised on identity stresses nation building and an assimilation of groups into the larger whole.
3. Citizenship education premised on the development of civic virtues emphasizes values and dispositions.
4. Citizenship education premised on agency promotes an active, engaged, and committed citizenry. “These programs... conceive [of people] as active citizens who can become... masters of the own destiny” (p. 72).

The overarching aim of citizenship education is to nurture citizens as political subjects. This means “community development initiatives” that foster and nurture “self-reliance, empowerment, grassroots democracy, and social transformation” (Schugurensky, 2013, p. 72).

Citizen life is active and critical life. In Nussbaum (2009) we see how citizenship education can be distinguished from traditional notions of education, like learning basic skill sets, like literacy and numeracy, or even the more advanced skill sets having to do with technology, science, and commerce. Citizenship education is said to be about active citizenship, which means understanding the society we are part of, realizing our place within it, and learning skills like critical thinking. The cultivation of these associations is treated as pertinent to a student's personal development, with the goal of producing citizens with a sense of civic rights and responsibilities. This was reflected in Meredith's (2011) statement about the life of a citizen, that is, "citizen life" as public life or the *vita active*.

We see in citizenship education more generally the presumption that human nature only comes fully to light when the connection between humanity and society is elaborated. Like Aristotle's *zoon politikon*, this suggests that human life is incomplete apart from its active membership in civic associations and relationships. In the context of the humanities programs involved in this study, this becomes of particular importance because the context is of "marginalized people who may or may not have legislated or perceived rights in their community" (Meredith, 2011, p. 46). From the perspective of citizenship educators, collectivism and a community of enquiry in which to discuss social issues is crucial. Johnson and Morris (2010) use this view to link citizenship education to critical pedagogy, suggesting that self-emancipation is inseparable from social emancipation; "an approach to pedagogy which focuses on the collective is central" (p. 82). Citizenship education has an explicitly critical angle, and although it does not cover all the elements of critical pedagogy, it does "provide the conditions for collective social change" (p. 86).

Citizenship education does this through critical and structural social analysis, including analysis of asymmetrical power relations, and even the effects of colonization and decolonization. It engages with ideology and politics, and the participatory and reflective elements of praxis. It uses these elements to actively examine relationships between a person's behavior in society and structures of social injustice that influence him or her (Johnson & Morris, 2010, p. 86).

Nussbaum (2006) used the allegory of a parrot being sent to school and force fed from the textbooks (literally) and eventually dying to explain the notion of education for citizenship. Like education for citizenship, her allegory is about building outward from “a spirit of respect for [a person's] freedom and individuality rather than [a] hierarchal imposition of information” (p. 393). Rather than having students, who like the parrot “are so completely choked with the leaves from textbooks that [they] can neither whistle nor whisper” (p. 393), the aim of citizenship education is transformation through education.

It's About Transformation: Transformative Learning

Humanities 101 programs have been called transformative because of the significant shifts they elicit in the learners, shifts to their beliefs, their values, and underlying assumptions (Hyland-Russell & Groen, 2008). In “Radical Humanities: A Pathway toward Transformational Learning for Marginalized Non-traditional Adult Learners” (Hyland-Russell & Groen, 2010b), they are called “transformational” because of “the shift from disengagement to hopeful engagement in the learning process and their pursuit of lifelong learning” (p.5) the adults enrolled in radical Humanities Programs experienced. Groen and Kawalilak (2013) provide a little context for the notion of transformative learning:

When you hear the word transform, you probably connect it to the idea of change – not just superficial change, but substantial and deep change. As an aside, not all learning is about significant change. (p. 153)

If, as Scott (2006) has suggested, “transform means to change or go beyond or across structure” (p. 153), then the intention of transformative learning, and thus the humanities programs involved in this study, is complete metamorphosis.

Transformative learning has been described as “elegant in its simplicity” (Cranton & King, 2003. p. 23). Intimately connected to the process of everyday existence and living, its basic premise is that as we go on with our lives we absorb values, assumptions, and beliefs about how things are. These things lead to questioning, or critical self-reflection, and new experiences. This produces meaning and pushes us to consider our own views in a new light. The process does not have to be linear or sequential, or even appear to be logical, according to Cranton and King (2003), but it is a rational process of that engages the ‘fit’ of our previously held views. Ideas and evidence from others and our experiences push us to consider our views and beliefs in a new light, to test if they are broad enough, open enough, and account for new experiences (p. 32).

Power, class, race, gender, bodily awareness, alternative approaches to living, and our sense of social justice, peace, and personal joy, have been included in discussions of transformative learning (O’Sullivan, et al., 2002). Transformative learning has been separated into three variants: psycho-critical, psychoanalytical, and social-emancipatory (Lange, 2013):

1. Psycho-critical transformation reorganizes the ways people regard themselves in a “process of questioning the uncritically assimilated beliefs, values, and perspectives that form [our] personal frames of reference” (p.108). It involves the direct intervention of an educator in order to foster “the development of skills, insights, and especially dispositions

essential for critical reflection – and self-reflection – on assumptions and effective participation in critical-dialectical discourse” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 62).

2. Psycho-analytic transformative learning concentrates on “psychic conflict.” It assists individuals in discerning and opening spaces for “symbols and emotions generated by the unconscious,” the exploration of one’s “inner territory,” and the “grieving” that accompanies the loss of “old meanings” and “old identity” (Lange, 2013, p. 112).
3. The social-emancipatory variant of transformative learning is quite different. It rests on the theories of Freire, and draws from existentialism, liberation theory, and dialectical Marxism. “The intent of education is not personal transformation... it is societal transformation, where education fosters action against poverty, oppression, repression, and injustice, and for social justice, equality, democracy, and freedom” (Lange, 2013, p. 110).

The epistemology of transformation. In Mezirow (2000b) transformative learning is explained as an “epistemic cognition” (p. 5), involving prior experience and interpretations to construct a “new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience” (p. 5).

Transformative learning is ascribed the ability to bring critical awareness to one’s own tacit assumptions and expectations, and those of others. This is said to lead to an assessment of the relevance of one’s own assumptions and expectations, and the creation of space for a participatory citizenry. In a Mezirowian view, transformative learning develops our capacity to critically reflect on our taken-for-granted assumptions. Often, this involves contested points of view and arenas of participation. Transformative learning “reduces fractional threats to rights and pluralism, conflict, and the use of power, and fosters autonomy, self-development, and self-governance (Mezirow, 2000b, p. 28). In such a model there is a primacy placed on what the

individual learners want to learn. This provides it with a starting point for a discourse leading to a critical examination of the normative assumptions informing both the learner's and the educator's sense of value and normative expectations (p. 31).

The epistemic character of transformative learning was explored in "What Form Transforms?" (Kegan, 2000). Kegan explained it using the character of Nora, from Ibsen's "A Doll's House":

Nora [doesn't] just come to some new ideas, changing her mind in the sense that she is becoming less persuaded by formerly held ideas and more persuaded by some new set of emerging ideas. Rather, she is coming to a new set of ideas about her ideas, about where they came from, about who authorizes them or makes them true. Her discovery is not just that she herself has some new ideas but that she has been uncritically, unwarily identified with (subject to) external sources of ideas (her husband, her church, her culture). (Kegan, 2000, pp. 57-58)

In such a context, transformation means not just rejecting the assumptions of one's spouse or church or culture, but also rejecting one's identification with their truths. In Kegan we see the process of transformative learning explored as a shift to a person's perspective and knowledge, rather than merely a change to their repertoire or quantity of knowledge. This represents a deep structural shift to our thoughts, feelings, and actions. It represents "a shift of consciousness that includes our understanding of ourselves, and our self-locations, and our relationships with other humans and the natural world" (O'Sullivan et al., 2002, p. xvii). It is along these lines that Groen and Kawalilak (2013, p. 154) attribute to transformative learning the premise that there are no enduring truths in the world, and that the world and the people populating it are always changing. Transformation happens in a constant negotiating and revising of belief, based on new and

unforeseen experiences and circumstances, as a platform for future action. In Brookfield (2000) transformative learning is described as building on a Freirean interpretation of praxis, and that the function of transformative learning is to assist in student development by helping them critically reflect on their own and other beliefs (pp. 142-143). In this context, the intent of Humanities 101 would be social-emancipatory, meaning it represents a shift to a more critical and active consciousness.

The contexts and multiple Discourses surrounding Humanities 101 are complicated. My attempt thus far has been to provide some background for understanding the context and delivery of Humanities 101. The abovementioned and described critical, liberatory, citizenship building and transformative approaches to pedagogy have been ascribed to Humanities 101, and they all stress a commitment to change. As theories of adult education, they all advocate redressing inequality, and are premised on an empowered image of the subject. The boundaries between the various interpretations are rather porous, with a great many of the authors crossing back and forth among them.

Entry-Level Humanities Education for Non-Traditional Adult Learners

What follows is a description of specific examples of the delivery of entry-level humanities programs for non-traditional adult learners. Some of the literature focused on the Clemente Course (Vitello, 2012; Egan, et al., 2006; Groen, 2005; O'Connell, 2000; Shorris, 2000), that is, the inspiration for what became known as Humanities 101. Other literature concentrated on Humanities 101 (Meredith, 2011; Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010a, 2010c, 2009). Following the descriptions of the Clemente Course and Humanities 101 is an overview of each of the twelve programs now operating in Canada: Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, Orillia, Ottawa, Nanaimo, Peterborough, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, and Waterloo.

The research of Meredith (2011), Hyland-Russell and Groen (2008), van Barneveld (2007) and Urban (2005) are also provided as a way of situating this research. Let us begin with a description of the original course.

The Clemente Course. Plato's allegory played an important role in Earl Shorris' formation of the original humanities program, the Clemente Course. Shorris said:

Poverty [is] an absence of reflection and beauty, not an absence of money. It [is] comparable to the experience of people chained to the wall of the cave in Plato's Allegory of the Cave ... They see shadows on the walls, and assume that is all there is in the world. (Shorris, as cited in Vitello, 2012, p. A24)

Plato's cave imagery is about "freeing the chained prisoner and turning him [sic] around towards the firelight to see the objects that cast the shadows ... and [begin] the upward journey out of the cave into daylight, which Plato likens to the soul's ascent to the intelligible realm" (Losin, 1996, para. 18). Much like the articulated intentions of Plato's cave, the articulated purpose of the Clemente Course (and subsequently Humanities 101) is to reorient the students towards the light. Plato's allegory is provided as Appendix 1.

Shorris published "On the uses of a Liberal Education: As a Weapon in the Hands of the Restless Poor" in 2007. Reminiscent of Plato's cave, he maintained that an entry-level education in the humanities provides a way out of the ghetto. "[This philosophy] grew out of an idea put forth by Robert Maynard Hutchins: The best education for the best is the best education for all" (Shorris, in O'Connell, 2000, para. 5). It was based on his own experiences with the original humanities course for non-traditional learners, the Clemente Course.

In 1995 Shorris started the Clemente Course, named for the Roberto Clemente Family Guidance Centre in lower Manhattan where it took place (Groen, 2005, p. 65). The Clemente

Course was started for people who lacked the resources to achieve their “fair share” in our society, those from low-income and other forms of marginalized situations. Shorris (2000) suggested that education for this sector of the population typically meant training and preparation, simple tasks rather than studies in grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, logic, and philosophy – those topics commonly reserved for the rich and powerful. He disagreed with this approach. Shorris felt that knowledge of the humanities would provide people in marginalized groups with a foundation for getting along in the world, for thinking, and for learning to reflect on things rather than simply reacting to whatever force was affecting them. Learning something about the humanities would bring them into the public world and enrich their lives.

In clear acknowledgement of liberal education theory, Shorris said that the Clemente Course was based on the Renaissance idea of the humanities, or *studia humanitatis*, as defined by Petrarch. The early Italian humanism Petrarch ascribed to “encompassed quite a range of subjects: grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, the arts that gave a command of Latin, the language of learning, and oratory, history, poetry, and moral philosophy” (Kirsch, 2006, para. 2). These were considered indispensable disciplines for any well-educated person because they helped to define an ethical ideal. They were regarded as forms of thought and writing that improved the character of the student (para. 2).

The Clemente Course was developed with the backgrounds and needs of the students in mind. It was designed as an “integration of disciplines – a task ... aided by professors ... [which] builds toward wonder ... through art and reason” (Shorris (2000), p. 184). It was to be a survey course, involving the chance to learn the pleasure of close reading, “examining a poem here, a paragraph of Plato or Aristotle there, embracing a Tintoretto or inhaling the scent of Cézanne, wondering how to reconcile the *Crito* with Thoreau’s civil disobedience” (p. 184). Achieving

this meant a curriculum that, while it might have prepared students to go on to a college or university, was aimed mainly towards reflection, autonomy, and the public world. Shorris believed that Petrarch's vision suited that goal, whereas "the vision of the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey, does not" (p. 175).

In "Riches for the Poor" Shorris (2000) said that the aim of his Clemente Course was to create for the poor and marginalized "a political life" (p. 4), that is "activity and engagement with other people at every level – family, neighborhood, community, and the state in which they live, and reflection and management of the affairs that concern them" (p. 6). It was the proper sense of politics the poor needed to be learning. This meant "knowing how to negotiate instead of using force... knowing how to use politics to get along, to get power... it presented them with a more effective method for living in society" (p. 127). It is this complex formulation that other courses have sought to replicate. In an interview with Harper's Shorris defended his view, and the position of the Clemente Course, in the following way:

[I don't] mean that rich people are good and poor people are bad. [I] simply mean that rich people know a more effective method for living in this society. Do all rich people, or people who are in the middle, know the humanities? Not a chance. But some do. And it helps. It helps to live better and enjoy life more. Will the humanities make you rich? Yes. Absolutely. But not in terms of money. In terms of life. Rich people learn the humanities in private schools and expensive universities. And that's one of the ways in which they learn the political life. I think that is the real difference between the haves and have-nots in this country. If you want real power, legitimate power, the kind that comes from the people and belongs to the people, you must understand politics. The humanities will help. (Shorris, 2007, n.p.)

Since then, others have affirmed the value of such programs. The multiple Discourses surrounding the idea are echoed in the analyses. Some emphasize personal growth, others the integration with society, while Mattson (2002) said that it is the emphasis on citizenship and public life that makes such programs special.

The Clemente Course is set apart from formal notions of education by the connections it draws between education and citizenship, and it is their fierce opposition to education as training that makes it special. Such programs are about “joining the *viva active* (the active life), a life based on action and choice and to escape from lives of impoverishment” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010a, p. 226). Fraser and Hyland-Russell (2011) suggested that in such programs “students find far more freedom through engaging in the dialogic space of the humanities than they did in up-skilling programs designed to liberate them from poverty” (p. 31). Statements such as these connect personal growth to integration in society using the vehicle of a liberal education, but stop short of revolutionizing society through education. In short, the goal of humanities programs is to better the lives of the students through the liberatory and emancipatory potential of humanities education (Pfieff, 2003; Duncan, 2002; Howard, 2000; Culbert, 1998; Alberta Public Interest Research Group, n.d.). The Canadian programs operate independently from Shorris’ Clemente Course, yet most acknowledge drawing inspiration from it (Meredith, 2011).

Humanities 101. Humanities 101 is distinguished from ‘typical’ educational approaches for adult students, like vocational training and work preparation, because the focus is on autonomy, empowerment, and involvement. As an institution, Humanities 101 purports to provide non-traditional adult students with the means to get along in the world through thinking and reflection. Egan, et al., (2006) said that such programs communicate to the adult students

that they are worthy and capable, and Groen and Hyland-Russell (2010a) said Humanities 101 is about joining the active life and escaping lives of impoverishment and marginalization. The goal of Humanities 101, in a broad sense, is to better the lives of adult students through the liberatory and emancipatory potential of university-level education (Pfieff, 2003; Duncan, 2002; Howard, 2000; Culbert, 1998; Alberta Public Interest Research Group, n.d.).

Meredith's (2011) suggestion that liberal education theory for adults and the humanities are interchangeable terms focused on how Humanities 101 shows adult learners the way to a more complete and fulfilled life she called "citizen life" or *vita activa*. As I have shown, such programs are also fashioned as education for citizenship, and portrayed as a means for a more inclusive citizen. They appeal to the development of critical awareness, and the danger and destabilization that informs critical theory. They are also portrayed as transformative because of the transformative and significant shifts they are expected to elicit in the students. Groen and Hyland-Russell (2009) characterized them this way:

Transformative humanities programs for the marginalized require an entirely different philosophy and praxis than found in instrumental or vocational learning. These programs do not promise an end to material poverty; they do, however, promise an end to internal poverty. Through radical transformative learning, students can become more engaged and can move away from the margins into a more active citizenship and, in a paradoxical fashion, may ultimately evaluate their success in quantifiable external measure (p. 106).

As alluded to previously, Humanities 101 is even portrayed as an example of popular education.

Humanities 101 represents an alternative educational path for adults, founded in a belief of the ability of the humanities to lead people to an examined life. Like the Clemente Course, the

students of Humanities 101 are identified as disadvantaged people. Here is how Groen and Hyland-Russell (2010a) describe them. The description is quite reminiscent of the Discourse surrounding the programs, in the literature, and the approach in a broader and more general sense:

Non-traditional adult learners [who] experience a constellation of barriers to learning that include poverty, homelessness, addictions, mental or physical illness, low self-esteem, a belief that education is not for them; negative histories with learning institutions; and feelings of disenfranchisement. (pp. 224-225)

The students are also described as “particularly fragile” (p. 239) learners, people facing a “constellation” of barriers:

These students’ stories profoundly demonstrate that dispositional, situational, and systemic barriers often combine to restrict ongoing learning and lead to a denial of self as learner. This constellation of barriers, both internal and external... accurately identifies the participants in Radical Humanities programs. (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010c, p. 36)

In the context of Humanities 101 the expression “disadvantaged” comes to mean no more than the people had limited choices, which the programs seek to alleviate through an empowering education. On the other hand, the University and its setting and culture are treated as powerful and elite. It is not with any malevolence or scheming on their part that they purport the value and benefits of a university and the education it offers. It is simply due to the concept of a higher type of knowledge. As with Shorris and the Clemente Course, this higher type represents complexity, depth, coordinated elements and intent, which can develop the skills, and insights, and disposition necessary for effective participation in the world. It promises the students those

things which it sees as being commonly reserved for the rich and powerful, a proper sense of what they need to be learning, and an effective method for seeing the complexity of the world and for thinking about the world and one's place within it (Shorris, 2000).

This is important, because people are not subjects standing separate from their surroundings, and they cannot be plucked out of their relations. The Discourse represents a base of assumptions people are caught up in, a phenomenon called "institutional capture" (Eastwood, 2006). Institutional capture happens when the people who participate in the process, work within that process (that is, Humanities 101) and the conceptual frames it represents are converted by the terms of a Discourse that constitutes the institutions, its activities, and the people involved.

In "Humanities Professors on the Margins: Creating the Possibility for Transformative Learning" (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010a), Humanities 101 programs are even called radical. Groen and Hyland-Russell did this to distinguish the Canadian programs, while underscoring their rootedness in the humanities. It was also done to emphasize the "radical nature" of their educational goals, which were defined as "counter[ing] marginalizing social forces through the access of postsecondary institutions and content typically denied these [non-traditional] learners" (p. 224). The programs are said to offer the potential for radical societal change. There is a clear reference to the philosophy informing Shorris' Clemente Course here as well. Humanities 101 is "inspired by a belief in the power of education and intrigued by the vision of social change for the poor that Shorris promoted" (p. 224). The following passage by Groen and Hyland-Russell (2010a) demonstrates just how pervasive this Discourse is:

Through their involvement in a Radical Humanities program, students are experiencing a deep shift in their perspective of themselves and their place in the world: A shift that

moves from disengagement on the learning process and society to hopeful engagement in the possibility of learning and the world around them. (p. 225)

That is, Humanities 101 has the power to cause deep and, seemingly, existential shifts in the learners.

The instructors involved in Humanities 101 have been described as beings who “[cultivate] the possibility for student transformation from disengagement to engagement in learning and society... hold[ing] the qualities of mature authenticity” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010a, p. 239). The idea of authenticity in an instructor is defined as: “genuine caring and a deep belief in education... [a person offering] transformative learning...to those pushed to the margins of society” (p. 242). They are also said to “represent in a powerful way the chasm between students’ negative experiences of learning and the learning for the elite that [the students] feel is barred to them” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010c, p. 40). Both the instructors and directors are seen as “offering students a profoundly new way of viewing themselves in relation to learning” (p. 41).

The philosophy and praxis of Humanities 101 is about “gaining insight into oneself, learning to open up to dialogue, [and] becoming aware of oneself in relation to others in society” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010c, p. 106). In Hyland-Russell and Groen (2011), Humanities 101 is described as a protected intellectual space where the rigorous of dialogue helps students develop the intellectual skills necessary for civic participation. The dialogue, whether it is about philosophy, art, literature, or history, provides a multitude of perspectives on the human experience and condition. Humanities 101 engages both the past and present, and offers nontraditional and marginalized adult learners a “horizon of hope and possibility.” It connects

their personal experiences and life with the structural and systemic contexts and Discourse of the programs and approach (p. 76).

Humanities 101 represents an institution. Not a specific institution but a concept with many concrete institutions as part of it. Just as there is the idea of “school” and there are specific schools, there is Humanities 101, that is, the approach of offering an entry-level education in the humanities to non-traditional adult students, and there are specific examples being offered in different places. They are constructed from a distinctive landscape, informed by precepts about adult education, and it is not just a way to bring people into mainstream society, it is inextricably linked to concepts of emancipation and societal reform.

Canadian programs. An overview of specific humanities programs operating in Canada is provided below. The descriptions are taken from program websites and web-based publications, so they are limited by the programs’ web presence. The overview details the program, location, provider, the program’s description, and whether there is a direct reference made to the Clemente Course.

The programs are shaped by local contexts, “and no two programs run the same or like Earl Shorris’ Clemente Course in the Humanities” (Meredith, 2011, p. 70). Still, the strongest commonality of all the programs, whether they specify it or not, is the use of the term “humanities” by the various Canadian programs and their general delivery model drawing a link between them and the Clemente Course. Like the Clemente Course they are intended to better the lives of learners and claim to focus on the liberatory and emancipatory potential of education (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010a). There are direct links between the various Canadian programs and the Clemente Course as well.

Edmonton's program aligns itself with the Clemente Course in the negative, by defining itself in how it is different from the Clemente Course, especially as it has to do with curriculum.

Although the Clemente Course has no core curriculum, Shorris insists that the classics (Plato, Aristotle, and other key thinkers in the Western philosophical and literary canon) are foundational to "empowering the poor" and are therefore foundational to the Clemente Course. Humanities 101 at the University of Alberta has a much more flexible curriculum that draws on the areas of expertise of our instructors. (Humanities 101 – University of Alberta, n.d.)

Halifax's Humanities 101 program makes a direct reference to the inspiration it draws from Shorris' Clemente Course, "based [as it is] on this hugely successful education model" (Halifax Humanities 101, n.d.). It follows Shorris' curriculum more closely than any other program in Canada (Meredith, 2011, p. 68). Toronto's University in the Community states: "This program was inspired by the Clemente Course in the Humanities" (University in the Community, 2015).

Nanaimo's Clemente Course is the only program to use the Clemente name, although there is no official affiliation beyond the attention this draws to its inspiration (Meredith, 2011, p. 62). Vancouver's program states: "[A program for] those whose economic situation, academic experience, financial and social well-being [is] compromised" (Humanities 101 Community Programme, 2007). Characterizing the student's lives as "compromised" is quite in keeping with the treatment of them as non-traditional; that is people who lack the resources to achieve their "fair share" in our society, those from low-income and marginalized situations. The twelve programs:

Humanities 101
St. Mary's University College, Calgary AB
 Clemente Course referred to: No

Humanities 101 offers free humanities courses to low-income adults who have experienced barriers to learning... If you have faced barriers to education but have a passion for learning, this program may be for you.

Humanities 101 is a strength-based educational program designed to help low-income Calgarians address barriers getting in the way of their capacities and skills. We learn about the stories that connect us to others and the world around us through studies in Literature, History, Music, Cultural Studies, Philosophy and Art History. Our students are people who face challenges such as poverty, immigration, experience with violence, prior negative education experience, addiction recovery, homelessness, and other interruptions to learning. Participants in Humanities 101 learn how to increase their capacity to engage in a life reflective of their unique gifts and abilities, while deepening their skills of learning, communicating and analysis ... Teachers and tutors are passionate about learning and create a profoundly safe and welcoming space where adults with a diverse range of life and educational experiences are all welcome. We... equip [our students] with skills so that they have more hope for the future. (Humanities 101 – St. Mary's University College, n.d.)

Humanities Program
University of Alberta, Edmonton AB
 Clemente Course referred to: Yes

The Humanities Program offers free, non-credit university-level courses offered to individuals living in Edmonton's downtown and surrounding areas who are passionate about learning, but who may have faced economic, institutional, or social

barriers to accessing formal education. This community-based learning program is centered on a commitment to ensuring that educational experiences are available to community members with a love of learning. By offering non-vocational training, the Humanities Program aims to empower students to use critical thinking in everyday life and inspire a passion for lifelong learning.

The Humanities Program is in partnership with the "The Learning Centre Literacy Association" and currently offers courses in the Fall and Winter at the Humanities Centre, on the University Campus. Past course topics have included: An Introduction to the Humanities, Stories and Communities, Native Studies, Education and Society, and Taking Back the Airwaves.

Since Spring 2010, the Humanities Program has also run a course at Wings of Providence Shelter for Second Stage Shelters. This course is designed specifically for women healing from interpersonal violence and brings university-level learning into the unique environment of the women's shelter. The Humanities course offered at Wings of Providence is centered on themes of home and community from diverse scholarly perspectives. (Humanities 101 – University of Alberta, n.d.)

Humanities 101

The Halifax Humanities Society, Halifax NS

Clemente Course referred to: Yes

Halifax Humanities 101 is based on the premise that the insights and skills offered by study of the traditional Humanities disciplines can provide people with crucial tools for gaining control over their lives.

The course teaches reflection and critical thinking, enabling participants to develop a capacity for thoughtful reflection that may prove life-changing.

As Earl Shorris, founder of the original Clemente Course in the Humanities, has put it: “The Humanities provide the most practical education. The Humanities teach us to think reflectively, to deign to deal with the new as it occurs to us, to dare.”

He argues that exposure to the Humanities opens the way for disadvantaged people to begin to participate in the life of the community, to engage in the political life in the widest sense.

“The Humanities provide the most practical education. The Humanities teach us to think reflectively, to begin to deal with the new as it occurs to us, to dare.” - Earl Shorris: American writer, founder of the course in the Humanities and author of *Riches for the Poor...*

Halifax Humanities 101 has been inspired by this vision of bringing the riches of Humanities education to those living below the poverty line. (Halifax Humanities 101, n.d.)

Clemente Course and Clemente Course 101
Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo BC
 Clemente Course referred to: Yes

CLEM 100 (3) The Clemente Course

An interdisciplinary course of study in the Humanities with introductory modules in Art History, Literature, and Writing. Seminar discussion in these areas will enable students to think about and interpret culture on equal ground with other citizens. Active participation is required. (1:3:0) *Prerequisite: Successful application and interview, and the ability to read and comprehend a one-page newspaper article.*

CLEM 101 (3) Clemente Course 101

A continuation of CLEM 100. Interdisciplinary study in the Humanities with introductory modules in Canadian History, Philosophy, and Writing. Seminar discussion in these areas will enable students to think about and interpret culture on equal ground with other citizens. Active participation is required. (1:3:0) *Prerequisite: Successful completion of CLEM 100.* (Clemente, n.d.)

Discovery University

Ottawa Mission, University of Ottawa, Saint-Paul University, and First Baptist Church, Ottawa ON

Clemente Course referred to: No

A program called Discovery University allows people living on a low income to participate in non-credit, university-level Humanities and Social Sciences courses at no cost. Thanks to a partnership between The Ottawa Mission, University of Ottawa, Saint Paul University, and First Baptist Church, the courses are taught by professors from the universities and all textbooks and course materials are provided at no cost to the students. The program helps encourage a commitment to learning and helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Discovery University courses focus primarily on the Social Sciences and Humanities fields, with the belief that experiencing these disciplines will empower students to think and engage more critically with their community. (Discovery University, n.d.)

Humanities 101

Trent University, Peterborough ON

Clemente Course referred to: No

Humanities 101 at Trent University Durham is a 10-week, not-for-credit multi-disciplinary course offering classes in humanities and social sciences. Students will

attend classes each week for two hours (one hour of lecture and one hour of seminar-style discussion). Each week will bring a new topic and new instructor.

The intent of the program is to provide access to higher education to those in the Durham Region who might face barriers – either financial or otherwise and also to provide our community with opportunities for lifelong learning.

The courses are taught by Professors who volunteer their time and the administration is coordinated by a committee of dedicated Trent staff.

Humanities 101 is free to all those enrolled and is offered each Fall at Trent University Durham. (Humanities 101 – Trent University, n.d.)

Humanities 101

Lakehead University, Thunder Bay and Orillia ON

Clemente Course referred to: No

Humanities 101 is a community based outreach program, which ensures that community members, who have a love of learning, have access to a university-level educational experience despite financial or social barriers.

We work to benefit the community and its members through education and the development of knowledge, transferable skills, and self-empowerment. We provide a healthy and supportive environment where you, the student, can experience the excitement and benefits of a post-secondary education without the costs.

What is Humanities 101?

Humanities 101 is a free opportunity for individuals who want to expand their education. This program is an opportunity for you, a recommended student, to expand your academic knowledge as well as a chance to develop personally and as a member of the community. Humanities 101:

- Introduces students to the excitement and interest that accompanies the discovery and creation of knowledge
- Acquaints students with the potential benefits of higher education experiences
- Provides assistance to students in order to overcome barriers to higher-level educational experiences
- Provides an opportunity for students to explore university-level education
- Motivates students to be a positive influence in his or her community
- Inspires students about the different educational avenues that are available
- Helps students to realize that a post-secondary education is possible
- Humanities 101 is a part of your journey

This program is a part of your academic journey. Humanities 101 does not provide entry into Lakehead University; however, it does guarantee an opportunity to learn about yourself and your educational options. (Thunder Bay and Orillia Humanities 101, n.d.)

University in the Community

Worker's Educational Association of Canada, The Catherine Donnelly Foundation, Senior College, Innis College, and St. Stephen's Community House, Toronto ON

Clemente Course referred to: Yes

Since 2003 University in the Community has offered free non-credit university-level courses in the liberal arts to people who would not ordinarily consider attending university. This program was inspired by the Clemente Course in the Humanities...

University in the Community takes post-secondary education into the community. We believe that learning is inclusive, lifelong and active. It is the capacity to participate.

Each year, we offer free-of-charge, semester-long courses to adults whose access to higher education has been limited by life circumstances...

Who can enroll in University in the Community? If you have a passion for learning but face barriers to higher education, possess basic English literacy skills and can commit to weekly attendance, please get in touch! (University in the Community, 2015)

Humanities 101 Community Programme
University of British Columbia, Vancouver BC
 Clemente Course referred to: Yes

The Humanities 101 Community Programme (fondly known as “Hum”) offers four non-credit, university-level courses at UBC for people living in the Downtown Eastside, Downtown South (DTES/South) and surrounding areas who have a lust for learning—especially those whose economic situation, academic experience, financial and social well-being are compromised.

Humanities 101—Hum—is ... supported by residents of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside and Downtown South (DTES/South) ... Participants are people with diverse backgrounds and knowledge who are geographically situated in the DTES/South and nearby areas and are working to overcome obstacles and roadblocks—financial, institutional, educational, governmental, health and social ... For some people, Hum is a catalyst for self-knowledge that inspires and activates—if the moment’s right, it can help to get momentum going. The courses are a dedicated time and space for inquiry and an opportunity to meet like-minded people who love learning. This mix of people coming together, giving and taking knowledge, are in reciprocal relationships of learning based on their own expertise and also open to new visions ... For participants,

there are no pre-requisites, so you start where you are. Some have travelled through the eye of a storm in their lives, persevered and refuse to allow themselves to be restricted from education, further learning and ways of being.

Hum—the first of its kind in Canada—was inspired by the “Clemente Course” initiated in New York City’s Lower Eastside by the American journalist Earl Shorris... [The] intention was “to offer non-vocational training that empowers students to use critical thinking in everyday life and inspire a passion for lifelong learning.” While they found an abundance of skills-based programmes in the Downtown Eastside and surrounding areas, they found none which focused on the Arts and Humanities. (Humanities 101 Community Programme, 2007)

University 101 and 102
University of Victoria, Victoria BC
 Clemente Course referred to: No

University 101 [and 102] is a program that offers barrier FREE, non-credit, academic courses that will introduce students to a wide range of university topics. Non-credit means that you will get a completion certificate for attending the course, but the course cannot be applied to a degree or diploma program.

We aim to remove the barriers to learning for our students, so meals are provided at the beginning of each class. Bus tickets and child care subsidies are also available.

[The goal is to] provide introductory academic courses to people whose economic and social circumstances normally pose obstacles to university education...

Critical thinking and a passion for learning are elements of citizenship that can and should be shared amongst everyone. Humanities and social sciences give us ways to understand our own society and history. (University 101, n.d.)

Humanities 101
Renison University-College, Waterloo ON
Clemente Course referred to: No

Humanities 101 is a ... course designed for people who have encountered financial and other barriers to university education and who wish to expand their intellectual horizons in an accessible, challenging, and respectful environment ... The course centers around classes, study groups, reflective writing assignments, and conversation.

Humanities 101 is a course for people who have encountered financial and other barriers to university education and who wish to expand their intellectual horizons in an accessible, challenging, and respectful environment ... Applications for this non-credit course are accepted not on the basis of past academic history but on an applicant's desire and ability to participate. (Waterloo Humanities 101, n.d.)

Prior Research: Where Does This Research Fit?

The concept of Humanities 101 has been institutionalized in various formats and has taken on a variety of iterations within Canada. These have been studied from a variety of perspectives. For example, the directors of humanities programs have been asked to reflect on the challenges and rewards of Clemente-inspired programs in Canada (Meredith, 2011); the programs have been looked at as a means of facilitating learning for non-traditional marginalized students (Hyland-Russell & Groen, 2008); program activities and outcomes have been assessed in an attempt to contribute to the provision of quality post-secondary education experiences to students of Humanities 101 (van Barneveld, 2007); and, the effect of humanities programs on student identity, social relationships, and civic engagement has been focused on (Urban, 2005).

What follows is an overview of these studies. This overview of these studies is intended to situate my research.

In “Creating Spaces for Dialogue: Participatory Action Research in Free Humanities Programs in Canada” Meredith (2011) used participatory action research (PAR) to give the directors of Clemente-inspired programs in Canada a chance to reflect and comment on the challenges and rewards of their experiences, and to identify issues they experienced as directors, “from finding sustained funding to responding to academic and other pressing student needs” (p. iii). The intention of the study was to “extend” the experiences of the directors’ beyond a singular collaborative event, and to produce a document that not only raised awareness of Clemente-inspired programs in Canada but also served the directors’ own professional development (p. 231). In her study, Meredith examined the “multiple knowledges” and epistemological frameworks that the directors brought to the study (p. iii).

Meredith highlighted some of the realities of directing Clemente-inspired programs and the ethical issues and concerns the directors faced in a reflexive look at “how and why we do what we do” (p. 252). She concluded that the individual educational experiences of the directors informed and affected how the programs were run. The programs were also affected by the experiences and histories that led directors to their position at the head of Clemente-inspired programs. It was also concluded that the directors were influenced by “the reflexive nature of [the] learning environment... [and] the participants in the programs.” Meredith referred to these things as “guides.”

Hyland-Russell and Groen (2008) focused on the barriers non-traditional learners encountered to post-secondary learning. Using a mixed-method case study (demographic survey, document analysis of course outlines, attendance records, marketing materials, funding proposals

and committee minutes, and individual interviews with the students, tutors, instructors, and program directors) they analyzed data and refined it to provide recommendations for facilitating the education of non-traditional marginalized Canadian adults. Seeking material and non-material barriers to learning the results showed considerable socio-economic challenges for this group of non-traditional adult learners. They identified the “profound material barriers” students face as: living below the poverty line, unemployment, and inconsistent and/or poor housing situations. The non-material barriers included addictions, violence, illness, and disability. They also pointed out how their findings contradicted a claim made by Mezirow concerning the inability of marginalized adults to engage with transformative learning.

“The Pilot Implementation of Humanities 101: A Lakehead University Community Initiative” (van Barneveld, 2007) is like my study in that it used semi-structured interviews to assess Humanities 101. It differed in that it focused on program activities and program outcomes. Students were interviewed, along with program associates (people from the community organizations who recommended students to the program), and faculty (the people giving the lectures), in order to “contribute to the provision of quality post-secondary education experiences to students of Humanities 101” (p. 3). The students were asked about achievement, goals of the program, their future, and suggestions for developing the program. Program associates were asked about the process of recommending students to the program, student participation, support, and suggestions for developing the program. The faculty were asked why they wanted to lecture for Humanities 101, the benefits and the challenges of it, how it compared to traditional university courses as well as suggestions for developing the program (p. 6). This study suggested that Humanities 101 was successful in meeting its objectives as it introduced students to “the excitement and interest that accompanies the discovery and creation of knowledge” (p. 3).

Urban (2005) used a “heuristic inquiry,” a “research process designed for the exploration and interpretation of experience, which uses the self of the researcher” (Hiles, 2001), to focus on the effect a humanities program had on student identity, social relationships, and civic engagement (Urban, 2005, p. ii). Urban described it as a personal inquiry that allowed her to include lived experience in her research (p. 11). In this sense, her research was similar to mine. She concluded that the students felt that the program had had an impact on their lives. The program resulted in an increased sense of agency, along with feelings of trust, connection, and empathy. It improved their willingness to form and stay in groups, and to manage power structures and conflict (p. 133). In her study, Urban categorized the phenomenon of humanities programs as “transformative learning” (p. 134).

In a review of the literature, I have found that entry-level humanities programs for non-traditional adult learners are treated in narrowly conceived presuppositions about the liberatory and emancipatory potential of education and the value of such programs. Prior research is also caught up in this Discourse. They do not delve into the institution of Humanities 101 as such, and a serious look at the Discourse that informs it does not appear in the available literature. A study clarifying Humanities 101 as an institution, as a practice best expressed through the experiences of the people involved as a means toward understanding the fit between the ideals of the institution and the realities of the practice of that institution, has largely been absent until now. This study is intended to examine the spaces between the expectations of the people presenting the courses and those people taking the courses to understand the institution itself. This is different than asking about program activities and program outcomes, barriers to learning, or even the impact such programs have on peoples’ lives.

Chapter 3. Methods and Methodology

In this chapter I describe the processes and background behind the four imperatives that I formulated to guide my research. That is, I illuminate the underpinnings of these four imperatives: 1. Texts were treated as processes that positioned and situated people and programs. 2. Inquiry was conducted from within actual programs to present current lived experience. 3. Open-ended questions were used, so that the participants could voice their own experiences and perspectives rather than replicating preconceived ideas or being bound by the parameters of the research. 4. Power was accepted as a central tenet of the research.

This chapter is reported in the following order: the research question developed for the study; description of the representative programs; a description of the design of the study and the data; the subsequent research strategy and analysis, data source, and coding; and descriptions about how the findings will be disseminated, ethical considerations, and a statement about the limitations of the study.

Research Question

The question that distinguishes this research is: How do the experiences of those involved in Humanities 101 relate to the institution known as Humanities 101?

Representative Programs

Two programs were chosen as representative sites for the institutional ethnography of Humanities 101. The two programs operate in two separate cities and are run by two different directors. There were two groups of participants at each site: the adult learners enrolled in Humanities 101 (students), and the people providing the program (institutional participants). All the research participants received a formal invitation to participate (Appendix 2).

As mentioned earlier, the students enrolled in a Humanities 101 program have been recommended to the program by community service agencies. They are selected because the people at the agency believe that these potential students are people able to benefit from the opportunities and structures afforded by the experience. Once selected, the students were provided with course materials, transit fare, a meal at each meeting, and the cost of child care to remove financial and social barriers to learning and ensure that the students had the opportunity to participate. The only other condition for enrollment was that the students be at least 17 years of age and able to read a newspaper.

Further to that selection process, the students who were invited to participate in this research were also vetted by the representatives of the social agencies. They were recommended as people that would be willing to participate without the participation in the study reflecting negatively on their learning experience. Eventually, 9 students volunteered as study participants and were given the pseudonyms Participant S1 – S9.

The institutional participants (instructors and a program director) represented the primary link between the adult learners and the program. These were the people who worked with "the messiness of everyday circumstances so that it fit [with] the categories and protocols of the regime" (Smith, 2006, p. 27). As intermediary actors in the institutional complex, these were the people speaking from within the ruling discourse (p. 28). The seven institutional participants who volunteered to participate were given the pseudonyms Participant I1 – I7.

Design of the Study

The design of this study takes the form of an institutional ethnography. This method of research is the study of interactions which have been institutionalized. Not to be confused with an ethnography of specific institutions or organizations, it is an ethnography of the relations that

structure people's lives, through the ways that they interact with one another in the context and how their interactions are confirmed institutionally. In this sense, an institutional ethnography makes ordinary daily activity the site of investigation.

Different than conventional research, an institutional ethnography means unlearning some common assumptions about research and accepted practices of knowing (Campbell & Gregor, 2008, p. 11). For instance, the researcher is positioned as a “knower” located in the everyday world who finds meaning there. Employing a theorized process of discovery, this kind of ethnography unpacks how a topic works, so it can be mapped. In this study I mapped the determinations of the life conditions of the people involved in Humanities 101.

I turned to institutional ethnography because it allowed for an “emergent mode of inquiry” (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 16) as opposed to the implementation of a strategy to test a hypothesis. The emphasis is on discovery of what already existed. According to Smith (2006):

Institutional ethnography is committed to exploration and discovery. It takes for granted that the social happens and is happening and that we can know it in much the same way as it is known among those who are right in there doing it... Institutional ethnography is committed to discovering beyond any one individual's experience including the researcher's own and putting into words... what she or he discovers about how people's activities are coordinated. (p. 1)

It was important to me to avoid imposing interpretations upon the participants, instead elaborating what they said as a mode of discovery. This produces an investigation of the social organization of knowledge and treats knowledge as ideology, unpacking it as a distinctive epistemological perspective on our everyday. Campbell and Gregor (2008) described institutional ethnography as understanding the lives of people through the actual determinations

of those life conditions (p. 17). Turner (2006) described institutional ethnography as answering things like: how it happened as it did, what the people involved did, and what was of consequence, with the intent of producing an “analytic description of coordinative power” (p. 142). An institutional ethnography is typically inspired by something troubling or some sense of unease in a setting.

I was intrigued by what Campbell and Gregor (2008) called the “radical potential” of institutional ethnography. Rather than replicating previous findings and what is taken-for-granted about Humanities 101, like the tenets that typify the programs and approach, it is a process of discovery. It rethinks the setting by taking the inherent power relations into account. The guiding query of institutional analysis becomes: “What does the data tell me about how this setting happens as it does?” (p. 85).

The direction of the inquiry for an institutional ethnography is never entirely random. The institutional ethnographic thematic shares with Foucault an interest in Discourse (DeVault & McCoy, 2006), which manages to “displace the traditional basis of knowledge in individual perception and locates it externally to particular subjectivities as an order which imposes... it [regulates] how people’s subjectivities are coordinated” (Smith, 2005, p. 17). Institutional ethnography (and subsequently this study) comes with a few underlying assumptions.

The first is a Foucauldian notion of Discourse. According to Foucault, Discourse is a collective of statements and ideas that produce networks of discursive meaning. The defining characteristic of Discourse is that it is hierarchical in the sense that it arranges and reinforces certain identities or subjectivities, including things like gender, status, and class, and “gives rise to a certain organization of concepts, certain regroupings of objects, [and] certain types of enunciation” (Foucault, 1972, p. 64).

Discourse provides the conceptual framework and classificatory models for understanding the world around us, shaping how we think, and how we produce knowledge. Discourse structures possibilities for thinking, talking, and acting. Foucauldian Discourse provides an underlying assumption to institutional ethnography (and this study), but this does come with a rather important qualification, as identified by Marjorie, DeVault, and McCoy (2006): Institutional ethnography shares with Foucault an interest in texts, power, and governance. But there is an important distinction, especially where empirical research is concerned. Foucault's notion of Discourse designates a much larger scale than institutional ethnography. Institutional ethnography is grounded in the activities of individuals, and Discourse refers to a field of relations that involves their activities within actual sites, and the conceptual frames that circulate there. Institutional ethnography never loses the presence of the subject who activates the Discourse (p. 16).

Such an articulation of Discourse can be described in the negative as something other than the situation of a speaking subject. Discourse is not akin to the grammatical laws governing one's discussion, nor the ground of our experiences, nor is it an a priori type of knowledge. Described in terms of what it is, Discourse is a boundary for one's statements, the general domain for one's statements, and the regulating practice guiding one's statements. Here is what Foucault (1972) had to say about Discourse:

Every statement is specified in this way; there is no statement in general, no free, neutral, independent statement; but a statement belonging to a series or a whole, always play[ing] a role among other statements ... it is always part of a network of statements, in which it has role ... There is no statement that does not presuppose others; there is no statement that is not surrounded by a field of coexistences, effects of series and

succession, a distribution of functions and roles. If one can speak of a statement, it is because a sentence [or proposition] figures as a definite point, with a specific position, in an enunciative network that extends beyond it. (p. 99)

The other important assumption is a notion of power derived from Foucault.

In institutional ethnography, power is a “materiality” or “technique” that operates on the subjects involved. In this sense, power is “a way in which certain actions modify others... less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of governance” (Foucault, 1983, p. 219). While not always explicitly identified, power is always present within the ensemble of Discourse, operating most of the time as a matter of perspective. Power also provided an underlying assumption to this study.

Power in this sense is not something that one simply has, or does not have – and in this sense it exceeds the Marxian sense of power as that which can be seized, or that from which one can be alienated. Power is viewed as being productive and dynamic in the sense that it structures, rather than something that one holds on to, or conversely allows to slip away. Power is treated as a thing co-constituted by the people who support it, and as Rouse (2003) explains, such an invocation of power is...

not a substantive property or capacity that agents or institutions possess or exercise explicitly, but instead ... expresses how actions act upon existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or future rather than upon agents directly, by affecting a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions. (p. 117)

Bringing it back to this study...

Any discourse [involving] power in the lives... and learning experiences of adult learners would be sorely lacking without addressing how... norms and traditions...

influence our development and how we ultimately see and understand ourselves. (Groen & Kawalilak, 2014, p. 64)

I provide two examples of institutional ethnographies to illustrate the emergent inquiry nature of institutional ethnography, and how Discourse and power is incorporated. The first is by Smith, Mykhaovshiy, and Weatherbee (2006) entitled “Getting Hooked Up: An Organizational Study of the Problems People with HIV/AIDS have accessing Social Services. This study is an examination of the organization and reorganization of the “lifework” of people with HIV/AIDS. Contrary to studies that focus on the health care and social services system, this study begins from the standpoint of people who are HIV/AIDS positive, and examines the social services system from their standpoint. From the study’s statement of objectives:

The procedure is not concerned with the subjective feelings or perspectives of the [participants]. Nor is it intended to indict or criticize social service agencies or the attitudes of their workers. Rather, it is focused on how the interface between the two gets organized as a matter of everyday encounters between individuals who are HIV positive or who have AIDS and social service workers. (pp. 267-168)

Power and Discourse, that is, the perspectives individuals who are HIV positive or who have AIDS and social service workers, were present in the study as the relations that structured the people’s lives. The study looked at the ways that they interacted with one another in the context of social service agencies.

The second example is by Wilson and Pence (2006). It is titled “U.S. legal interventions in the lives of battered women: An Indigenous assessment.” Wilson and Pence used an institutional ethnography to conduct a research project that not only stayed true to Indigenous ways of knowing, but met scientific standards and furthered peoples’ understanding of how the

U.S. legal system could be used to design an Indigenous intervention system to protect battered women (p. 200). The study identified specific processes, as identified by Indigenous women, which were either helpful or problematic and then traced these processes back to the institutional work that produced and organized them.

We did not try to distinguish between good or bad workers, but rather focused on the way workers were coordinated to participate in institutional processes that either do or do not protect Indigenous women. (p. 202)

In this case the institutional ethnography was about the perspectives of Indigenous women and the institutional organization they face, present in the study as the relations that structured their lives, that is, power and Discourse. Both studies reflect the institutional ethnographic notion of mediated relations organized around specific ruling functions, like education or social services.

Various methods or strategies are used to collect data in an institutional ethnography, including interviews, textual analysis, and archival research. The choice of methods depends on the organizational properties of the phenomena under investigation (Smith et al., 2006, p. 162). In this study the methods used to collect data were textual analysis, interviews, and reflections. The focus of the research is the complexes of relations organized around a specific ruling function, that is, Humanities 101. The two programs I investigated were typified by a general delivery model, with the same informing tenets. These tenets organized, defined, and regulated the experiences and interactions of the people involved. Any generalizations pertain to the institutional idea of offering an education in the humanities to non-traditional adult learners. The use of an institutional ethnography allowed for an examination of an organizational work site (Devault & McCoy, 2006), and an exploration of how ruling relations create forms of thought

and structures how members view both themselves and the world they live in (Howard et al, 2005).

Description of the Data Sources

The data were sourced from program documents, interviews, and personal reflections on personal observations as recorded in a journal. Data collection was an ongoing and interactive process.

Program documents. Smith (2006) argued that incorporating textual material into ethnographic practice is essential. "It is what enables [one] to reach beyond the observable and discoverable into the... social relations and organization that permeate and control" (p.65). Textual material provides the categories and concepts that frame people's understanding and thereby frame institutions. Smith (2006) called textual material a regulated form of rationality and objectivity, establishing "what is done" as an instance and expression of an authorized discourse. Textual material operates as an "extra-local determinant coordinating and concerting the organization of the program and institution" (Smith et al, 2006, p. 174). Textual materials are fundamental to "institutional coordinating, regulating... [and] imposing an accountability on the terms they establish" (Smith, 2005, p. 118).

The data sources in this case were the program documents found on the websites of the programs studied. The purpose was to review systematically the Humanities 101 programs involved in this study to provide data on defining tenets and 'formulating' aspects of the programs. Data were included if it addressed the role of the programs, provided a definition, and/or involved the students.

Then I conducted an independent appraisal and critical recovery of the program data I found. The method for analysis centered on coding and mapping of patterned similarities and

differences in the material. The program documents were treated as an expression or instance of organization and power. Though texts might not be able to 'speak back' to the researcher, there is room for interpretation of the data the texts provide. The program data were also used to refine and develop the interview guides (Appendix 2).

Interviews. Interviews were conducted with the students of Humanities 101 and the institutional participants, that is, the instructors and a program administrator. The common ground for the interviews was Humanities 101 and their participation in it.

To place the stories in the context of their lives, to "explore the meaning of their experience" (Seidman, 2006, p. 17), there were two interviews with the student participants, each intended to capture 'snapshots in time' of the student's feelings and experiences regarding Humanities 101. The first interview established the context of their experience. The second allowed them to reconstruct the details of their experience and reflect on it. During the first interview participants were asked if they were willing to participate in the second (post-Humanities 101) interview. The initial interviews were conducted in person. Because of logistics, including travel and finances, the follow-up interviews were conducted via mail, electronic and written. The students willing to participate in the follow-up interview were provided with the questions, and it was at their behest and initiative to answer them. I found the answers to be in-keeping with the initial and in-person interview answers. In-person interviews were recorded as recommended by Smith's (2006) who observed that interviewing amounts to making notes and preserving details whose relevance may not be immediately obvious.

The student participants were reached through a program director shortly after they entered the program. This was at the behest of the program director to help assure that the students would not be scared away from participating in Humanities 101 by the prospect of being

involved in this research, and to communicate clearly to the students that the research and their participation in Humanities 101 were not dependent on each other. The purpose of Humanities 101 is not to conduct research. Research participation was just an option in this circumstance. All the students received a formal invitation to participate (Appendix 3). The students who wanted to participate contacted me directly. Nine students participated. Of these nine, one dropped out for personal reasons before the end of the program so was unavailable for the follow-up questions. One person participated in the follow up who was not available initially. The student sample quotes are referenced as Participant S1 – S9, designating the nine different student respondents.

The seven institutional participants were one program director and six instructors from two separate programs. A list of the instructors was acquired from the program directors and they were all approached via a letter or electronic mail (Appendix 3). The institutional participant sample quotes are referenced as Participant I1 – I7, designating the seven different institutional respondents. All the interviews took place at a time and place that best suited the participant's individual needs and situation. They all received a description of the topic matter prior to the interview.

I heeded Devault and McCoy's (2006) advice and treated the interviews as "talking with people" (2006), to allow the respondents the opportunity to voice their experiences. I listened to Creswell (2012) and sought "open-ended responses" that "allowed the participants to create [their own] options for responding" (p. 218). I adopted what Douglas (1985) referred to as an "evolutionary process" to interviewing to maximize the freedom to maneuver within the interview. The interview was never 'tied down' more than it had to be. I adopted "a general strategy of research opportunism: Always be poised to pounce on any phenomenon that shines

with the promise of a new truth – discovery” (p. 69). The nature of the research was about opportunism and submission to the reality of the interview data. The challenge was to accurately deal with what was discovered in the interview process. While there are risks associated with interviewing, like the indeterminacy and uncertainty that pervades an interview, these risks did not dissuade me from the practice. As Seidman (2006) maintained, the interview represents an interest in understanding the lived experiences of other people and the meaning they attach to that experience (p. 9).

To better ensure the validity of my findings I used respondent validation (Creswell, 2012) or member checking. All participants were presented with their transcribed interviews. I asked them to confirm that I captured their personal perspectives and experiences. I also asked them to comment on the accuracy of my transcribing and, if necessary, edit their transcribed interviews to make sure their words had been interpreted correctly, and in the context in which they were intended. All seventeen participants confirmed that my transcriptions adequately and accurately captured their perspectives.

Interview guides. Interview guides (Appendix 2) were employed to assure that similar questions were asked of all the interviewees from each group. The intent was to concentrate on the concrete details of the participants’ experience and interpretation of Humanities 101. Interviews were designed to investigate their experiences and knowledge as a means of revealing Humanities 101. I asked questions to analyze the Discourse behind the participants’ answers. The questions were about discovery, they provided definitions, and the definitions provided themes. These themes spoke to the prevailing Discourse around Humanities 101.

I heeded Patton's (1990) advice on minimizing the imposition of predetermined responses; this meant paying attention to how the questions were worded, as it is “one of the

most important elements determining how the interviewee will respond” (p. 295). It also meant keeping in mind the potentially threatening nature of interviews. To combat this, I started with non-controversial questions seeking straightforward replies. Some of the advice provided by Seidman (2006, pp. 82-84) also proved useful, including asking only real questions, which meant asking questions that I did not already know the answers to.

I took language seriously, which meant considering the terms used by the participants and asking well-constructed questions as a means of dealing with the inherent limitations of interviewing. A well-constructed question meant that it could be answered honestly; a question from which I could clearly and accurately report the results; and a question that provided the interviewee with the opportunity to answer the question being asked. A lot of thought was given to the questions that were asked, and they were constructed with the above considerations in mind.

A pilot test was conducted on all the interview guides prior to official data collection. Seidman (2006) advises all researchers to conduct pilot tests. He gave the dictionary definition of the verb *pilot* as "guiding along a strange path or through a dangerous place" (p. 39). He went on to say that while the world of interviewing research may not seem a strange path or dangerous place, the unanticipated twists and turns it takes, and the complexity it entails, requires exploration before the researcher plunges headlong into his or her project. I followed his advice. The instructor interview guide was piloted with a willing faculty member, the student interview guide with a former graduate of Humanities 101, and the director interview guide with a director of a different and unrelated Humanities 101 program. Minor edits were suggested, having mainly to do with the construction and clarity of the questions.

In one instance, the pilot resulted in an important change that may have affected the outcome of the data collection. I was originally going to ask the student participants: “Who do you identify as?” Because of the ambiguity of the term “identify,” this was changed to a simpler and clearer: “How would you describe yourself?” these edits were applied to the interview guides (Appendix 2).

This change merits further clarification. From a philosophical position, asking about identity is asking about the sufficient condition under which a person persists as the same person. In that context, identity becomes a continuity of substance and consciousness, which is different from a self-description. The question, when used in this context, was not about that “sufficient condition.” To paraphrase Stuhr (1997), some semantic indeterminacy makes empirical sense. In this case, student identity had to do with characterizations, descriptions, and perspectives concerning the students. Since the students were categorized in the literature and by definition, through their involvement with social services agencies, as being from socially or educationally disadvantaged segments of the population, people from poor and working-class backgrounds, ethnic minorities, and immigrants, I thought it fair to ask the students to describe themselves, rather than who they identify as.

Observation reflections. I observed the students as they participated in the programs during six Humanities 101 classes and engaged in a reflective writing process in situation. In keeping with the practice of this Humanities 101 program, each class had a different instructor. I asked each instructor for permission to sit in and make observations of his or her class. The students were made aware of what I was doing. I was not a naive observer working in a “naturalist mode” (Campbell, 2006). My written reflections were informed by prior experience with the program and a conscious analysis of the institution of humanities education for non-

traditional adult learners. I did not address specific questions in my reflections, but rather I interpreted how the class and classroom were unfolding before me. My reflective writing became a commentary on the program and institution of Humanities 101. The reflections were about my feelings and my interpretation as I sat in class.

My reflections were recorded in a journal. I recorded questions like: “Why did an instructor feel a need to impart upon the students the ability to claim their own mind?” I documented thoughts, like: “university and college enrollment continues to be equated with success,” and connected them to other thoughts about Humanities 101, including how I interpreted the students’ engagement with the lectures, and at other times how I interpreted when students were critical of the lectures. In one example, I noted how quickly a lecture was reclaimed by an instructor when some of the students got critical of it – I referred to this as the students’ own politico-epistemic framing of meaning, accorded to their own values, ideologies, and experiences. The journal was not an actual record of the event, but a means by which I could reflect on my thoughts as they occurred during the classes I attended. My reflections helped me to develop and orient my understanding of the institution of Humanities 101.

Research Strategy and Analysis

An institutional ethnography is ethnography of the relations that structure people's lives, through the ways that they interact with one another in a given context and how these interactions are confirmed institutionally, ordinary daily activity becomes the site of investigation. My analysis was intended to make visible the primary narratives of the students and the institutionally orientated accounts of the instructors, director, and the programs themselves. Mirroring an approach already established by John McKendy (2006), I was on the lookout for times in the data where disjuncture resided, where differing perspectives on

Humanities 101 rubbed up against each other. I was interested in where such disjuncture was occasioned within the flow of the interview, and what types of issues such disjuncture identified (Devault & McCoy, 2006, p. 39). As in any institutional ethnography, I brought under scrutiny relations that were not peculiar to any one individual, rather relations that were part of a complex reaching beyond and coordinating the individuals in relation to each other (Smith 2005; Smith, Mykhalovskiy, & Weatherbee 2006). This qualitative methodology does not limit itself to the settings but rather expands into the realities of how the local is penetrated by the trans-local reality of power. I addressed explicitly the character of the institution as a form of organization that is constituted externally to people and places (Smith 2005, p. 42).

A visual representation of the process by which my data collection and analysis unfolded is depicted on a Venn-inspired diagram (Figure 1) below. It is “Venn inspired,” not Venn, because it is not my intent to offer a diagrammatic and mechanical representation of a logical proposition. The four primary data sources are represented in the intersecting circles to identify the reality of the discursive space of a Humanities 101 classroom, treated as separate discourses joined under the umbrella of Humanities 101.

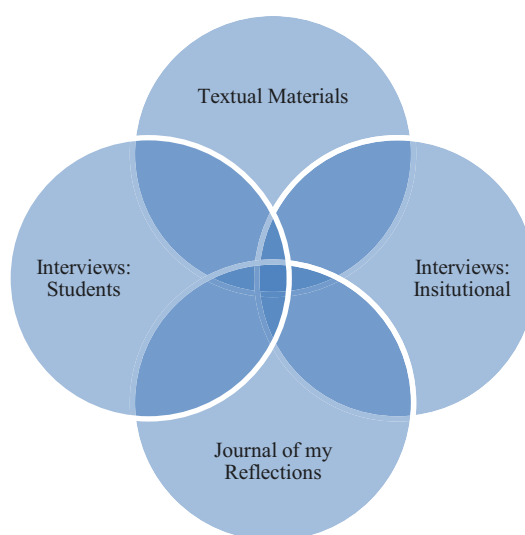


Figure 1. The Relation of the Data Sources

I entered research intentionally allowing the objects of ethnographic scrutiny to unfold. I started with initial codes, or understanding, arising from the literature and program materials and from this data emerged, and from each step of investigation more data materialized. There were intersecting spirals between and among the participants, the texts on humanities education for non-traditional adult learners, and my reflections. It was a process of discovery.

As an exploratory study, participant's accounts, data from my reflection(s), and textual analysis were used to construct a representation of how things worked. In describing institutional ethnography, Smith (2005) referred to the process as "knitting" different perspectives and positions together. The processing of data was ongoing and interactive, and carried on throughout the textual analysis and interviewing stages. I worked between and among the different sources of data and analysis. I coded according to the perspectives and positions I discovered.

Coding. Ethnography is fundamentally an analytical project involving transcription and formal analytic strategies like coding. Coding is used to identify features of the data that are pertinent to the study. It also organizes the data into more concise ideas. Following DeVault and McCoy's (2006, p. 39) suggestion, coding was kept simple, reminiscent of the indexing of a book. I kept it simple because an institutional ethnography is founded on the authority of the experience to frame the ethnography (Smith, 2006), and coding in an institutional ethnography is not about developing themes but reflecting one's analytic interest in explicating how an institution is coordinated (Webster et al., 2015, n.p.). Coding was done manually by highlighting and segmenting the data into discourse strands corresponding to two categories: discussions of the students (Table 1a) and discussions of Humanities 101 (Table 1b). I used preset or a priori codes (bolded and on the left side of Table 1) derived from what the texts had to say about

Humanities 101. I considered the purpose of my study in setting these codes. Emergent codes that developed as data were collected and the transcripts reviewed are italicized and on the right side of Table 1 below. I include sample quotes, from the data I collected, with the tabled codes below.

Table 1

Preset and Emerging Data Analysis Codes, Definitions, and Sample Quotes

Table 1a – Students

<u>Preset</u>	<u>Emerging</u>
<p>Code: Student Identity - Defined in the texts as non-traditional adult learners, that is, socially or educationally disadvantaged and marginalized beings, characterized in the following way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[Having] experience with homelessness, low-income, social isolation, long-term physical or mental illness and/or past negative experiences with the formal learning environment” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2007, p. 1). 	<p><i>Code: Strength</i> – emerged as the most common term the students used to self-identify.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Strong and resilient... I am too strong” (S8). • Strength to “branch out” (S2). • The strength “to jump out there and say “Hey!” [to the world]” (S3). <p><i>Code: Potential</i> – The possibilities open to the students, rather than the reality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “All [of the students] have great potential that has never really been challenged or realized” (I5). • Students are “bundles of potential” (I7). <p><i>Code: Diversity</i> – How many of the institutional participants spoke about the students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I would describe [the students] as quite diverse... there’s really quite a diversity [in the program]” (I6).

-
- “The diversity in the class was just wonderful... we had young students that had done high school or part of high school, and then got drawn off in different ways... There were students that had different types of learning disabilities... [and] older people that were just interested in exploring learning” (I2).

Code: Education –The students experience with the educational system.

- “Rescuing myself I went back to college... I took the [high school equivalency] course” (S8).
- “I always talk about the students as having not accessed post-secondary education for financial or other reasons” (I7).

Table 1b – *Humanities 101*

Preset

Code: Empowerment – Empowerment means to give power or authority.

- “Knowing how to negotiate instead of using force... knowing how to use politics to get along, to get power... it presented [the students] with a more effective method for living in society” (Shorris, 2000, p. 127).
- Such programs are about “joining the *viva active* (the active life), a life based on action and choice and to escape lives of impoverishment” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010a, p. 226).

Emerging

Code: Opportunity – A situation in which something can be done.

- An opportunity “to put an opinion forward, and anybody beside me, around me, near me, can say “well I think this” and come back. And that’s what [Humanities 101] is” (S1).
 - “A second opportunity [for the students] to really build their confidence up in themselves” (I5).
-

Code: Indoctrination – Indoctrination is the inculcation of a person with ideas and attitudes

- Adult education is often reduced to finding the most efficient and effective way to shape learners (Curry & Cunningham, 2000, p. 82).
- The participants demonstrated “diverse and complex patterns of subjectivity... [but] only a minority of them projected an image of themselves that was consistent with the prevailing interpretation [used by the programs]” (Ayers, 2011, p. 209-211).

Code: Enabling – To make able and give power, also to authorize.

- “Enable [the students] to feel the confidence required to open doors in their lives... Enable [them] to see the world in its complexity ... to see things in a different light” (I7).
- “Enable people to think differently and imagine different possibilities for themselves” (I6).

Code: Door Opening – A synonym for opportunity, empowering, and enabling.

- “Everybody that is involved with instructing in Humanities 101... is helping open doors to the university” (I3).
 - A program, providing the “basic building blocks” for people “caught in the system” (I5).
-

The coded data eventually led to groupings and more advanced levels of conceptual analysis, including patterns in the data, inconsistencies and disjuncture, and connective threads among the participants. This is presented as my analysis of the discourse around the institution of Humanities 101 itself.

The following table (Table 2) is a sample comparison table of some of the data that emerged on Humanities 101. I included it here for the sake of transparency of my data analysis method.

Table 2

*Sample Comparison of
Views on Humanities 101*

<u>Student Views</u>	<u>Institutional Views</u>	<u>Program Documents</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A “course to widen [my] perspectives on different areas in life” (S5). • “[An] opportunity to... meet different people with different ideas” (S3). • “[A place] to say [my] opinions in an open forum and not get pushed down for it, and not be afraid to say it” (S1). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “A door opening program... enabling people to feel the confidence required to open doors in their lives” (I7). • “A wonderful program of confidence building... A second opportunity [for the students] to really build their confidence up in themselves” (I5). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Humanities 101] Acquaints students with the potential benefits of higher education experiences • [Humanities 101] overcomes barriers to higher-level educational experiences

Once my codes were established, I went back to my journal and unpacked it accordingly. This helped to confirm that my codes were valid as they were confirmed by my reflections. The reflections include notions like empowerment, enabling, and opportunity, in events like: an institutional participant equating success with education and with university and college enrollment, treating it as a means for the students to claim their minds. Or, students treating Humanities 101 as space to embrace their own thoughts and knowledge and perspective, and shaping the class in a politico-epistemic framing of meaning that made sense to them.

The Dissemination of Knowledge

Meredith (2011) categorized the production and dissemination of knowledge as a way of giving back to the community and a way of expanding the community, which re-energizes the cycle of reflection, research, and action (p. 98). With this sentiment in mind, I have already published part of this research as “Humanities 101: What I have learned from it ... what I am still learning” (Czank, 2016). I presented part of my research at “The Canadian Society for the Study of Education Annual Conference” (CSSE 2017), in Toronto, ON. Other publications and conference presentations will follow. It will also be available through the library and archives of Lakehead University and those of the federal government.

There will be a production and dissemination of knowledge for the participants. I will go back to each of the participating programs and personally present my findings and make recommendations to them. Participants told me that the act of being interviewed initiated for them a cycle of reflection, which enriched the depth of their own understanding and provided a catalyst for not only new knowledge but also served as a means for understanding it. This research is an action for all the programs across Canada and elsewhere, with the aim of enriching the depth of our understanding and the purpose of making a difference for everyone involved with Humanities 101.

Ethical Considerations

The "Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans" stipulates...

special ethical obligations to individuals or groups whose situation or circumstances make them vulnerable in the context of a specific research project, and to those who live

with relatively high levels of risk on a daily basis. Their inclusion in research should not exacerbate their vulnerability. (p. 23)

In this case I had to be aware of the vulnerability of the student research participants. I was aware that processes of interviewing may bring up areas and instances of emotional discomfort for them. They also, at least potentially, ran the risk of embarrassment, either through public exposure and/or because the interviewer hears personal aspects of their lives. I sought to manage these things in the following four ways:

1. Member Checking: Issues of power asymmetries arise within the moments of the social relation between interviewer and interviewee. It also arises with the researcher creating data, to be made over into representations of a discourse (Smith, 2005, p. 137). To overcome issues that arise with creating data the interview data was member checked. By member checked, also called informant feedback/respondent validation, I mean that the transcribed interviews, that is, the data and my interpretations of what was said, was validated by the people from whom the data were originally obtained. This was done to assure the accuracy, credibility, and validity of my transcriptions. This was done formally by sending the participants their transcribed interviews and giving them the opportunity to correct the transcriptions. The follow up interviews with the student respondents were not member checked, because they sent me written replies. Member checking gave the participants the opportunity to correct any errors in my interpretation and challenge anything they perceived as misinterpretation. It allowed the participants the opportunity to volunteer additional information, assess the adequacy of the data, and it presented them with a record of the transcribed data.

2. Research protocols: While there is some inherent risk associated with the interview process, like bringing up areas and instances of emotional discomfort in the participants, precautions were taken to help assure that the participants felt safe, did not feel threatened, and the research did not cause any undue stress or awaken past trauma. I considered the interview location, offering to hold the interviews in a location of the participants choosing. This was done to assure the participants could find and travel to the interviews and to tackle issues of power asymmetry that a setting such as the university might constitute by formalizing the interview and situating my position as expert. It proved conducive to the conversations. Only open-ended questions were used, so that the participants could voice their own experiences and perspectives rather than replicating preconceived ideas or being bound by the parameters of the research. An institutional ethnography progresses by collecting data and explicating it, not substituting the interviewees position with the researchers own.

At every step of the interview process, that is, in the initial invitation sent out, in the consent form they were required to sign, and at the start and end of every interview, participants were assured that their confidentiality would be maintained, they were also informed that participation was entirely voluntary. At these same points of the interview process, they were also informed that they could withdraw themselves and their data from the study at any time, and that no identifying information would appear in the data. Every participant was provided with a pseudonym to remove any risk exposing personal aspects of the participants' lives. I made sure that the participants knew that participation in my research project was not tied to their participation in Humanities 101. They could opt out or withdraw from my research and still be involved with Humanities 101. All data has

been safely stored following its collection. Approval was obtained from the university's Research Ethics Board, along with the approval of the committees governing the programs. To help mitigate the risk of embarrassment, through public exposure of personal aspects of the participants' lives, I have made sure to maintain the anonymity of not only the participants, but the programs themselves.

3. My role: Based on my experience with Humanities 101 I am an insider to this research. I have been involved with Humanities 101 for 5 years. I have served as the Acting Director of a Humanities 101 program, worked as a program assistant, volunteered with Humanities 101, fulfilled my graduate assistance hours through it, taught classes, and assigned projects.

Gibson et al., (2014) said that "power and organizational hierarchies are ubiquitous to... institutions." My experience with Humanities 101 helped me to identify and remain cognizant of the complications inherent to my various roles with Humanities 101 and this research. Every effort, starting with awareness, was taken to remain consistent in the role of researcher and keeping separate my researcher role from the various roles I have held with Humanities 101.

4. I used my "cultural capital" to connect with the students and diffuse the impression that I am just another white male academic, and to help navigate the experiences, language, and experiential base of my participants. It helped ease felt differences between myself and the participants, and to ease discomfort they might have been feeling and to overcome the sorts of hurdles identified by Fontana and Frey (2003) when accessing a research setting, things like understanding the language and culture of the respondents (p. 76), presenting myself to them (p. 77), gaining their trust (p. 78), and

establishing rapport (p. 78). A big part of this meant reciprocating the trust the participants showed me. To paraphrase participant S1, I remained “straight out” with them. I did not make assumptions about the student participants, and I trusted in them enough to be truthful about myself. For example, when one of the student participants was describing his run-ins with the police I let him know I could relate because I too have had run-ins with the police. When some of the participants said that post-secondary education was never an expectation for them, I let them know that I have faced the same sort of hurdle myself.

Limitations of the Study

I recognize and acknowledge that the validity of my findings may be affected by certain limitations. I did not have extended and ongoing relationships with the participants in this study. I tried to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the student participants, but this was more difficult than I anticipated. This might have been because the nature of the student participants in Humanities 101 and the realities of life. I know from experience that many of the students manage jobs, families, and other such commitments along with their participation in Humanities 101, and sometimes life just gets in the way. This is a likely reason for three of the participants not participating in the follow up interview. None of the students expressed concern about the interviews during the data collection. In most cases the participants seemed enthusiastic about participating. Another limitation had to do with generalizing my findings. As with all qualitative research, my findings cannot be generalized. My interview data is based on the experiences and perceptions of a limited number of people from two Humanities 101 programs. While my research involved the concepts around the institution of Humanities 101, the participants in this study reflected the realities of the communities they came from.

Chapter 4. Findings

My report on findings starts out with what I found in the program documents, unfolding from there to the interviews, including student retrospective accounts of their experience, through to my reflections on a Humanities 101 program. I then use “abstractions” derived from this data to shed light on the Discourse. Details of student demographics are included in this chapter. Analysis and an in-depth discussion of the implications occur in the next chapter.

Program Documents

This summary of program documents is a summary of the mission and value statements and program documents of the specific programs that were the focus of this study. These documents provided an entry point into the research. They confirmed that the intention of Humanities 101 is to serve and enrich the community by offering a university level education to non-traditional adult learners. They both purport to do this by removing the financial and social barriers that prevent people from experiencing the excitement and benefits of post-secondary education.

Both programs work to benefit the community and its members by developing knowledge, transferable skill, and empowerment in the students selected for the programs. The programs are described as opportunities to expand academic knowledge, personal development, explore university-level education, and the realization that a post-secondary education is not beyond the abilities of the people in the programs. Reflecting the literature, the mission and value statements use terms like inspire, opportunity, introduce, acquaint, and motivate, all about Humanities 101 and higher educational experiences.

While it is true, as Meredith (2011) has suggested, that most of the Canadian programs do not run exactly like the Clemente Course – for instance, the programs I studied did not limit

themselves to the “rigorous education of literature, philosophy, history, art history, and critical thinking and writing” (The Clemente Course, 2017) as the Clemente Course does, the use of the term “humanities” links them to the Clemente Course and the perspectives explained in literature, as does their general delivery model and their mission and value statements. Their shared values are tied to the conviction that a university level education can provide individuals with opportunities, skills, and “empower them to work effectively toward improving their own lives and those of their families and communities” (The Clemente Course, 2017). From “The Clemente Course” (2017) website:

The experience of... students has demonstrated that through the dialectics of learning, in a caring and respectful classroom, participants develop crucial tools to set in motion personal and societal change, and are empowered to participate more fully in civic life.

The shared mission is to remove significant obstacles that impede access to higher education. It is to “create a bridge to higher education” (The Clemente Course, 2017), and to engage students to better control the direction of their lives and engage their world more effectively. To bridge this with the cave imagery Shorris used in the formation of the original humanities program, it starts with freeing the students and turning them around towards the firelight to see the objects that cast the shadows. This leads to an upward journey out of the cave and into the light.

Unwritten discourse in the program documents. The students are characterized as people with an experience with homelessness, low-income, social isolation, long-term physical or mental illness and/or past negative experiences with the formal learning environment. They are deemed marginalized and disadvantaged, and identified as such even before entering Humanities 101. As has already been mentioned, they come to Humanities 101 as referrals from social service agencies that deal with people experiencing such things and exhibiting such traits.

The programs themselves require that the students be recommended to Humanities by these social service agencies, thus on a very factual level disadvantaged and marginalized become a descriptor of the students of Humanities 101. They must be identified as such to be part of Humanities 101.

The program documents use terms like transform, opening minds and doors, potential, enrich, and success. Deconstructing this, we see that the programs are reproducing key tenets of Discourse I have already touched upon. The two most important examples are:

1. The programs are marketed for people suffering financial or social barriers. People who lack the foundations for thinking and for learning, or as Shorris typified them, people who lack the resources to achieve their fair share in our society. The students are people seen and treated as socially or educationally disadvantaged and marginalized beings. This reinforces the idea that students are people in need of rescuing, and that Humanities 101 is a means of rescue.
2. The Humanities 101 programs offered classes commonly reserved for university-level educational experiences. The experience, excitement, and benefits of a post-secondary education are explained as a means of enriching peoples' lives through the discovery and creation of knowledge. This typifies post-secondary education as a setting that is "rich with symbolic power associated with the elite in our society" (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2007, p. 261), and juxtaposes it with the idea that the students as people in need.

Interviews

The interviews demonstrated the complexities of working and being involved with a program like Humanities 101. They also serve as a reminder for just how different Humanities 101 is – and perhaps needs to be – from a 'regular' university program and 'regular' university

life. Demonstrated within the interviews was an intersection of complementary and at times competing understandings of the program and the people within it. The information collected through interviews collates findings from the initial interview (Appendix 2) and in the case of student participants, a written follow-up (Interview Guide 2B, Appendix 2). It is segmented into discourse strands pertaining to discussions about the students and discussions about Humanities 101. The student sample quotes are referenced as Participant S1 – S9, designating the nine different student respondents. The institutional participant sample quotes are referenced as Participant I1 – I7, designating the seven different institutional respondents.

An institutional ethnography gives the experiences of the participants a political presence (Smith, 2005). It maintains a commitment to exploration and discovery, and provides an expansion of knowledge rather than a substitution of the participants' knowledge and position with the researcher's own. Relevant demographic factors about the student participants are detailed in Table 3 below. The factors in the table appear as they do. I did not ask for demographics, that is, I did not ask them to identify with age, gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin. I asked them to tell me about themselves and took their claims at face value. I asked how they identified rather than substituting factors that others may think are socially and educationally relevant, like socio-economics, employment status, and other hurdles they may have faced in their lives. The factors included in the table arise from the students' accounts of themselves. The table identifies what factors were important to them. I left it up to them to identify the information they thought was relevant. For example, only two of the nine seemed to think ethnicity was a relevant fact about them.

Table 3. *Student Demographics. As Volunteered in Interviews.*

<u>Participants</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Education Level</u>	<u>Self-Description</u>
S1	Male	Indigenous	Did not complete High School	Disabled, Hardworking, Straightforward
S2	Female	Not Specified	High School/Post-Secondary	Adventurous Lifelong Learner
S3	Female	Not Specified	High School/Post-Secondary	Lifelong Learner
S4	Female	Not Specified	High School	Shy but Driven
S5	Female	Not Specified	Not Specified	Motivated Stay-at-Home Mom
S6	Female	Not Specified	High School	Helpful and Happy Person
S7	Female	Caucasian	High School/Post-Secondary	Socially Awkward but Charming, Impoverished
S8	Female	Not Specified	High School Equivalency	Strong and Resilient
S9	Male	Not Specified	Not Specified	Not Specified

I did not provide a similar demographic table about the institutional participants because I did not find that the identity of the institutional participants was a usual part of the Discourse involving Humanities 101.

The Students

What follows is a portrait of the students as perceived by both the student and institutional participants. The following narrative reconstructs the Discourse surrounding and characterizing the students. Characterizations of the students are an important element of the Discourse surrounding and informing Humanities 101. As revealed in the textual data, the characterizations are institutionalized and confirmed on an institutional level, thus necessarily influencing the lives and experiences of the people involved.

Students on themselves. The students of Humanities 101 used many adjectives to describe themselves but seldom did these adjectives correlate to those used by the institutional Discourse. Instead of impoverished the students described themselves as “socially awkward and charming” (S7), and “positive and happy” (S6) people living around the poverty line. The students were “critical” (S1), especially of the overt and covert ways in which they felt silenced. They were “strong and resilient” people “with gumption” (S8).

The concept of marginalization is commonly used to describe the students. In “Riches for the Poor” Shorris (2000) said that the aim of his Clemente Course was to create for the poor and marginalized “a political life” (p.4). In the Canadian programs students are typified as socially or educationally disadvantaged and marginalized beings (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010b, p. 10). Program documents state: “[Humanities 101 is program for] those whose economic situation, academic experience, financial and social well-being [is] compromised” (Humanities 101 Community Programme, 2007). Participant I1 was invoking the concept of Marginalization when he said:

I heard about [the students'] challenges, their personal challenges in their lives... [They are] people who might not be viewed in a favorable light... [they are] people who have to cope with a lot more than the average [person].

But the students did not see themselves as such. Participant S2 was quite resistant to being characterized as marginalized. She defined marginalization in socio-economic terms and observed that it does not encompass who the students are. Her words: “[Marginalization] doesn’t fit. A lot of the people in the program are employed. I think a lot of them still work.” But, when the concept of emancipation was raised, she replied “that sounds good” and “I think it is excellent, because that is what I am looking for right now.” For Participant S1 having a disability meant a willingness and need to function despite it. It meant taking a different look at things, and looking for a new way of doing things.

Strength was the most common adjective used by the students when self-identifying, and it took many forms over the course of the student interviews. For Participant S1 it meant being “very hard working, straightforward, and honest.” This respondent identified as a local to the area and a First Nations person. He was someone for whom not “wasting people’s time with crap” was important. Being “straight out” was a priority. Similarly, for Participant S2 strength meant having the courage to “free her soul,” in response to how guarded and sheltered she had been for most of her life. Another student, Participant S8, said that she had the strength and the gumption to “just keep going.” She described herself using a variety of adjectives, including “eager,” “strong,” “resilient,” “hard working,” “focused,” and “dutiful.” That is, despite life “not being perfect.” She said she is often “too strong” for her own good. Her strength results in “people reading [her] as kind of cold.”

Continuing with the theme of strength, Participant S4 used adjectives like “shy,” “quiet,” and “insecure,” to describe herself, but also admitted to having the strength to leave an abusive relationship and enter a new “process of growing.” Similar sentiments were shared by Participant S3, who desired to learn more about herself. She valued “self-discovery and self-awareness,” and had the strength “to jump out there and say “Hey!” [to the world].” The students were people with self-confidence and self-esteem, and people “motivated to learn” (S5).

Participant S2 was the oldest person interviewed and self-identified as “adventurous,” with the courage and strength to “branch out” from what she knew and from where she was. Her participation in Humanities 101 was an extension of having strength, which started long before her enrollment in the program. When asked to describe herself she said that she is a “person who likes to learn” and “a writer,” who “in [the] future could see [herself] getting published.” Other non-traditional learners described themselves as “discombobulated lifelong learners” (S3), people “wanting to open [their] mind more” (S1), and “adaptable” people finding sanctuary in education (S4).

According to the literature and many of the institutional participants Humanities 101 is for people who have had “past negative experiences with the formal learning environment” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010a). It is true that among the participants there were students who had had negative experiences with the formal learning environment. Participant S6 admitted that her experiences with school were “not very good,” she struggled with teachers and peers. Personal hurdles affected the “school life” of Participant S8. “Family tragedies and a lot of trauma and explosive things derailed [her] high school experience.” Participant S7 referred to her own post-secondary educational experience as an “unmitigated disaster ... a waste of time and

money, and a huge blow to [her] moral.” Participant S3 planned on continuing with her education until life got in the way. In her own words:

I was going to go forward with my education, but then we had [a child], and so ... to me, I had gone back to school when [my other] boys were little, and I thought “I can’t do it again.” So, I decided to just let it go.

But these were not the only points of view. Participant S1, someone who was prevented from graduating from high school, referred to his educational experience as “awesome,” as something he loved and excelled at, and something he “cherished.” He admitted that getting expelled “did not bother [him at the time], as a person [who] did not need a diploma or all that stuff [in the 80’s], so [he] never went back.” He had been a straight “A” student all the way through school. There is an obvious tension in the perspective of participant S1, a tension I did not ask him about at the time of the interview. But, like all these accounts, even the tension speaks to the problem with typifying the students as people with “past negative experiences with the formal learning environment.” He had a negative experience, yet he still described his educational experience as awesome. Participant S8 felt “rescued” by her educational experience. Some of the student participants graduated from high school, and some had attended college and university.

Institutional participants on the students. There were similarities among the backgrounds of the people teaching within Humanities 101 and the students they were teaching. Many of the instructors said that university was never a given for them, and talked of education as an exciting new way of thinking about things that opened the world to them. They felt that their own life journeys allowed them to make connections with the students and enabled them to know on an intimate level many of the challenges the students faced. Many of the institutional

participants expressed personal satisfaction in overcoming the hurdles to get this far in the academic world. Participant I3's message to the students: "I did it! You can do it too! You just need the vision."

Participant I5 was the "non-traditional academic." He was not affiliated with any faculty, but his interests in the environment lead him to study on his own and become a leader in environmental studies in his community. In the interview he repeatedly referred to "second chances to learn" when talking about Humanities 101. The reference seemed reflective of his personal experience.

For many of the institutional participants, Humanities 101 served as a reminder that university 'life' does not always operate in the same way that society operates. As Participant I1 put it, "while the university is in some ways a microcosm of society, in a lot of ways it really isn't." Participant I1 had the following to say about the program:

I think [Humanities 101] helps [us] understand people in society a little better ... because you can start to feel like you live in a tiny little bubble when you work at the university, and your idea of what constitutes being disenfranchised ... is sometimes a little bit skewed because of the specific population ... in [the university system]. I would say that happens too with the community I work with [here], and the friends that I have. But [the students in Humanities 101 are] a different set of people who come from different places and that reminds me that we, as a society, really do have a lot of complex people doing wonderful, complex, interesting, and sometimes very challenging things. It's easy to forget some of those things when you work at a university.

The institutional Discourse uses descriptors like poor and disenfranchised, disadvantaged, and marginalized to describe the students. My use of the term non-traditional is derived from

Groen and Hyland-Russell's (2009) categorization of Humanities 101 students as socially and educationally disadvantaged individuals, people from poor and working-class backgrounds, ethnic minorities, and immigrants. Participant I1 felt it was wrong to describe the students in such a superficial manner using adjectives and labels that dehumanize them. Participant I7 did refer to the students as non-traditional.

Several participants (I2, I4, I5, and I6) used the language of diversity when asked about the students. Participant I2 described the students as people who “got drawn off [education] in diverse ways,” people with “diverse types of learning disabilities,” and “diverse people that were just interested in exploring learning.” “Of course,” said Participant I6, “there is a shared sense of some kind of barriers... but there's really quite a diversity [of people in the program].” In the interviews “diverse” encompassed age, gender, race, socio-economics, and educational backgrounds.

Participant I5 was unable to provide a “textbook description” of the students – that is, beyond “diverse.” Other institutional respondents described the students as people who had “some kind of barrier that had to be overcome, or that [they] are still dealing with” (I6), as people with an interest in learning (I1, I2, I3, I4, I6). Participant I6 maintained that never has she had “a group of students, and its consistent year after year, that are so engaged in learning.” The students were “bundles of potential” according to Participant I7, with the mind, capacity, ability, and desire to interact with the world in complex ways, but lacking the opportunity. In this sense, the institutional participants were paralleling the textual materials covering Humanities 101 and the institution of offering non-traditional learners an education in the humanities. All the students were said to have “great potential” (I5) that had never really been challenged or realized. All the institutional participants equated the experience of Humanities 101 to an inspiration for students

to achieve levels that they would never have achieved otherwise. References to untapped strengths were common.

Humanities 101 was treated as an opportunity for the students, as “it gave [them] some knowledge, gives it to [them] and lets [them] learn” (I3) and “enable them to feel the confidence required to open doors in their lives” (I7). In the words of Participant I7:

[Humanities 101] is a great opportunity to envision and to see what they (the students) could attain should they choose to go that road, and it is certainly possible to break down the barriers of “I’m not good enough,” “I’m not smart enough,” “I’m not worthy enough.”

As such, the students were treated as people who stood to benefit more so than most from the university experience, because it is “a safe place to explore their hopes and dreams and to think about themselves and their world” (I4). According to Participant I4 they lacked “preconceived ideas” of “what they should be learning,” or even “what they were going to learn.” They were “really different” from regular university students. Participant I1 started by saying what the students were not, and that was ‘regular’ or ‘typical’ university types. He said they lacked a “required academic component” in their lives. He also contrasted their “private experiences” with the need to assert an “academic voice”:

[The students of Humanities 101] talk openly about their own private experiences, about how they fit into the university community, and [of] their experiences in the classroom ... stuff like that, but they need to start assert[ing] their academic voices ... because they have academic voices. (I1)

Most of the institutional participants mentioned that the difference between the students of Humanities 101 and ‘typical’ university students is the life experience of Humanities 101

students. This life experience left the students of Humanities 101 with less of a sense of entitlement and more ability to critically reason in a “different way” (I1) than typical university students do. In the words of Participant I1:

I think that the students, because they have different experiences in life, life experiences, that they reason, critically reason in a different way... and they are probably more present and more genuine as a result.

The difference between the students of Humanities 101 and ‘typical’ university types might be due to the difference in age and maturity level. Still, the institutional participants overwhelmingly attributed it to their life experiences as non-traditional learners. Earlier I cited an instructor’s apprehension over describing the students in a superficial manner, the descriptors he chose instead were “interesting” and “neat” (I1).

Humanities 101

What follows is a portrait of the institution of Humanities 101 as drawn by the nine student participants and the seven institutional participants. It reconstructs some of the Discourse surrounding Humanities 101. Again, as the textual data reveals, the idea of Humanities 101 is institutionalized and confirmed on an institutional level. Like characterizations of the students, this Discourse has an effect on the lives and experiences of the people involved. This time, to the notion of the excitement and benefit of a post-secondary education, typified as a setting rich with symbolic power associated with the elite in our society.

Students on Humanities 101. Many of the students used the language of opportunity to describe Humanities 101, an opportunity to open a few doors, to share in the experiences of others and learn from them, and to achieve some level of empowerment in the space that it provides.

“Like a door that is opening [Humanities 101] is an opportunity to see different things, and explore where your interests are,” said Participant S3. The idea of opportunity took on a few different connotations, including a look at the university system and the various programs that are offered (S2, S6), and a working out of a sense of self and situation (S2, S4). Humanities101 was envisioned as a means by which to move forward in life (S7) or a means toward a widening of perspective on different areas of life (S5).

The students also regarded Humanities 101 as an opportunity to share experiences, opinions, and views. The expectation was that hearing the opinions of others would help them view things differently than they did before entering the program. “There are many views and opinions,” said Participant S1, “and there are no wrong answers when we are discussing our life.” As a result “we [learn] that everybody’s got their own story and it kinda [sic] helps to put yours in perspective, and [you] realize that everybody has their [own] challenges.”

Participant S3 juxtaposed what she expected from Humanities 101, that is, “meeting different people with different ideas... and conversing and picking their brain,” with more traditional versions of education. She defined traditional versions of education as “hearing what [something] is,” “here’s what you gotta [sic] learn,” and “and then be done with it.” Having elucidated the difference(s) between what they viewed/experienced as education and what they expected from Humanities 101, Participant S3 explained...

[I see Humanities 101] as an engaging kind of program, [where] you learn a lot about yourself because ... you take a little from each thing and expand your knowledge ... for me, what I have learned [up to now], is that [things] are not always cut and dried and black and white, and somebody else’s opinion of something is really very valuable because it makes me think more ... and learn more about myself.

Humanities 101 was also expected to be an empowering space, an opportunity for students to “voice” their opinions. Participant S1 was very adamant about this. “To be able to say [our] opinions in an open forum, and not get pushed down for it and not be afraid to say it,” he exclaimed, “that’s the biggest thing [about the program].” His narrative equated “not being judged” with “being encouraged,” and juxtaposed both with conformity and compliance. He said:

In this course I can put an opinion forward, and anybody beside me, around me, near me, can say “Well, I think this ...’ and come back at me ... that’s the great thing about the program ... everybody puts things forward and nobody [is] afraid to hold back on anything. (S1)

Participant S4 said she hopes Humanities 101 “makes [her] feel like [she] can actually have an opinion,” especially on things she currently had little knowledge of. She cited the Baconian adage that “knowledge is power,” and through this bit of wisdom described Humanities 101 as an opportunity for empowerment.

After Humanities 101 was over I asked the student respondents about the aspects of the program they connected with – if any, how the program fit with the ideas they have of themselves and whether it made them feel different about themselves, and how they now see Humanities 101 and how it fit with their prior educational experiences. Five students opted to participate in this leg of the research, offering replies that varied in length from a couple lines to several pages. The themes that emerged from the various students were equally varied, sometimes contradictory, and often complex.

In terms of what aspects of the program people connected with, the answers varied from a mention of some of the instructors – although they were not named, to the social aspects of the

program, meeting like-minded people and the exposure Humanities 101 offered to many new things. Some claimed to have connected to the overall concept of the program; others identified topics they liked. A class on Van Gogh and painting “rekindled” Participant S3’s love of painting. A class on the holocaust was intriguing to her; a class on poetry and writing “got the gears going,” and a “dreams class” sparked an interest in the mind. Participant S3 mentioned how passionate some of the instructors were, and really seemed to connect with their passion. Humanities 101 allowed Participant S9 to reconnect with the student he used to be, that is “curious, engaged, and ready to challenge,” and “unashamed of wanting to know [more about the world].”

In answer to how Humanities fit with the students, Participants S3, S5, S6, S8, and S9 drew comparisons between their own non-judgmental and relaxed attitudes and how Humanities 101 operated. Participant S3 compared her “openness to new experiences” to the opportunities that Humanities 101 offered to learn new things. Participant S5 reported that Humanities 101 did little to nothing in terms of making them feel differently about themselves.

Participant S3 and Participant S6 said that at the outset of Humanities 101 they doubted their ability to understand university material. Participant S3 expressed it as the preconceived notion that “university was only for the super smart people, and that [she] wasn’t one of them.” But after starting the program she began to think differently about herself. “I was harder on myself than I needed to be,” she said, “I began to worry less, and I began to trust in others and especially trust in myself.” Through Humanities 101 she started to trust herself to make “wise choices” and to expect more out of life. For Participant S6 it “certainly did change the way [she] lived.” Participant S3 said the biggest regret Humanities 101 left her with was that it made her

realize that maybe [she] could have done university a long time ago ... and believe in [herself] a long time ago.”

Humanities 101 fit with Participant S9’s “affinity for learning,” and reminded him that this affinity is “an essential part of [his] nature, and not merely some adopted behavior.” In answer to whether the program made him feel any differently about himself he responded that it allowed him to feel less “unique” than he tended to. “I saw that I was not the only one who was interested in learning,” and seeing others in similar tough situations allowed him to “negotiate a period of uncertainty in my life.” The answer he gave was entangled with personal experiences that conflicted with the textual Discourse informing Humanities 101.

In the beginning there seemed to be a lot of emphasis on availing ourselves of every possible benefit and privilege of being [university] students. Since I wasn’t sure just how far I wanted to stick my toe in the water, so to speak, these repeated recommendations, though well-intentioned, did make me a bit uncomfortable as I couldn’t entirely escape the feeling that something must be wrong with me if I didn’t take advantage of every opportunity.

According to Participant S9, Humanities 101 provided people who might not have considered university an option with a “taste of the academic experience.” It presented them with “ideas and directions that might not otherwise have occurred to them.”

The final question asked of the students was about their educational experience up until then, and whether Humanities 101 felt any different. They were divided. While the program was reported as worth doing, Participant S5 said that it did not feel any different to her than her previous experiences. Another said that the “general experience was similar,” despite it being “different by virtue of its lack of tests or assignments.” Participant S7 mentioned that it did feel

different, but attributed the difference to the lack of an “educational goal, no assignments, no required reading, no recommended reading, and no deadlines.” She had an idea of what “schooling” meant and “wouldn’t describe the program as schooling to her friends or family.” “Absolutely,” said Participant S3, “I hated the way I was schooled in High School. It was all about memorizing and nothing about actual learning.” She described Humanities 101 as “rich with variety and depth.” The professors “were passionate and encouraged an engaged learning experience. [They] made it personal so that students could relate it to their own life.” Participant S6 said that “Humanities 101 was completely different than [her] previous school experience.”

Some students felt a connection with Humanities 101, others had topics they liked. Humanities 101 offered new things to some, and did little to nothing for others. The general consensus was that Humanities 101 presented the students with an opportunity, ideas, and direction that might not otherwise have occurred to them. Humanities 101 represented for them a door opening process to experience different things and explore their interests.

Institutional participants on Humanities 101. Participant I3 referred to Humanities 101 as a social responsibility. She viewed and treated it as an opportunity to connect non-traditional students to academic content and thus open doors to the university. This view was shared by all but one of the institutional respondents. The only institutional respondent not to use the language of opening doors to the university was Participant I5, the non-traditional academic. He called it a program of “confidence building.” In the words of one of the institutional participants, Humanities 101 was akin to saying: “Come on in this is for you too” (I3).

One of the institutional participants said they had a responsibility to do what professors “should be doing” (I2), which was “getting information out there and doing outreach activities.” The consensus was that once knowledge is acquired, there is an obligation to share it with other

people. All the institutional participants felt that the university had to be part of the broader community, and that Humanities 101 was a way of bringing the community and university together.

Their reasons for teaching in the program came down to perspective and responsibility. They recognized the hurdles the students faced. This led to feelings of responsibility, responsibility for what a university and post-secondary education should be about, and a responsibility to connect non-traditional students to the university and post-secondary world that benefitted the institutional participants themselves. The institutional participants also felt that Humanities 101 connected post-secondary institutions to the broader community of which they are a part.

In describing Humanities 101 the institutional participants used terms like “door opening” (I3, I7), “empowering” (I6), “confidence building” (I5), and a “program offering people choice” (I3). Participants I1, I2, I3, and I4 talked in various ways about it enabling the students. Participant I5 said Humanities 101 provides “basic building blocks” for people “caught in the system, people who grew up in areas that did not have the opportunities that some had, or suffered financial burdens, sickness, or something like that.”

The language of “opportunity” was prevalent throughout the interviews. This was the case for the respondent who said that Humanities 101 provided an opportunity for...

Finding ways to enable [the students] to see the world in its complexity ... [for] when [they] start to think of the world as a complex place and [their] place within it as a location from which [they] can do really cool and unique things ... all of a sudden doors start to open and [they] start to see things in a different light. (I7)

Humanities 101 was as an opportunity to bring students into the university and provide them with a feel for what it is like. Participant I2 said it allowed students to experience the “flavor” of the university.

Participant I7 was quick to point out that Humanities 101 is not about enhancing university enrollment. It is “not intended as a recruitment tool for the university it takes place in, or any other university for that matter.” Humanities 101 is simply about the value of education for “people that have not accessed post-secondary education for financial and other reasons.” Participant I6 said that “it was never the intention that [Humanities 101] be a gateway to university education.” This came with the qualification that if it becomes one of the outcomes for some participants then great. Humanities 101 “creates pathways” for people who “have not been at university or have been and didn’t continue ... to be there, to come onto campus, and to have the experience of being in a classroom and university.”

Shorris was cited by Participant I6. Specifically, his idea that an entry-level university program can “cultivate a kind of critical thinking that can actually empower people to change their lives, or to see where there are systemic barriers to them and find ways to knock them down.” This led to a description of Humanities 101 as “engagement in critical thinking about issues having to do with identity politics and power issues and oppression and so on.”

“If I had to provide a three-minute elevator conversation about Humanities 101,” said Participant I1, “I would describe it as an introductory course to the university, and perhaps to university life and to courses at the university.” When this respondent started volunteering with Humanities 101 he did not know what he was getting into. He asked “some basic questions about the expectations, the audience, and what they wanted to get out of it.” He viewed it as an access program, at least initially...

... in that [Humanities 101] is in part the potential ... to maybe get into a particular [university] program, and to find [one's] own pathway, and be exposed to different instructors from various programs or various professions, so the students learn a little bit about different 'smackerings' [sic] of different programs.

However, Participant II's understanding of Humanities 101 changed immensely with his first experience. Instead of seeing it as an "access program," he viewed Humanities 101 as a "university enrichment course" that introduces students to the opportunities before them.

[Humanities 101] is really about helping [students] envision what their own pathway may be within education, should they choose to pursue that and should they choose to go further with it. It's less an access program and more of a modeling program, more of an envisioning program for the students, about where they see themselves moving in the future should they choose to go down that particular road. As an outreach program I think it does exactly that, it shows the students a different set of opportunities that might exist, and enriches them and their experiences in a way that demonstrates to them that they have the ability to be successful, that they are capable, that they are worthy of being at any university or college or post-secondary education.

The interviews end with a declaration by the same respondent. His experiences affirmed that there are challenges that people face in accessing post-secondary education. He called it a "systems issue," and not an easy problem to overcome. He said that post-secondary education needs to be demystified, and the walls of the ivory tower need to be broken down, because this "would be better for our society, population, and all members of our city and surrounding area." He suggested that more thought must be given to how we bring in non-traditional students,

because bringing them in “breaks the post-secondary factory of turning out the same likeminded people over and over again.”

From the institutional perspective Humanities 101 was an opportunity that provided the students with a feel for what university is like, and to transform, liberate, and empower them, and fundamentally change how they see themselves. The institutional Discourse described the students with broad generalizations about who they are. This informs Humanities 101; it also bleeds into the classes and content, and reinforces a stigma about the students. When the students were asked questions about themselves and Humanities 101, the result was a set of answers that failed to reflect the prevailing discourse. The students did not see Humanities 101 like the institutional participants saw it, nor how it is portrayed in the literature and textual data. They also did not identify like the institutional Discourse described them.

My Reflections on Humanities 101

The third source of data for this study was my on-going reflections, as recorded in a journal. These reflections involved the ways that the people in Humanities 101 interacted with one another in the context of the program, and how their interactions were structured and confirmed institutionally. This account is laid out in chronological order and includes my continuing thoughts as recorded at the time. The journal was started after I was done my initial research of the literature and program materials, but during the time that involved the participants included in this study. What I have included here was summarized after the fact.

What I experienced. Given the Discourse surrounding Humanities 101 I was not surprised when an instructor, a person with a lot of experience lecturing in Humanities 101, started equating success with education and with university and college enrollment. Upon reflection, and given what has already been reported regarding Humanities 101, it is not hard to

understand why. Shorris (2000) maintained that university level studies (topics like grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, logic, and philosophy) – topics commonly reserved for the rich and powerful, could provide non-traditional learners with a foundation for getting along in the world. Even then, at the time, I felt the instructor was simply ‘toeing’ Shorris’ line (so to speak) about the value of post-secondary level education.

Shortly into the same class, post-secondary level education was treated as the means for students to claim their minds. The message rang a little hollow with me, as it seemed to with some of the students. I found the idea of imparting upon someone the ability to claim his or her own mind a dubious proposition. I watched the students transfigure the topic and the message to mean “challenge their norms” – one might refer to it as challenging the “discursive spaces of their everyday,” delivered through examples more in tune with their lives and experiences. They gave voice to the socio-economic hurdles they faced, and in at least a couple of examples, a discussion of their dealings with the police. The topic, the message, and the space, was quickly reclaimed by the instructor. I felt there was a slight disconnection between this class and the students.

Initially, and as a Marxist, I thought about the event as a situation of the powerless facing off against the powerful, or as the under-privileged confronting privilege, but given the context and situation this seems both an imperfect explanation and a difficult thesis to maintain. It simply is not a sufficient account of what was going on. I now think of this event as a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. It seems a much more accurate and defensible thesis. And in that space, and on that occasion, the students used their voices.

The next week the subject matter was power, thinly veiled behind the politics of representation and portrayal. It was a different instructor, and this time what I found particularly

significant was not so much what the students were saying, but what they were not saying ... or, perhaps more accurately said, what they were choosing not to say and what they were choosing to ignore. Again, I felt there was a disconnection between the class and the students, and it stemmed from these so-called non-traditional students resisting the instructor's focus on issues of power, as it had to do with socio-economic class and race. They seemed resistant to engage with issues that they wanted to discuss the week before, issues that many of them faced daily, favoring instead a less politically charged discussion. Reflecting upon the event, I do not see it as subaltern voices being allowed – or given the space – to assert themselves. Rather, and quite in keeping with ideas expressed in texts like “Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” I now see it as an example of people embracing their own thoughts and knowledge and perspective, and shaping the class in a politico-epistemic framing of meaning that made sense to them at the time. This event reframed for me a criticism leveled against adult education programs that suggests that they have little or nothing to do with empowering the learners (Cunningham, 1993), and that in practice such programs often fall short of engaging learners in a meaningful examination of their own needs (Ayers, 2011).² At the time I interpreted what I witnessed as an attempt by the instructor to engage the students with issues she thought they needed to be learning, and the

² The treatment of adult education as social reform is not without its critics. In Ayers (2011) it is said that, in practice, such approaches to adult education often falls short of engaging learners in a meaningful examination of their reality and needs. Cunningham (1993) has suggested that such adult education approaches have little or nothing to do with empowering the learners. In Ayers (2011) study of adult education programs the participants demonstrated “diverse and complex patterns of subjectivity” (p. 209), but “only a minority of them projected an image of themselves that was consistent with the prevailing interpretation [used by the programs]” (p. 211). The conclusion was that all forms of subjectivity are socially constructed, and such programs maintained their own view of subjectivity (p. 197). The programs did not correspond readily to the subjectivities of those involved in the programs. Curry and Cunningham (2000) investigated uncritically accepted assumptions of adult education and its humanistic goals, including empowerment and equality, and found that adult education is often reduced to finding the most efficient and effective way to shape learners (p. 82). These critiques suggest that even a learning/education philosophy of optimism and humanism can be dualistic in thought and manipulative in practice when it assumes the power to empower and transform others. The power disparity between educators and learners must be recognized and considered when educators are from more powerful social groups.

learners were being less than obliging towards the lesson.

In another class there was a discussion of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave." I witnessed Plato taking a back seat to the student's own interpretations of his allegory. The cave took on a more contemporary hue, giving way to Pink Floyd's "wall" and "The Matrix." I enjoyed hearing the students responding in their own terms and with their own examples. Understanding seemed to develop for some of them as the conversation carried on. A few university and college professors were invited to sit in on this class. They confessed to being confused by the situation as it blurred the traditional roles of power and authority within the classroom. They even tried to claim a separate space and role from the students in the room. They were identifying themselves relative to the students, using terms like "power," "member of the establishment," and "position" in reference to themselves. It was their impression that the students in the classroom viewed them much the same way they viewed themselves. This reminded me of Hegel's Lord-Bondsman dialectic, the visiting professors were identifying themselves in relation to the students, situating themselves juxtaposed against the disparate, seemingly antithetical positions of their other. All the while, the students were working on themselves and within their own politico-epistemic framing of meaning. That event demonstrated to me just how discursively bound both the dynamics of power and perception, and the relationship between students and educators really are.

The next week started with a look at the power of language, and moved on to the theme of power. A student asked the instructor: "Why this topic and theme and why now?" His question was quickly quelled by the instructor. I felt disappointed and even a little angry when this happened. It was even a little ironic given the theme of the class, and it seemed to me it happened because the question did not fit with the intentions of the instructor. On to another

week and a new instructor, and this time it was a very scholarly and academic lecture that I felt failed to make a connection with the students. How does one counter marginalizing social forces or transform problematic frames of reference through post-secondary education? Reflecting on what I witnessed, it is not through a lecture that students cannot connect with, or even with discussions of oppression and power. When thinking of my Humanities experience(s) I often think back to something Foucault (1972) said, that beneath the visible and official discourse there often reign other discourses that impose an articulation of their own. At times it is a controlling discourse, or a disturbing discourse, and in one way or another a discourse that stems from a certain set of experiences and a certain sort of knowledge. This seems an especially relevant insight, given what I experienced.

Not all the classes operated the same way; one of the classes started out with a few students sharing their own stories. Their stories seemed to be very well received by the rest of the class. I thought they came across as very genuine, and what they had to say felt very relevant. I was watching a couple of people sharing accounts of the hurdles they faced in their everyday existence, not anything as scholarly as Plato and philosophy. My background is not all that different from the people that shared their accounts, and I have been an instructor leading a class through difficult topics – Plato included. So, I have considered this event in a couple of different ways. Reflecting upon the class, I have come to think of it as education of a different, or perhaps specific, sort. I see it as a politico-epistemic framing of the classroom according to the students' own particular values, ideologies, and experiences. While I understand and believe in the intentions of Humanities 101, I also know that the moments that really excited the students were those they could relate to. Gauged from their engagement, a meaningful education was one about them. Perhaps the same could be said for all of us.

By paying close attention to the dynamics of a Humanities 101 classroom I was able to witness first-hand how the experiences of those involved in Humanities 101 related to Humanities 101. I watched how the institution and its participants related to and engaged with the students. How a powerful, symbolically wealthy, and elite institution and its representatives related to people who are typified as socially and educationally disadvantaged and marginalized. I witnessed examples of seemingly positive classroom experiences and what they entailed. I also witnessed examples of disconnection, like the disjuncture that set me upon this study. What I continually witnessed was how the instructors' relation to the students was codified and justified by the complicated social mechanisms of higher education.

Institutional Ethnography and Humanities 101: Connecting the Dots

An institutional ethnography ties people and events together in ways that make sense of “abstractions” (Taber, 2010). In this section I use “abstractions” derived from the above data, that is, student identity (including perceptions about the students' educational experiences), opportunity, and something I refer to as enablement. When taken together they illuminate the Discourse associated with Humanities 101 and how the experiences of people are structured and affected by the institution of Humanities 101. Each of these was evidenced in specific comments, observations, and incidents, outlined in the previous sections.

Who are the students? In the literature the students chosen to participate in Humanities 101 programs are typified as non-traditional, that is, people who have “an experience with homelessness, low-income, social isolation, long-term physical or mental illness, and past negative experiences with the formal learning environment” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2007, p. 1).

In the mission and value statements of the programs that were the focus of this study, the students were somewhat innocuously portrayed as “community members with a love of learning.” The institutional participants I interviewed from these programs thought of the students much like the characterizations in the literature. As detailed in the previous sections, they saw students as people hampered by the barriers of “not [feeling] good enough,” “not [feeling] smart enough,” and “not [feeling] worthy enough.” They referred to the students as simply a different set of people, suggesting that students were different in comparison to people with privilege(s). The “one common denominator” attributed to all the student’s was having great potential that has never really been challenged or realized. The students were people caught in the system, people who grew up in areas that did not have a lot of opportunity. They were people suffering financial burdens and sickness. That is, the students are non-traditional, marginalized, and it follows people and in need of rescuing.

Characterizations like these situate a Discourse about the students, structured by Humanities 101 and supported in a large part by the people who represent the primary link between the students and the programs, and who represent the vehicle, that is, the university establishment, by which the program is realized. Yet there is a difference between the institutional perception of the students it serves and the perceptions of those students about themselves.

A great example of this difference is the lack of reference to poverty by the students. As referenced in “Table 3: Student Demographics” (p. 58), only one of the students mentioned poverty in their self-description. This is despite the institutional Discourse describing them as non-traditional students with “low socio-economic status” (I1), and people facing financial burdens (I4, I5, I7). Like poverty, race and culture were also used in the research literature to

characterize the students, but again, referencing the same table, only two of the students identified themselves as such. Even then, it was not something they focused on. The reality is, some of these people might be poor or identify racially without describing themselves as such, especially if they were not asked about these things. But the data collected had to do with the Discourse and discursive spaces of Humanities 101, and part of it had to do with what the participants said, or did not say. It is especially relevant when it so clearly sits at odds with the more pervasive institutional Discourse informing the programs and reflected by the institutional participants.

A sub-theme of the prevailing Discourse common among the institutional participants was the sense that these students were unsuccessful in elementary and secondary school. That is, these people were expected to be drop-outs from regular school systems for a variety of reasons, people suffering from “past negative experiences with the formal learning environment” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2007, p. 1).

This perception came from the literature. When I examined the website descriptions of the various programs across Canada, many of them refer to the students as people with prior negative education experiences, and people who have faced barriers to accessing formal education. Most of the institutional participants I interviewed also characterized the students this way. Some of the examples provided in the previous section include the characterization of students as people suffering from an incomplete education, or as people who got drawn off education in diverse ways, and even people with learning disabilities (I2). They were also described as people lacking post-secondary education for financial or other reasons (I7), and people for whom life got in the way of their education (I3).

Some student participants did fit that Discourse. But others gave different and positive accounts of their educational experiences. One of the examples provided earlier is S1 having an “awesome” educational experience, that is, despite being expelled from high school. Some of the student participants graduated from high school, and some had attended college and university.

In two instances, student participants even gave examples of how they felt they were failed by formal education. Returning to Participant S1, despite being a straight “A” student on the honour roll with an “awesome” educational experience, he was “prevented” from graduating from high school due to an “unfortunate incident.” Participant S7 attended “Loyalist College for photojournalism, [then] switched to print in [her] second year.” She viewed her college experience as a disaster. She attributed this to not receiving necessary supports, so it became “a waste of time and money, and a huge blow to [her] morale.”

The question that distinguished this research was: *How do the experiences of those involved in Humanities 101 relate to the institution known as Humanities 101?* In this case, the prevailing and structured Discourse of Humanities 101 hinted at student failure as a barrier to their education, but the reality for the students was far more complicated than that. The students had varied and problematic experiences with formal educational systems, and they also experienced successes. But the institutional Discourse did not acknowledge this. This is an example of the chasm between Discourses. Characterizing the students as people with past negative experiences with the formal learning environment is a passive construction which allowed the onus for the failure of the educational experience to rest with the students themselves. While the prevailing Discourse depended on the position of the respondent within the institution, the programs were structured by an institutional Discourse (the characterization of students as people with past negative experiences with the formal learning environment), and the

students were subject to all the subtext that came with it. In what follows I turn to the notions of opportunity and enablement, which have to do with the students of Humanities 101 but speak to the institution in a direct manner.

Opportunity. The prevailing Discourse on Humanities 101 describes it as an institution dedicated to the notion of opportunity. In the original program, Shorris (2007) defined “opportunity” as the development of life skills that enhance participants’ interaction in the larger community. Underlying this line of reasoning, and exercised within a focused institutional Discourse, is an appeal to the value of a university education. Two examples of this are: “[The university is a] setting that is rich with symbolic power associated with the elite in our society” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2007, p. 261), and, Humanities 101 as “learning for the elite that [the students] feel is barred to them” (Groen & Hyland-Russell, 2010c, p. 40). These themes were repeated within the programs in this study. The goals, as set out in the program literature, referred to Humanities 101 as an opportunity for students to explore university-level education, and as an opportunity to access a university-level educational experience.

The institutional participants viewed opportunity in much the same light as the literature and followed the line of reasoning as published on the program websites. I1 referred to Humanities 101 as providing the students with “a different set of [options].” In the context of opportunity, this meant allowing the students to realize that “they have the ability to be successful, that they are capable, *that they are worthy of being*³ at any university or college or post-secondary education.” Humanities 101 was also said to provided the students with the opportunity to cultivate a kind of critical thinking that empowered them to change their lives, and to see the systemic barriers they face, and the ways to knock them down (I6). Participant I7 suggested that Humanities 101 was an opportunity for the students to “think about the world in a

³ My italics

university sort of way ... and to assert their academic voices.” The ideal of opportunity they offer is deployed, not as much as a counterbalance to the subordination of learning as a vocational pursuit, but as a complement and reinforcement of the idea of empowerment. This is because the version of opportunity deployed by Humanities 101 is derived not only from educational traditions and ideologies, but also from an appeal to the value of a university education. “Opportunity” meant the opportunity to allow the students to be successful in an institutional setting such as a university. It did not appear to be intended to aid the students in accepting and understanding their lives as they were, but rather providing opportunities to change the direction that their lives had taken.

The opportunities described by the institutional Discourse were once again at odds with the opportunities that the student participants voiced and valued. None of the students expressed a specific interest in reentering an education institution. The students’ saw Humanities 101 as an opportunity for many things, among them an opportunity for voicing their own opinion, for self-discovery, self-awareness, and for meeting new people with whom to share new ideas. I will cite an example for each of these. The data comes from the previous sections.

The first example comes from Participant S1 who thought of the opportunity provided by Humanities 101 in terms of the excitement of educational exchanges. He wanted to “voice” his own opinion. It was an opportunity to be heard and valued. He was particularly adamant about this. He wanted the opportunity to say his opinions in an open forum, and not get pushed down for it, and not be afraid to say it.

The second example comes from Participant S3 who thought of the opportunity provided by Humanities 101 in terms of and self-discovery and self-awareness. Participant S3 treated Humanities as an opportunity to explore her own interests and engage with other people. She saw

it as “conversing, and picking [her own] brain and moving into things.” For her, opportunity meant engaging with her classmates and their “very valuable” opinions.

The third example comes from Participant S6 who thought of the opportunity provided by Humanities 101 in terms of meeting new people with whom to share new ideas. She saw Humanities 101 as an opportunity to “learn and meet new people, and to gain a new understanding about [her]self and others.”

One of the student participants (S9) was quite aware and explicit about the difference between his views of the programs and those of the institution. He understood the intention of the program as an opportunity to access a university-level educational experience, but was not sure that he shared those goals. As cited earlier, he explained how the program placed a lot of emphasis on the students to avail themselves of the benefit and privilege of being university students. But, he wasn’t sure just how far he wanted to “stick [his] toe into the water.” The repeated recommendations made him feel uncomfortable, as he couldn’t entirely escape the feeling that something must be wrong with him if he didn’t take advantage of every opportunity. That is, if he did not heed the Discourse informing the programs.

An opportunity is a favorable circumstance that provides an opening. At the core of opportunity lies a decision to “enable.” The story of Humanities 101 was not just occasioned as opportunity; it was also occasioned as a chance to enable the students in some way. I will use the term “enablement” to explore this expectation that is implicit in the institutional Discourse.

Enablement. The prevailing Discourse on Humanities 101 describes it as enabling integration into society. Other synonyms that appeared in my data were helping, permitting, cultivating, empowering, and creating. I grouped these in the “enablement” theme when analyzing the data. Here too, the students’ accounts came up against the instructors’ accounts,

which were in keeping with the perspectives of higher education, structured and confirmed by Humanities 101.

In the literature Humanities 101 was said to enable “the possibility for student transformation from disengagement to engagement in learning and society” (Groen and Hyland-Russell, 2010a, p. 239). Such programs enabled the students to live better lives and to enjoy life more, through “presenting them with a more effective method for living in society” (Shorris, 2000, p. 127). The enablement theme was also present in the program materials. Thunder Bay and Orillia Humanities 101 (n.d.) suggests that Humanities 101 provides the chance for the development of knowledge, transferable skills, and self-empowerment, on both a personal and community level. UBC’s “Humanities 101 Community Programme” (2007) is described as “training that empowers students to use critical thinking in everyday life and inspire a passion for lifelong learning,” and “Discovery University” (n.d.) suggests that it “empowers students to think and engage more critically with their community.”

Not surprisingly, this theme of enablement was also repeated by the institutional participants. For example, Humanities 101 enabled the students to feel the confidence they required to open doors in their lives, and get involved in the world. It enabled the students to see the world in its complexity, as a place of opportunity (I7). The same participant (Participant I7) also said Humanities 101 “enabled [the students] to find their voices in relation to [their] community.” Other participants also focused on enabling students. Participant I6 said Humanities 101 enabled people to think differently, and to imagine different possibilities for themselves.

For the institutional participants enablement occurred through a university education and university lessons the students would otherwise not have access to. The institutional participants

viewed the students as people who haven't really had the opportunity to think about the world in a university sort of way (I7). The line of reasoning seemed to be that Humanities 101 enabled people who were otherwise lacking in opportunity and/or ability to be successful, capable, and worthy. This idea of enablement, as described in the institutional Discourse, was not reflected in the students' accounts of Humanities 101.

For the students Humanities 101 meant a chance to understand themselves and their relationships. It was not about being enabled to participate in societal institutions such as further education, it was about the chance to be free, to rebuild, to reconnect, and to form relationships with others. Their goal was not necessarily to further integration into a society that had failed them. I will give examples. The data comes from the previous sections.

The first example is from Participant S2, who described Humanities 101 as a chance to "free [her] soul." She started by talking about Humanities 101 as an introductory course to the university, to see how one would fit in if one were to take some courses. The second example was quite introspective. S8 described Humanities 101 as a chance to rebuild her confidence and understand herself a little better. The accounts and experiences of her fellow classmates was a big part of participant S8's experience. They enabled her to put her own self in perspective. The third example has to do with reconnection. Participant S9 spoke about how Humanities 101 allowed him to reconnect to the person he used to be, that is, a curious person, a person engaged with the world, who is ready for any challenge and unashamed of wanting to know more. For him, Humanities 101 was about returning to the person he was. The final example is Participant S1, for whom Humanities 101 meant meeting a bunch of people with different backgrounds and talking about all kinds of different subjects. It presented a chance to "go off base or off on other

topics.” His focus was on forming relationships with others and the excitement of educational exchanges.

Whether it is opportunity or enablement, what the students wanted was a platform, and not an introduction to an active life, or a foundation for getting along. They were not asking to be enabled, and opportunity meant something quite different for them than that associated with institutional Discourse. Students described Humanities 101 as a chance to widen perspectives they already held, and as a means of exploring what they found interesting. It was a way for them to keep moving forward, rather than a means of getting going or moving into something different. These differences in perspective and Discourse were not limited to the data reported in the interviews or even the literature. In my reflections I noted similar instances.

Taber (2010) said that an “institutional ethnography traces the ways in which [data] stitches together smaller social groupings into larger institutional contexts” (p. 11). What I have stitched together are small groupings that represent the discursive space and institutional context of Humanities 101. On the surface the differences I identified might seem small and inconsequential, but they all speak to the complicated institutional mechanisms of Humanities 101. There is an institutional Discourse to Humanities 101, and it clearly gives meaning to the programs I studied. I address the consequences of this in the analysis and discussion that follows. In keeping with institutional ethnography, the answers have political overtones (p. 12).

Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The question that distinguished this research was: How do the experiences of those involved in Humanities 101 relate to the institution of Humanities 101? There was no single, definitive account of the nature of Humanities 101. Different people defined it differently. However, this study revealed a chasm between the instructors and institution, and the students' values, domains, and beliefs about Humanities 101. The understanding of the Discourse surrounding Humanities 101 appeared to be flexible and open to interpretation. The interpretation varied from person to person but there was a dramatic difference between the perceptions of the students and the institutional accounts. In many cases, the instructors' relations to the students and the programs seemed codified and justified by the complicated social mechanism of higher education, structured and confirmed by Humanities 101. In the end, this left me asking whether our offering of Humanities 101 was true to the intention of liberatory or emancipatory education, or was it just another version of education for cultural conformity? For, the results revealed that both the programs involved in this study reflected the literature and general discourse used to describe and define Humanities 101 and Clemente-inspired programs.

The results of my research are explained in several steps: a) a discussion of Discourse structuring the experience, b) a Freirean analysis of the data, and finally c) conclusions and comments on future research and practice.

Discourse and the Structuring of Experience

Institutional ethnography is ethnography of the relations that structure people's lives, through the ways that they interact with one another in a given context and how their interactions are confirmed institutionally. Jackson (2012) defined education as a socially facilitated process of transmission with the explicit goal of effecting an enduring change in its recipients.

Humanities 101 is informed by a similar take on education, and forever aligned with the idea that the best education for the best is the best education for all. It privileges higher education, and treats it as emancipatory, liberatory, transformational, and citizen building. This is the background of the Discourse, as defined by Foucault, surrounding Humanities 101. As Foucault (1972) described it:

[Discourse is] a violence that we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them; it is in this practice that the events of discourse find the principle of their regularity. (p. 229)

The Discourse around Humanities 101 begins with the purposes associated with it. It is offered as a program for people who lack the resources to achieve their fair share in society, those suffering low-incomes and marginalization. Students are characterized as marginalized and disadvantaged even before entering the program because of the referral process. This characterization, the ideas described in the literature, the context and content of the programs and their place in the institution, involve a Discourse which situates Humanities 101 as an institution. This Discourse was present in all the institutional data I collected.

This Discourse established orders of truth and influenced what was accepted as 'reality' for Humanities 101. It arose in the orientation of the programs and institutions. This institutional Discourse gave a definition to situations and events, and reinforced the identity of the programs. It pressured and modified patterns of meaning, and regulated the classroom and the people in it. It situated the programs and gave them historical meaning. Such a Discourse, that contextualizes and regulates, modifies. In a very pragmatic sense, the programs and the experiences of the people involved never really stood outside the Discourse. This is important. To paraphrase Fiske (1996, p. 3), to make sense of something, as institutional Discourse does, is to exert power over

it. To circulate that sense in the social context of the program is to exert power over all those who used it as a way of coping with the world.

The problem with this is that the Discourse surrounding Humanities 101 produced and sustained assumptions, which were not always in keeping with the perception of the people the program was intended to serve. Strengthened by what becomes familiar, the prejudices and perspectives associated with Humanities 101 continued to inform the institution even though they were markedly different from what the students reported.

Most of the institutional participants, the program materials, and the literature, spoke of the value of the programs in terms of what they needed to do for the students. It was the basis for most of the conceptions of opportunity and enablement they espoused. They maintained that Humanities 101 is not meant as a recruitment tool for the university. However, the presumed value of university or academic education remained at the forefront of the accounts and the institution. The spell of the academy remained *sui generis* for the institutional participants and Discourse in Humanities 101. The university and its culture were treated by some as beneficial. Others called it enabling. Most attributed to it the power to provide people with the confidence they needed to get on with their lives. One of the institutional participants even invoked the notion and benefit of having an academic voice.

University life was at the forefront of the institutional accounts and Discourse, along with opening doors to the university, and the benefit of being in a university setting. Complex interaction with the world was made synonymous with academics and university education. Some of the institutional participants talked of the university learning experience, and others defined Humanities 101 as sort of university enrichment course, and defined possibilities open to the students according to it.

All seven of the institutional participants found inspiration and perhaps a refuge of sorts in their role as instructors, or director, and in their positions within the university system. In their roles with Humanities 101 they all occupied a position somewhere between traditional university teaching and community worker. This hybridism was underscored by their belief in the value and privilege of a post-secondary experience.

This played out into an articulated distinction, or perhaps juxtaposition, between experience and academia. This distinction has become fairly standard fare for those offering an education in the humanities to non-traditional adult learners, although it is not always referred to in such specific terms. The programs and, by extension, the students have become the unconscious prisoners of such Discourse. Two aspects of this Discourse become apparent and will be discussed separately: 1) Humanities 101 provides students with opportunities they otherwise lacked and 2) The students are a homogeneous group.

1. Humanities 101 provides the people enrolled in it with opportunities they otherwise lacked. The Discourse focused on what the people did not have rather than what they could bring to the institution. One seldom found any privileging of what the students already knew; instead, the Discourse focused on how the students would benefit from the experience of being in a university setting, or sampling its particular flavor. There were references to cultivating the type of thinking that empowers people to change their lives, and to enabling people to think differently about themselves. According to institutional discourse, Humanities 101 provided the students with the foundation they require for getting along in the world, and introduced them to an active life. This was all made synonymous with the experience of university learning and the specific kind of quality

learning it entails. But quality is a perspective on truth for us, that is, like the quality of the university experience, and not truth in-itself.

2. The students are a homogenous group. The term student was used within the Discourse of the institution to categorize a group of people assumed to belong to a certain group.

Through the interviews with the institutional participants I came to understand this non-traditional group as something quite definitive, as people lacking ability, and capacity, and desire. The students of Humanities 101 were described as people caught in the system, without opportunity, and suffering, sick, and challenged. Or they were perceived to be people without opportunity, and people who failed to make the best choices. Some of the institutional participants were hesitant to describe the students of Humanities 101 as marginalized, instead using words like fallen and disabled. Others described the students by what they were not. They were defined as significantly challenged and coping, although others suggested they were interesting and neat people.

The Discourse informing Humanities 101 situates the program in the privileged space that a university occupies, and the serious barriers that exist for many people in accessing that kind of learning.

At the onset of this study I understood Humanities 101 as an institution for non-traditional learners and as a means of empowering people from socially or educationally disadvantaged situations. As such, when I talked about Humanities 101 I was talking about an idea. I had accepted the official Discourse, manifest in the literature, program documents, and subsequently by the institutional participants. Throughout this study this Discourse came up against the students' sense of self and the ideas and expectations they had for the programs. The institution fails to map neatly onto the life and experiences of the students.

The students' resistance to what was going on in the programs, manifest in the disjuncture I mentioned earlier, reflected more than a difference in views or even priorities. It is rooted in fundamental differences in how they treated and understood the world and themselves. For example, not one of the students referred to him or her-self as marginalized. Nor did any of them use the word oppressed, outside of a class that had oppression as one of its topics. They did not see themselves in the same way as the program did. Their views did not concur with the ideas informing Humanities 101 and the expectations of the people responsible for actualizing it in the classroom.

The reason for this seems clear. Both the institutional participants responsible for running and deciding upon Humanities 101, and Humanities 101 itself, are coordinated and structured to act and to think within the Humanities 101 Discourse. It is a constructed program and institution accorded to the theoretical underpinnings of humanities education. Student development typically meant fostering in the students a new outlook, providing them with perspective, and offering them new ways of responding to their situation. In this sense Humanities 101 is an extension of the accepted formal learning environment.

This meant that, within the Humanities 101 classroom there were Discourses that intervened, intersected, and contravened each other. According to the institutional Discourse, and the institutional participants, Humanities 101 was one thing. According to the students, it was something else. The difference is more than semantics. The perspectives sit in sharp contrast with one another and are strikingly dissimilar.

The different Discourses and perspectives operating in and on the program at the same time resonated within these two distinct positions in a series of fragmented and disjunctive exchanges. The institutional participants and the Discourse informing the programs and

institution operated in keeping with standard and traditional notions of education and classrooms. People adopted traditionally accepted classroom protocol: Raise your hand if you wish to speak, do not interrupt, talk about the topic introduced and controlled by the instructor. The conventions were adhered to by both students and instructors, but the topics chosen by the instructors were not necessarily the ones the students wished to explore. Some of the students demonstrated a more insurrectionary perspective. The empowerment they were looking for was not empowerment as reified and fixed upon by the institutional elements of the program, as the capacity of the institution to rescue and recuperate the lives of the students; for, such a notion only transforms empowerment into so much “hollow, nominal, and empty terminology” (Lankshear 1994, p. 164). Rather, it was empowerment in a much more real and meaningful sense.

The institutional Discourse and structure of Humanities 101 appeared to be a discourse of “we”. That is, “we” need to help these poor and underprivileged people through an educational system that worked for us. We need to introduce them to worthwhile culture and experience and education. We need to address their needs. We need to “allow subaltern voices to assert themselves because interpretation, definition, description of the program and action, according to institutional and textual discourse, obscures what really takes place within the classroom” (hooks, 1994, p. 62). The institution of Humanities 101, in this sense, is little more than a continuation of privilege by the privileged. We have the answers because we have the degrees and we represent the privileged space that is a university and post-secondary world. The disjuncture comes when we understand that the people being spoken for were able to find their own answers in being who they are.

An education that helps overcome isolation and powerlessness is less about academics and more about the people involved. To paraphrase Giroux (2010, p. 191), within Humanities 101 there was little proof that pedagogy is treated as anything but status quo. Genuinely critical education, as a deeply civic, political, and moral practice – that is, pedagogy as a practice for freedom, evades it. I observed opposing discourses, but all were largely subordinated to a standard order as a vestige of the status quo and traditional notions of education and privilege.

The Discourse that informs and makes up Humanities 101 was not different from the formal learning environments that supposedly failed the students in their earlier educational experiences. There were few opportunities that allowed students to tell their stories based upon their experiences, and there were very few manifestations of these stories and experiences in the classroom. Many of the interchanges between the students and the institution had the accepted dynamics of power as a constraining feature, implicit in language, framework, and perspective. The delivery and structure were certainly reminiscent of education in the standard format of transmission of knowledge from an individual to a group. The result of this for the students, to paraphrase Smith (2006), is that within the space of the classroom their actuality became accountable to the overarching Discourses of Humanities 101.

In Nietzschean terms, a look at discursive spaces is a look at what is active behind the ideas, that is, the people and the participants. These all express something that is true for them. This makes the conflicts encountered in difference, including between epistemological scruples, conflicts between quite definite perspectives (Nietzsche, 1968). Humanities 101 was a space not easily navigated. As a process, it was coordinated by an institutional Discourse, in practice it was a collection of individuals who came into it with different needs, understanding, and knowledge. While it purports to be an example of learning that liberates and transforms beliefs, values, and

underlying assumptions, dissolution of barriers, a program holding the promise for radical change, empowerment, and enabling, the Discourse in the program and its juxtaposition showed that it really is not – at least, no more so than any other post-secondary classroom. Humanities 101 did not engage with a collection of quite definite perspectives, instead it remained tied to just one. Put simply, if a genuinely critical education – pedagogy as a practice for freedom and emancipation is about the people in the classroom, then critical education is not what Humanities 101 was about. To paraphrase Che Guevara, it is erroneous to say that a person can be emancipated. For, the emancipation of someone else is impossible; a person can only be emancipated by his or herself. The students seemed to realize this.

A Freirean Analysis

Institutional ethnography provided the basis for this study of Humanities 101, the description of its authorities and delimitations, and even the exploration of the systems according to which Humanities 101 was classified, derived, and divided as an object of discourse. The focus of my study initially was not the binaries/dichotomies of dominant versus dominated, good versus bad, or powerful versus powerless, but of the differing perspectives occupying various and sometimes seemingly contradictory positions. This route was adopted because Humanities 101 is an institution of individuals and relationships, which suggests a thematic of complex social networks and discursive spaces. As such, an institutional ethnographic methodology was adopted as a means of explaining the disjuncture I witnessed in my time with Humanities 101. My role involved taking up inquiry from the site, that is, Humanities 101, to look at the site from the standpoint of the people involved through their own accounts, and explain how the site works so that people are engaged with it as they are. As such, it was an extension of the boundaries of the data and the individual participant's knowledge and experience.

The critique I offer now rests on the critical and dialectical theorems of Freire's notion of power as an explanation of the disjuncture that set me upon this research. Freire believed that we are (or should be) active participants in the world, based on the idea that we are involved both in and with it, in a 'praxical' relationship. Praxis is connected to outcomes in terms of participant perspective and experience. Praxis is a challenge to common sense divisions between theory and practice. It is reflection and action and the dialectical interplay between the two. It makes a demand upon consciousness to be mindful of the relationships between consciousness, actions, and the world (Glass, 2001).

Freire's notion of existing "in" the world suggests a standard individual and determinate view of things, while existing "with" the world rounds things out for his philosophy. "With" is plural in nature which organizes our involvement in the world in *necessitudinem*. The basic tenet he followed is that we should exist in and with the world in a meaningful and authentic way (Czank, 2012). This provides a great deal of perspective on the issues of interest and questions of power; it also provides a means for analysis of the data presented here. Freire's concepts were used to look at the idea of equality and relationships within the programs, and as part of the analysis to connect the intentions of praxis (as offered through the program) and the intended outcomes of the programs and institution.

The dynamics of power within Humanities 101, and the unequal relationship between dominant and dominated poles, existed in antithetical contradiction. Freire (1993) used the term "antithetical contradiction" to refer to the dynamics between the oppressed – those whose own voices are silenced, and those who "subsist on the oppressed and find their authentication in the vertical relationship between themselves and the latter" (p. 132). In this critique power is treated in a Marxian or Freirean sense, as something that one has or does not have.

The catalyst for this study was a disjuncture I witnessed while working with Humanities 101. This study illuminated the disconnection between the perceptions of the instructors and institution of Humanities 101, and the students' values, domains, and beliefs. Freirean theory suggests the irrationality of calling an education carried on by "A" for "B" or derived by "A" about "B" empowering. Freire would argue that education needs to be "A" with "B." Otherwise, it remains an alienating experience.

I have argued that the Discourse inherent to the operation of Humanities 101 is organized with the intent of showing poor and disenfranchised people the way to a better life. Humanities 101 is said to elicit a significant shift in the learners' beliefs, values, and underlying assumptions, using radical educational goals that counter marginalizing social forces. Meredith (2011) defined the Canadian Humanities 101 programs as nourishing learning environments that counter neo-liberalism and lend experiential knowledge to a struggling public education sphere that is being overwhelmed by the forces of capitalism. In short, Humanities 101 is supposed to be about emancipation, addressing issues like identity politics, power, and oppression.

Education can be viewed as either a means of emancipation or a process of indoctrination. It is a terrain where power and politics are given fundamental expression, "where the production of meaning, desire, language, and values engage and respond... [it is] a struggle for a particular future and form of social life" (Giroux, 1988, p. 110). Freire focuses on the emancipatory possibility of education. That is, it can be a form of action that joins critique to possibility, with the potential to be a struggle for humanity and emancipation. But, there is another possibility. Education also holds within it the possibility for indoctrination. Both humanization and dehumanization are real possibilities, especially as it pertains to people, politics, and the dynamics of power that underlie both (Freire, 1993, p. 43).

An emancipatory discourse, by its very definition, cannot be the property of an educator, but must be part of the practice of education itself. In the words of hooks (1994), education only emancipates when it is a field in which we all labor, educators and the educated alike. The situation that individuals find themselves in is what conditions their consciousness, and this in turn conditions their attitudes and their ways of dealing with their world. When a person is denied his or her right to voice his or her history and experience – as Subject – his or her consciousness becomes dominated and alienated (Freire, 1993, p. 130). One’s history and experience, as Marx said, is what makes people who they are. The necessary logic of this is, of course, that it is only when one has one’s history and experiences that she or he is a full person, that is, non-alienated.

An emancipatory education, and emancipatory knowledge, involves critical self-reflection as distinct from that which is gained from sources external to us. To this end, Mezirow (1991, p. 87) called emancipatory education “appraisive,” rather than prescriptive or designative.

The emancipation in emancipatory learning is emancipation from libidinal, linguistic, epistemic, institutional, or environmental forces that limit our options and our rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted or seen as beyond [our] control.
(p. 87)

The personal experience and consciousness of the world differed among the people involved with and attending Humanities 101, and within the groups themselves. The data showed that, at times, people stood opposed to one another and to what was happening in the classroom. There were obvious differences between what the institution and what the students had to say. The Discourse, and the process of Humanities 101, denied the subjectivity of the students so that they became dominated and alienated from their own history and their own experiences. This

was the result of looking at how the experiences of people involved in Humanities 101 were structured and how they related to the institution and Discourse. The history and the experiences of the student participants were non-traditional. So, this history and experience had little value in the context of the classroom within the promise of a radical humanities program. The students were responding to discourses and perspectives that tended to problematize or ignore their experiences and histories. The institution, in this case, became a synonym for domination.

At the forefront of Freirean educational theory is the need for an “authentic education” in which “A” with “B” mediates the world and people’s experiences and understanding of it (Freire, 1993, p. 93). But, “A” for “B” or derived by “A” about “B” is the mandate articulated in the Discourse that informed Humanities 101 and how it was to be manifested in the classroom. It is an example of formal notions of education. The designation of “university” as a place of power and privilege sets the instructors up as the possessors of knowledge and casts the students in a role that is subservient and powerless. Or, people in need of rescuing.

The Discourse of Humanities 101 matches the “naively conceived humanism” that Freire (1993, p. 93) said overlooks and ignores the concrete, existential, present situation of real people. Student resistance to the program and lectures, stemmed from fundamental differences in how the students thought they should be treated and how they understood the world and themselves. The students expressed some views that did not concur with the ideas informing Humanities 101 and the expectations of the people responsible for the classroom. The students were being reigned in from really challenging their norms.

Humanities 101 is based on the intention to cultivate a type of thinking that empowers people to change their lives, a thinking that enables them to think differently about themselves. But empowerment and enabling are made synonymous with the expectation that the experience

will include university learning, traditional and formal notions of education, and the specific kind of learning and knowledge associated with it. University learning is just the kind of formal learning environment that failed many of the people who were enrolled in Humanities 101. It is important to remember that the value of university learning is a perspective on truth for many of us, not truth in-itself.

Humanities 101 as it was practiced was treated as a site in which knowledge was a gift bestowed by those considered to be knowledgeable upon those considered to know very little. The fact that people came from socially or educationally disadvantaged segments of the population, and from poor and working-class backgrounds, negated their contributions to the conversation. The instructors were presented to the students as their opposites. Their canonized knowledge justified their position at the head of the classroom and in charge of the lecture, and the program justified its existence by providing this knowledge to people assumed to own no knowledge of their own. “The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, were expected to accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher’s [and the programs] existence” (Freire, 1993, p. 72).

In summary, an education that is an act of transmission or any systematic extension of knowledge is not an education, at least not in an emancipatory sense (Freire, 1974). Many of the students wanted an opportunity to use their voice, to communicate and dialogue. They did not expect to be subject to a bestowing or transference of knowledge, or to acknowledge someone set up as a knowing Subject before a knowable object. In such a situation the knowledge was offered to those whose only role became filing away the communiqués. If the criterion of the value of an education is the extent to which it creates or supplies the means for growth, then the value of Humanities 101 is identical to that of standard and formal education. It had the normal dynamics

of power as a constraining feature, implicit in language, framework, and perspective. These are dynamics that failed the students in the first place, in their first go-around with formal education.

From a Freirean perspective, the disjuncture in Humanities 101 arose because an education, as the practice of freedom the students were looking for, cannot be about just Plato or Petrarch. Nor can it be only an extension of technical knowledge. The students were not looking to have facts deposited in them. They were not looking to be turned into educatees, and they did not always agree with the content and values of the program. As Freire (1974, p. 133) put it, students are not looking to be adapted to a milieu. The students of Humanities 101 were looking for a platform and opportunity. In that sense it was a continuation of what Freire described in the “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1993):

There is no such thing as neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 34)

Humanities 101, as it presently stands, seems more about facilitating the integration of people into the logic of our present system than it does the transformation of their world. I suggest that therefore there is disjuncture within the programs, because the sort of education the students were looking for was liberating and emancipatory, a gnosiological education – that is, a philosophical and scientific understanding and unpacking of the knowledge they already have. Any attempt to manipulate people to a reality, to adapt them to it, meant taking from them their opportunity and right to be involved with and transform it themselves.

Consider this from the perspective of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" (1993, §514a-516b). Provided as the epigraph to this document, the lives of the students are like the prisoners living in front of Plato's shadows, people for whom shadow made up the entirety of their existence. The allegory is about orienting these people towards the light, and turning them away from their lived existence upward out of the cave. Just like Humanities 101. Neither the allegory nor the example it provides is gnosiological, that is, it is not about them. The lived experience of the prisoners is referred to as "cheats and illusions." Only when they are habituated to a new and different reality are they able to see the truth of things. Only then are they able to look upon the sun itself. Indeed, the prisoners are even described as people who need to be compelled to stand up and lift their eyes to the light, people needing to be dragged by force up a rough and steep ascent. The prisoners are violently alienated from their history and experiences.

Conclusion

The contrast between institutional and student discourse offers a unique counter interpretation of Humanities 101 as an institution. Through the study of participant's accounts, personal reflections, program documents and literature, this unpacking of how Humanities 101 structures the experience of the people involved, knitted together a representation of the institution of Humanities 101 that sits at odds with the view that evidences it as empowering and enabling. The intersecting accounts highlight how Humanities 101 perpetuates the entrenched habits of objectification and asymmetrical power relations that plague more traditional approaches to education. This was the cause of the disjuncture that set me upon this research.

Meredith (2011) recognized in her research that all learning and research projects that enter new ground open the possibility for an examination by new fundamental principles. My treatment of Humanities 101 as an institution, and the contrast I make between institutional and

student discourse, opens up new ground and offers new principles to judge it by. This study contributes to what Hyland-Russell and Groen (2011, p. 77) recognized as a need for studies examining the various types of barriers facing adult learners in radical humanities programs.

This study and the empirical results highlighted a great deal about the theories associated with Humanities 101. Humanities 101 exists in a space between liberal, transformative, and critical theories of education. The wider question of the relationship between these fields is open to debate (Trowbridge, 2009) and they are conflated in the literature dealing with Humanities 101. What they have in common is a cultivating and empowering view of education. My findings, by extension, identify these educational theories as fields that perpetuate the entrenched habits of objectification and asymmetrical power relations that plague traditional approaches to education.

Cunningham (1993) saw that adult educations uncritically accepted humanistic goals of empowerment and equality is little more than a way to shape learners. This seems to hold for Humanities 101, and program developers need to consider this. The empirical results of this study demonstrated Humanities 101 as an act of transmission, but true emancipatory education – if indeed that is what Humanities 101 is after – needs to be geared at social groups gaining autonomy and promoting their own independence as social actors.

It is clear from this study that the barriers which exist for the student participants of Humanities 101 go well beyond those commonly associated with a Humanities 101 student. Things like homelessness, poverty, social isolation, physical or mental illness, and past negative experiences with formal learning environments are normally thought of and ascribed to the students. But the barriers also include the language, framework, literature, and perspectives that

inform the programs. This discourse is an implicit and constraining factor. Education is the fundamental expression of power and politics that Giroux (1998) suggested it is.

An attempt I took at overcoming the barriers of objectification and asymmetrical power relations: I took on the role of Acting Director of Humanities 101 in 2016 having done the data collection and analysis included in this document. My recommendations for Humanities 101 are tied to the notion of equality, not as an end, but as a point of departure. They stem from Rancière's (1991) definition of emancipation as "learning how to be equal ... in an unequal society" (p. 133). A supposition I seized in an action. I made a former graduate of Humanities 101 an instructor. It was only for a single class, and it was only a single graduate, but this graduate of Humanities 101 who learned "the art of the usurpers," also knew what opportunity meant for the people in the room, and knew intimately the espoused needs of the students themselves. She stood at the head of the classroom. In this one instance, the instructor was not the opposite of the student, not in their eyes and not in hers. It was only a start, but it was a way of bringing equality to the program.

Students need to be involved in the classes and material. The students' point of origin, socially or educationally, needs to be accepted. To overcome the sort of disjuncture that set me upon this research the normal and constraining dynamics of power, as a feature of the institution implicit in language, framework, and perspective needs to be overcome. Instead of writing the students lived experiences out of the space of the classroom, program developers and instructors need to appreciate how their actual stories, voices, and experiences can contribute to the conversation. The program developers and instructors need to know their audience, and the espoused needs of their audience. I took Hyland-Russell and Groen (2011) to be saying much the same thing when they called out for program developers and instructors to be "mature, grounded,

authentic, humble, and able to teach through respectful dialogic methods” (p. 78). Inclusive of all of this, program developers and instructors need to appreciate what the institution of Humanities 101 is, on both a theoretical and empirical level.

In the end, I believe in the message of a book titled “Beyond the Possible” (Williams & Mirikitani, 2013). It provides the insight that support happens from the bottom up by “learning what people want to do for themselves, and by offering help through knowledge” (p. 65). For this is how change occurs in society. It is not achieved by the powerful reaching down to those they have identified as lesser than themselves. It happens when people learn to love themselves and grow from within. The world is changed in the process (p. 112).

Future Research and Practice

The possibilities for this research include engaging Humanities 101 programs across Canada, and the academic discourse that occurs around and within these programs. This study was produced by focusing on Humanities 101 and the discourse that surrounds it. It has the intended purpose of identifying discourse, deepening our understanding of the role it plays, analyzing its effects, improving the programs, and getting the results out to other academics, teachers, and programs. As an institutional ethnography this research was an exploration and explication of what happened, in Smith’s (2006) words, an “emergent mode of inquiry” (p. 16). It leads to some interesting insights worth exploring.

I described how the students did not regard themselves as marginalized. The meaningfulness of the characterization was not at issue in this study, but the findings do raise the question of whether characterizations like “marginalized” are worthwhile and useful descriptors. Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” portrays the prisoners fettered by chains as people confident in their view of reality. Plato said that they needed to be compelled to acknowledge their situation,

even if it meant dragging them by force up a rough and steep ascent of enlightenment. Are such characterizations useful, or do they reinforce entrenched habits of objectification and asymmetrical power relations? This study indicated the Humanities 101 does just such a thing.

Humanities 101 students do suffer from things like homelessness, abuse, addictions, and poverty. In the instructor interviews they were described as people caught in the system, suffering, sick, and challenged. Or, as people without opportunity, and people who failed to make the best choices in life. Instructors even called them fallen and disabled. There is room and a need to address the barriers facing the students, including the implicit and constraining nature of the language, frameworks, literature, and perspectives highlighted in this study. There also needs to be more analysis of the solutions education offers and what these solutions look like in practice.

There could also be an analysis of the tensions and contradictions that arose in the responses of my student participants and instructors, to further unpack and even problematize their responses. For instance, Participant S1 claimed that school was awesome. He was making this claim as someone who was expelled before he could graduate High School. Human beings are beings of contradictions, certainly Participant S1 seemed to be, and such an analysis would help humanize their experiences.

A consequence of this study was a statement and characterization of different theories of education. The empirical results of this research demonstrate that there is a need for further consideration of emancipatory education, liberal, transformative, and critical theories of education, as an imminent critique of the theories and the solutions they offer. Another consequence was a statement on the unique position of the institutional participants. The students were disposed to see them as representatives of the institution, yet many of the institutional

participants were in a rather unique position and they were not necessarily representative of the university. For instance, one of the instructors was a self-described “non-traditional academic,” who was not affiliated with any faculty. He espoused studying on his own to become a leader in his chosen field. Others had histories and experiences not typically associated with university professors. While their identity was not a focus of this study, the identity of these intermediary actors is interesting and an area worth exploring in a future study. Six of the seven institutional participants interviewed had advanced degrees. Of these seven institutional respondents four were teaching regularly in a university setting, and two had moved into administrative positions within their respective schools. A look beyond the situational and institutional position of the instructors and program directors would widen understanding of the institution of Humanities 101.

Continued research will reveal further intricacies and issues that affect Humanities 101, and programs like it, facilitated by this discussion of discourse, oppression, power, emancipation, education, and change.

3 Ways to Change the Focus of a Program

It is clear that in order for Humanities 101 to offer emancipatory education the program would need to be geared toward allowing social groups to gain autonomy and for members to be given opportunity to exert independence as social actors.

Change, in any program, means an alteration of mechanisms within the structure, characterized by changes in culture, rules of behavior, organization, and value systems. With this in mind, I advocate the following “pillars” for Humanities 101 programs:

1. Change focus. As it presently stands, Humanities 101 is about facilitating the integration of people into the logic of our present system. The normal dynamics of power are at play

in the classrooms. To overcome this, help the students engage the “right” form of resistance. Make the classes about their experiences, as an unpacking of the knowledge they already have. For example, and as mentioned in my reflections, in a class on Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,” Plato’s intent took a back seat to the students’ own interpretations of his cave. The cave became a meaningful examination of their needs and their realities. Other diverse scholarly perspectives and content could be put into similar service. Also, include more former students and community members in the programs. Include people who know what opportunity means for the people in the room, and have intimate knowledge of the espoused needs of the students themselves.

2. Address resistance. The programs should be helping individuals develop their voice, to name and identify their world, rather than reaching down to draw them up to “ours.” The context of classes should be directed to these ends. As part of the program, explore opportunities for understanding resistance and make peaceful change an overarching theme of the individual topics being addressed within the program.
3. Connect to community. More could be done to bring the community into the classroom. This could mean exploring and extending the relationship between Humanities 101 (and other such programs) and community partners. When serving as the Acting Director of a Humanities 101 program I had local restaurants provide some of the meals that are such an integral part of the program. This was a big change from normal operating procedure, but I wanted the students to feel a connection to their community by getting the community involved in their classroom.

Connecting to the community could also mean extending Humanities 101 into the community. There is some context for this. For example, Humanities 101 at the

University of Alberta runs a course at a shelter. This brings university-level learning into a different environment, and it is centered on themes of home and community. A change in setting would change the dynamic of the “classroom” by changing whose “backyard” the programs take place in. The students would not be venturing into a foreign and intimidating setting, and the community would become part of the program.

These changes in focus could really change the dynamics of the classroom.

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Appendix 1. The Allegory of the Cave

From Plato's "Republic" (Book VII: §514a-516b):

Next, said I, compare our nature in respect of education and its lack to such an experience as this. Picture men [sic] dwelling in a sort of subterranean cavern with a long entrance open to the light on its entire width. Conceive them as having their legs and necks fettered from childhood, so that they remain in the same spot, able to look forward only, and prevented by the fetters from turning their heads. Picture further the light from a fire burning higher up and at a distance behind them, and between the fire and the prisoners and above them a road along which a low wall has been built, as the exhibitors of puppet shows have partitions before the men themselves, above which they show the puppets.

See also, then, men carrying past the wall implements of all kinds that rise above the wall, and human images and shapes of animals as well, wrought in stone and wood and every material, some of these bearers presumably speaking and others silent.

Like to us, I said. For to begin with, tell me do you think that these men (the fettered men) would have seen anything of themselves or of one another except the shadows cast from the fire on the wall of the cave that fronted them? And again, would not the same be true of the objects carried past them?

If then they were able to talk to one another, do you not think that they would suppose that in naming the things that they saw they were naming the passing objects? And if their prison had an echo from the wall opposite them, when one of the passers-by uttered a sound, do you think that they would suppose anything else than the passing shadow to be that speaker?

Then in every way such prisoners would deem reality to be nothing else than the shadows of the artificial objects. Consider, then what would be the manner of the release and healing

from these bonds and this folly if in the course of nature something of this sort should happen to them. When one was freed from his fetters and compelled to stand up suddenly and turn his head around and walk and to lift his eyes to the light, and in doing all this felt pain and, because of the dazzle and glitter of the light, was unable to discern the objects whose shadows he formerly saw, what do you suppose would be his answer if someone told him that what he had seen before was all a cheat and an illusion, but that now, being nearer to reality and turned toward more real things, he saw more truly? And if also one should point out to him each of the passing objects and constrain him by questions to say what it is, do you think that he would be at a loss and that he would regard what he formerly saw as more real than the things now pointed out to him?

And if he were compelled to look at the light itself, would not that pain his eyes, and would he not turn away and flee to those things which he is able to discern and regard them as in very deed more clear and exact than the objects pointed out?

And if, said I, someone should drag him thence by force up the ascent which is rough and steep, and not let him go before he had drawn him out into the light of the sun, do you not think that he would find it painful to be so hauled along, and would chafe at it, and when he came into the light, that his eyes would be filled with its beams so that he would not be able to see even one of the things that we call real?

Then there would be need of habituation, I take it, to enable him to see things higher up. And at first he would most easily discern the shadows and, after that, the likenesses or reflections in water of men and other things, and later, the things themselves, and from these he would go on to contemplate the appearances in the heavens and heaven itself, more easily by night, looking at the light of the stars and the moon, than by day the sun and the sun's light. And so,

finally, I suppose, he would be able to look upon the sun itself and see its true nature, not by reflections in water or phantasms or it in an alien setting, but in and by itself in its own place.

Appendix 2. Interview Guides

(A) Students

The following are guiding questions for semi-structured interviews that explore the expectations and experiences of the students.

1) Agenda

- a) Introductions, and thank them for sending a signed informed consent form.
- b) Begin recording.
- c) Commence interview.

2) Interview Questions

Initial interview – prior to the program:

A. Personal Background

- I. How would you describe yourself?
- II. What has your experience with the school system been like up until now?

B. How would/do you describe Humanities 101 to a family member or friend?

C. What does it mean to you to be a student of Humanities 101?

D. How does this fit with your ideas of yourself?

E. Is there anything else you would like to add?

- 3) Assure them that the data will remain absolutely confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. Thank them for their time in participating in this study.

(B) Follow-up Interview (Students)

1) Interview Questions

- A. What, if any, aspects of the program did you connect with?
- B. How did the program fit with your ideas of yourself?
- C. Did anything make you think differently about yourself, or cause changes in the way you live?
- D. Did anything make you feel uncomfortable?
- E. How would you now describe your experience of Humanities 101 to a friend?
- F. Did the program feel different than your previous experiences with schooling?
- G. Is there anything else you would like to add?

- 2) Assure them that the data will remain absolutely confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. Thank them for their time in participating in this study.

(C) Instructors

The following are guiding questions for semi-structured interviews that explore the expectations and experiences of the instructors.

1) Agenda

- a) Introductions, and thank them for sending a signed informed consent form.
- b) Begin recording.
- c) Commence interview.

2) Interview Questions

A. Personal Background

- I. Tell me about the setting and content of what you teach.
- II. Why do you volunteer for Humanities 101?

B. How would you describe Humanities 101?

C. How do you view the students? Why?

D. How did you choose what you were going to teach?

E. What are you doing differently as a Humanities 101 instructor? (Versus typical university classes.)

F. What do you take away from your experience teaching for Humanities 101?

- 3) Assure them that the data will remain absolutely confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. Thank them for their time in participating in this study.

(D) Program Director

The following are guiding questions for semi-structured interviews that explore the expectations and experiences of the program director.

1) Agenda

- a) Introductions, and thank them for sending a signed informed consent form.
- b) Begin recording.
- c) Commence interview.

2) Interview Questions

A. Personal Background

- I. Describe your role as a director.
- II. Why do you coordinate such a program?

B. How would you describe Humanities 101?

C. How do you view the students? Why?

D. What do you take away from your experience with Humanities 101?

- 3) Assure them that the data will remain absolutely confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. Thank them for their time in participating in this study.

Appendix 3. Invitation

Dear Potential Participant

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project conducted as part of my Doctor of Philosophy degree. It is titled **People in Discursive Spaces: A Study of Entry-Level Humanities Education for Non-Traditional Adult Learners**. For this project, I aim to investigate whether Humanities 101 reflects the reality it is intended to serve. As someone participating in the program, your perspective and experience would be valuable to this work. Of course, your participation is entirely voluntary, and has absolutely no bearing on your involvement with the program.

I anticipate a 45-60 minute recorded interview, either in person or over the telephone. The interview will include a few brief questions about your background, and your involvement and interest in Humanities 101. Should you choose to participate you may decline to answer any question, and you may withdraw from the research at any point without repercussion.

There are no foreseeable risks or harm associated with the research. No identifying information will be used, and you are encouraged to provide a pseudonym for use in reporting the results. The data collected in the interviews will only be viewed by me, and will be stored securely. This study has been approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca. It is my hope that you will consider participating.

Your interview transcripts will be returned to you for verification. If you are interested, you will receive a summary of research results at the completion of the research. Research will

be presented at conferences, published in academic and non-academic journals, and used to support Humanities 101 and other programs like it.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, my supervisor, or the University Ethics Board.

James M. Czank
PhD Candidate

James M. Czank (jmczank@lakeheadu.ca. Tel: 807-343-8478)

Dr. Juanita Epp, Doctoral Supervisor (jepp@lakeheadu.ca. Tel: 807-343-8891)

Lakehead University Research Ethics Board (research@lakeheadu.ca. Tel: 807-343-8283)

For instructors/directors only: If you are interested in collaborating in the publication of these research findings once the research is completed, please let me know on the consent form.

Appendix 4. Consent Form

I, _____, agree to participate in the study **People in Discursive Spaces: A Study of Entry-Level Humanities Education for Non-Traditional Adult Learners**. I have read and understood the purpose and intent of this study.

As a participant I realize that I am committing to a 45-60 minute recorded interview, but I may decline to answer any question and may choose to withdraw from the study at any point without repercussion. I am aware that no identifying information will be used, and that I have the option of using a pseudonym. The interview(s) will be recorded and transcribed, and the transcripts sent to me for verification. I also realize that the results of the research will be presented at conferences, published in academic and non-academic journals, and used to support Humanities 101 and other programs like it.

Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the research results at the completion of the research.

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Signature and Date

For instructors/directors only: By checking this box: I am acknowledging my interest in collaborating in the publication of these research findings once the research is complete. I am including my email address (above) in order that the primary researcher can contact me.