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Hope—Heartbeat of Adult Education: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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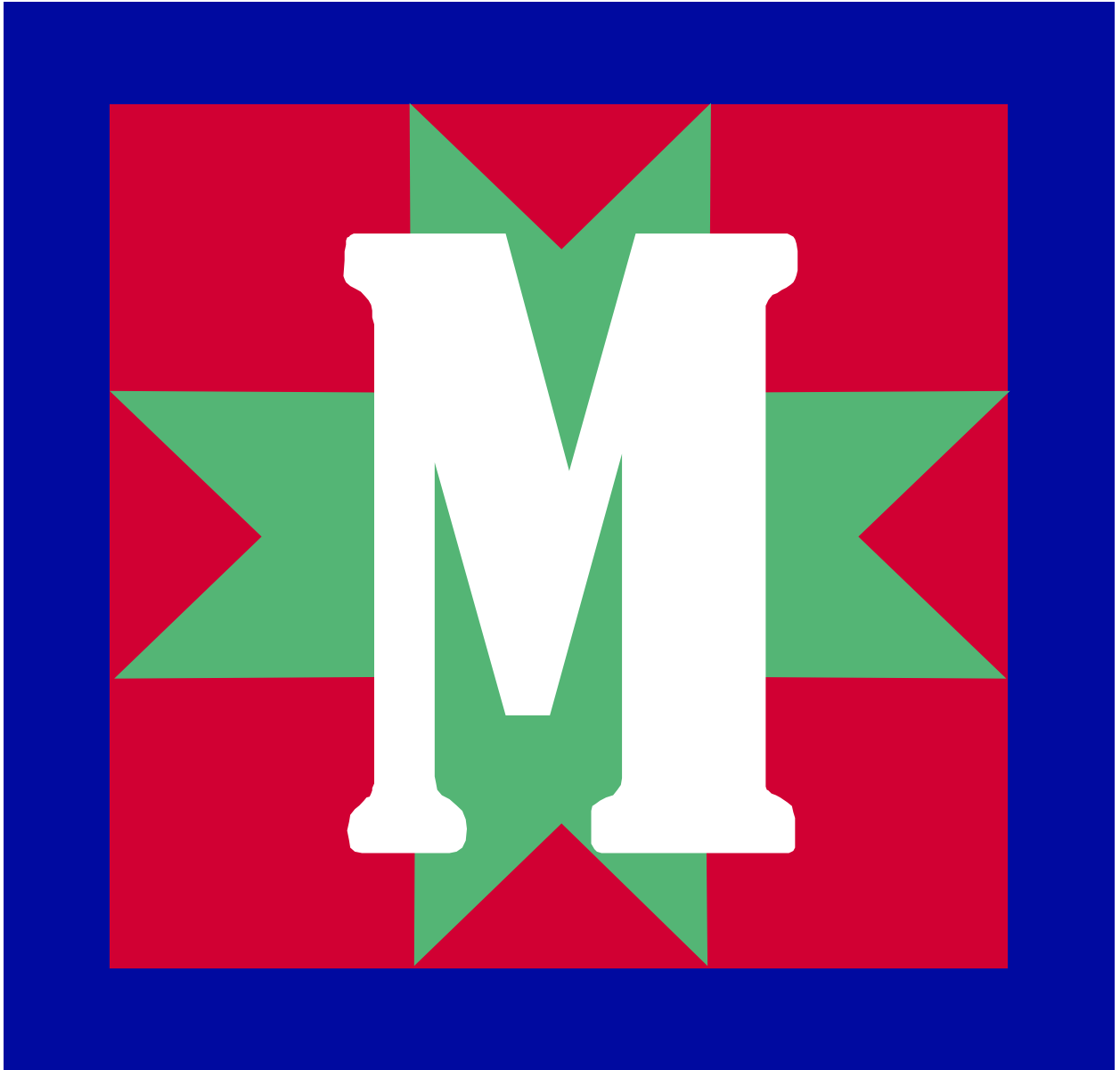
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Critical Engagement Project
Notification of Completion

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Hope—Heartbeat of Adult Education: A Phenomenological Inquiry

Adult and Continuing Education Doctoral Program

National-Louis University

Phillip L. Moulden

2005

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Introduction

Hope, Where Are You Taking Me?

Hope, where are you taking me?
What I'm lacking will you fulfill?
In the end, what will I be?
Will I be at peace and still?

Hope, you have given me many insights.
Now help with the decisions that manifest.
The changes, the growth, the difference that delights
My soul and fills all my being with zest.

Hope, where will I go with you?
Will I be part of social action?
Will I shrink back and nothing do?
Will I be status quo or transformation?

Hope, make from my dualism one person,
Join me with others to make new life meaning.
Draw me toward the light, the sun.
Create with me that new spiritual being.

Hope, I have the faith but not the action.
I talk a good game, but behavior lags.
I am excellent at avoiding self-examination.
All this defensiveness the question begs.

PLM—12/12/2002

Edited 7/25/04

Hope has been an enduring question and experience throughout my life. As a white man born and raised in Oblong, Illinois, I have fluctuated between impossible dreams and realistic goals all my life. I was told by my parents and teachers that anything was possible if I put my mind to it. I learned that athletic achievements took more than a strong mind and were soon overshadowed by those of others. I learned that academic achievements had to account for the whims of teachers as well as facility with subject matter. I learned that achievements at work relied as much on personal relationships as with the quality of thinking. I learned that financial achievements were not particularly associated with intellectual development. Yet, again and again I returned to higher education anticipating that something could and would change my life.

What does hope have to do with anything?

In 1978 at age 31, I was enrolled in a masters degree program at Loyola University of Chicago. I rode the EL from the upper middle class suburb of Evanston south to Chicago. On the ride I would look out the window at the acres

of apartment buildings that I was passing. Some were quite elegant and many were run down and shabby. I would often ask myself what would be good news for the diverse people that lived in all those apartment buildings. What news could bridge the differences in background, ethnicity, income, education, and gender? The answer that finally arrived was that all the people in those apartment buildings and I would recognize a message of hope as good news.

Another significant experience, in my life, related to hope was the experience of getting engaged and married. I became convinced that living as a married person would be a qualitatively better existence than my current experience of life as a single person. Part of that convincing came from being raised in the United Methodist Church that emphasized in its youth groups the positive aspects of faithful, committed relationships exemplified by marriage. I had met Carol at the United Methodist Campus Ministry Center at Eastern Illinois University. Even more than being convinced that marriage was the life-style for me, I was most convinced that Carol was the person who shared my vision. She was a partner with whom I could spend my life and raise the quality of both our lives. We only had part-time jobs, no car, and no apartment, but we were committed to getting married. I was close to graduation but Carol was not. We could not really anticipate what our lives would be like. What could a couple of twenty-year-olds know about such things?

I had seen a movie in which a man proposed to a woman with the words, "I want to have a baby with you." I later used these same words when I proposed to Carol, because they seemed to sum up the meaning of the commitment we were making to each other. We said "yes" to each other without knowledge but fully

with hope. We have been married thirty-six years and we are still developing the quality of our lives. Now our hope includes a daughter, son-in-law, and the “most brilliant granddaughter in the universe.”

A third experience related to hope happened when I was teaching a required class in logic and effective thinking for National-Louis University. One of the women students asked me if I had a “rubric” which defined how to get an “A” in the course. After questioning her about the meaning of the word “rubric” in this situation, I concluded that she was not committed to learning but only to getting a good grade. The more I tried to persuade her to focus on the learning the more she resisted. She stated that my grading would be too subjective if I did not provide the specific written requirements for getting an A, B, or C. I was so committed to my hope in persuading her to be interested in learning that I spent 20 minutes of class time on this dialogue. Other students later gave me feedback that they were bored and thought that so much time spent on the complaint of one student out of 35 was inappropriate. For the remainder of the ten week class, I tried unsuccessfully to engage this student fully in the learning process. Every assignment she turned in seemed to be only a hurdle to be cleared on the way to a grade.

Why was I so frustrated with my unrealized hope that as a teacher I could engage this student in learning? I had been teaching undergraduate students for over ten years and had known many students who were focused more on grades than on learning. I had been mostly unsuccessful in persuading them to change. What was the difference? The difference was that my hope for creating what I considered a “qualitatively better life” (Giroux, 1997, p. 63) by teaching adults

was being blocked. Previously, much of the time, teaching had been just a job, but within the last two years I had become more fully invested in teaching as my career which afforded me an opportunity to contribute to the improvement of the world. In other words, I had connected hope to my work and that had changed its nature.

What does hope mean if it is integral to these quite different experiences in my life? The casual use of the word hope in U. S. culture has obscured many of its diverse connotations. Rather than attempt a definition of hope, I am offering a multifaceted description. In this way I intend to broaden the scope usually associated with this term. By connecting it to other concepts, I am attempting to make hope more meaningful in the context of Adult Education.

Who has talked about hope?

One adult educator who has specifically looked at hope is Paulo Freire (2002). He has defined hope as an “untested feasibility” or a “possible dream.” These concepts emphasize the future, which is quite appropriate for hope, but they do not reveal much about how hope relates to the present. For me, hope must maintain a creative tension between the “status quo” and the “not yet.”

Hope is as active in the present as it is in creating the future, I think.

Another description of hope comes from Henry Giroux (1997). He uses the following phrase in describing the notion of critique used by the Frankfurt School; “a qualitatively better life” (Giroux, 1997, p. 63) as compared to the status quo. This phrase maintains the tension between the present and the future and places an emphasis on qualitative elements over quantitative in understanding hope. It implies that hope engages the whole person and is an ongoing experience,

because qualitative improvement in life could be an unending process just like the process of knowledge creation.

Ernst Bloch (1986) is a philosopher who has written extensively about hope. In fact he states that philosophy is responsible for the development of hope. “But now not only art but philosophy—and especially the latter—has consciously to bear the responsibility of prefiguration, and the prefiguration at that of an objectively real appearance, of the *world of process, of the real world of hope itself.*” (Bloch, 1971, p. 43) But this, for Bloch, is not a process of building castles in the air. “. . . [H]ope (with a plan and with a link with the potentially possible) is still the strongest and best thing we have.” (Bloch, 1971, p. 33) To fully anchor this understanding of hope in reality, Bloch states that “Reason cannot blossom without hope, and hope cannot speak without reason. . . .” (Bloch, 1971, p. 33) He combines the future orientation of Freire and the “qualitatively better life” of Giroux (1997, p. 63) in a view of hope that is based in reality but not limited to what is already known. If philosophy is defined as the love of wisdom, then to educate adults could mean connecting hope with the search for wisdom.

How did I describe hope at the start of this research project?

Hope was, for me, the greatest capacity that human beings have. I thought it was a universal experience that underlies all human activity. I contended that nothing human beings do was apart from hope.

Every baby is born with the instinct to suckle. This suckling contains within it the hope that it will eventually meet with nourishment. Humans form relationships because of hope that enables them to visualize qualitative benefits to their lives beyond what they presently experience. People develop businesses

because hope enables them to imagine a service or product that could improve the lives of other people. Art is created in the hope that people will see and feel the world differently. Books are written in the hope of communicating unique insights. Thus I argue that every creative act is undergirded by hope.

Some philosophers, like Epicurus, have said that the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain is the fundamental activity of human beings. But to pursue pleasure, one must hope to attain it. It is the desire for a quality of life that contributes to personal fulfillment or happiness [the **affective** dimension], which enables people to take risks in their lives. But this is not all there is to hope.

Hope is not oblivious to the harsh realities that are present in human life. Rather, hope penetrates these temporary situations and draws one beyond them. Hope is a force of human nature. It is an energy that expands human endurance. It is an insight [the **cognitive** dimension] that opens possibilities not realized before. It is a feeling that lifts the spirit. It is a decision that guides one in development. It is an ingredient that partially enables or supports personal transformation. It is a message that provides good news to the downtrodden.

Hope is also a connecting tissue between **individual** and **group** learning. The group influence on individual learning is well known and documented. Adults can learn much from each other if the class is facilitated with that in mind. “There are some obvious benefits to learners in a formal course of study who engage in an intentional or unintentional partner relationship. Working with a partner toward a common goal can move partners more effectively and efficiently toward that goal—and often, beyond it. The learning partner provides constant reinforcement and competition while being very supportive.” (Saltiel, 1998, p. 20) Much of my

teaching has been done with cohort groups of adult learners. I have witnessed the dynamics of individuals challenging each other's ideas that was possible, and even welcomed, because of the strength of the relationships built up over the time the cohort group had been together. I have conducted values clarification exercises that demonstrate the influence of group values on individual values. Students can even predict which values one of their colleagues will use to guide his/her decision-making in a particular case.

The interplay of the **group** dimension with the **individual** dimension of hope is also part of transformational learning. Mezirow points to this dimension in phase four of perspective transformation, "Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change." (Mezirow, 1991, p.22) This discontent is obviously with the present state of affairs, and by connecting it to hope the future can be transformed for the individual and the group. This experience also has implications for social change that can only be done by groups.

These four dimensions of hope (**affective, cognitive, individual, & group**) can be seen in my decision to apply for admission into the doctoral program in Adult and Continuing Education at National-Louis University. The individual dimension can be observed in the actions that required my personal attention. I had to fill out the application forms. I had to provide a writing sample analyzing and comparing statements from two different adult educators. I had to participate in the admissions weekend. No one else could do these things for me, but I was not alone in the overall process. My wife first brought this opportunity to my attention. She and her close friend, a recent graduate of the program,

encouraged me to apply. They provided information about and examples of how the program worked. In addition, I sought feedback from a faculty member associated with the program about my application and first writing sample. Clearly these experiences revealed the group dimension of my hope. The affective dimension related to the doubts, insecurities, and fear of rejection that were emotions I experienced at that time. I was also aware that my confidence was buoyed by the encouragement I received from my wife and her friend. The final dimension, cognitive, was also a part of this total experience. I had to display the intellectual capacity to complete the degree program to the satisfaction of the faculty. I had to demonstrate this capacity in my writing sample and in the group interactions during the admissions weekend. This dimension was the area of most confidence for me because I had completed previous graduate degrees which had been primarily about my intellectual capacity. Further, I had to reflect critically on what this degree was about for me. My past experiences with expecting career advancement following degree completions had failed to be realized. I did not want to experience that disappointment again. I concluded that my participation in this degree program had to be about self-development rather than career opportunities. Thus, the four dimensions I discerned as part of hope were evident in my own lived experience of hope.

Summary

In describing hope, I have spoken about it as a force of human nature underlying all activity. I described it as an energy that sustains and opens up new possibilities. I suggested that it had dimensions that connect it to emotions

and cognition. Further I described it as the tissue that connects individual learning to group learning. Hope, for me, is that sustaining drive that enables adults to complete degree programs. The imagination that creates our dreams is also part of my understanding of hope. The “status quo” is always called into question by hope as it visualizes the “not yet.” Hope keeps people from settling for what is, because it calls people to look for what might be. I think it focuses on qualitative changes rather than quantitative changes in human life. Because of this description of hope, I found it a worthy topic of study.

Finally, I offer the metaphor of the human heartbeat to summarize all that I have described about hope. Just as the heartbeat pumps life-giving blood throughout the body, hope pumps motivating energy that enables learning and action which is the realm adult education. In the same way that all activities of the body depend on the heartbeat, all that makes life human depends on hope.

Philosophical Assumptions

What Hope Does

Hope so precious, yet easily lost.
Hope so expected, but not the cost.

Hope renews, if we let
The past wounds to forget.

Hope so private, yet public too.
Hope so shared, but unique too.

Hope is all we do and are.
From its tower we can see afar.
Not clearly or in detail,
but just the horizon toward which we sail.

Hope confronts, sometimes shatters our fears.
Hope soothes, and often causes our tears.

Hope calls for change.
Hope never leaves us the same.

When we let hope melt away,
All that we're left goes astray.

Hope, when we decide causes worlds to collide.
Hope, when it abides reconciles disparate sides.

With hope we can accept our shadow,
Appreciate weakness, and fully know.

PLM—01/10/2003

What are my philosophical assumptions?

Primary among my philosophical assumptions in this research project were these humanistic values: 1) People have intrinsic worth. 2) People are meant to flourish in their lives. 3) People are not to be exploited.

1) People have intrinsic worth. Here I agree with Kant that people are “ends” in themselves. [As cited in Lamont, 1957, p. 225] They are not to be used as objects for purposes to which they do not agree. People have the right and power to decide how they will live their lives within the limits of positive social relationships. This inalienable right is not to be taken from them. Individuals do not have the right to do anything they want in life because that would inevitably cause them to treat others as objects rather than ends, which would violate this value. Positive social relationships would be exemplified by respect for the intrinsic worth of people and striving to live in peace and harmony with all other human beings.

2) People are meant to flourish in their lives. I am not convinced that an afterlife for human beings exists. Therefore the quality and satisfaction that can be developed in life are not to be delayed for the dream of a perfect afterlife. If this is the only life a person will experience, then, I contend, it needs to be as meaningful and enjoyable as possible in the living of it. I call that meaningfulness and enjoyment, flourishing.

3) People are not to be exploited. Exploitation refuses to recognize the first two values. It does not value people as human but only as objects to be manipulated for gain by someone else. Exploitation takes resources (time, energy, money, etc.) from individuals and prevents them from using those resources for personal and social development. The use of human beings for “cannon fodder” to protect the interests of businesses is for me an extreme example of exploitation.

With these values I was clearly in the philosophical tradition of humanistic education. “Simply stated, the goal of humanistic education is the development of persons—persons who are open to change and continued learning, persons who strive for self-actualization, and persons who can live together as fully-functioning individuals. As such the whole focus of humanistic education is upon the individual learner rather than a body of information.” (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 122) I would characterize this philosophy as focusing on helping human beings flourish. Corliss Lamont, a humanist philosopher stated it this way: “So Humanism encourages men [and women] to face life buoyantly and bravely, relying upon their own freedom and reason to fashion a noble destiny in a future that is open.” (1957, p. 146) [Inset added.] The noted educator John Dewey also

spoke about the flourishing of the individual. “It is true that the aim of education is development of individuals to the utmost of their potentialities.” (Archambault, ed., 1964, p. 12) This focus on individual flourishing is the starting point of my Adult Education philosophy.

What were the other beginning points of my Adult Education philosophy?

Any Adult Education philosophy must, I think, start with identification of the outcome for adults that is intended by the educational process. For me that outcome is the flourishing of adults. “Flourish” is partially defined as “to be in a vigorous state, thrive. . . to be at the height of development. . .” (Webster’s College Dictionary, 1991, p. 512) Flourishing is for me not a permanent state but an ongoing process. This definition of flourishing suggests the probability of experimenting with different ideas and behaviors. This experimentation would depend on creativity to identify alternative ideas and behaviors to evaluate. Both the acceptance and rejection of alternative ideas and behaviors could lead to the height of self-development. To reach the height of self-defined and self-determined development is what I intend as the outcome for adults through the educational process, which includes formal and informal learning experiences. However, defining specifically what “the height of development” is requires the engagement of individuals and groups in a multi-dialogical process. Since humans have intrinsic worth, their values, perspectives, and lived experiences are also valuable for consideration. This is an ongoing process for people as they interact with everyone in their environment. Variation of individual-specific outcomes would be expected, though a consistency of the process of Adult Education would likely be experienced. I envision that process as follows:

- **To Flourish, one must act creatively.** I mean this in the sense that people must use imagination and innovation in their choices about how to live. To blindly follow rules or patterns of behavior makes a person into a voluntary robot. Living life in such a way might be safe but it would not be flourishing because it does not draw on the inherent talents of the person to think, create, and act.
- **To Act Creatively, one must think creatively.** For me, thought is parent to action. One can not do things that have not been previously conceived in the mind. Even when one reacts to a situation, one is most likely repeating a behavior already conceived and lived out.
- **To Think Creatively, one must be able to question assumptions held.** Assumptions are those unquestioned constraints on thinking and behavior. Unless these can be identified and evaluated, one is prevented from creative thought.
- **To Question Assumptions Held, one must be continuously willing to investigate a variety of ideas through dialogue with others.** Others can help us identify our assumptions because they are likely to have different assumptions which permit them to more clearly see ours. Alternate perspectives naturally call into question the confidence one has that personal experience is what all other people experience.
- **To Be Continuously Willing to Investigate a Variety of Ideas, one must want to change.** The primary reason to question assumptions is to think it possible that different ones would help one live a “better” life. This

desire for a “better” life supports the investigation of a variety of ideas on how one can “best” live.

- **To Want to Change, one must believe he/she can change.** If one believes deeply in determinism, then change is caused by outside forces acting on the individual. This belief in determinism makes the human being a puppet to external forces. However, if one believes that s/he can choose behaviors and has the power to engage in the chosen behaviors, then change is motivated and accomplished within the person.
- **To Believe One Can Change, one must have a vision of a qualitatively better existence than the current status quo.** The fact that the status quo is at a high level would not prevent seeing ways that it could be continuously improved. Each change might give insight into how that new status quo could be changed for the better.
- **To Have a Vision of a qualitatively better existence than the status quo, one must feel HOPE.** If one can envision a change for the better, then one must posit that such a change can be accomplished. One must have the feeling that change in the world is realistically possible, because human action can make it so.

This underlying feeling that changing the world is realistically possible or hope is an essential part of Adult Education.

In my Adult Education philosophy, a primary value is thinking creatively. Creative thinking is a value that is not held at a uniformly high level by all persons. Albert Einstein said, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.”

[<http://sfheart.com/einstein.html>] Since all human beings encounter problems of their own making and the making of others, increasingly higher levels of creative action are required if those problems are to be solved rather than just accommodated. Those higher levels of creative action require higher levels of creative thinking.

A common problem that adults must address in their lives is the challenge of living in harmony with other adults in this world. War is evidence that human beings are not living in harmony. Recorded history is approximately 6,000 years old and it is rife with the experiences of war. In the twenty-first century, human beings continue to resort to war to *settle* conflicts. The current “war on terrorism” declared by the United States of America is a recent example. As adults, we have not yet reached a higher level of creative thinking that would enable us collectively to do something other than resort to war which limits the possibilities for flourishing, at least for those being killed. In order to flourish, people must first survive. We have made the choice of killing people illegal for settling individual conflicts over zoning issues, or domestic disputes, or business competition which has created a higher level of flourishing for individuals. Learning as nations to live without war and in harmony with each other would be a sign that humans have reached an even higher level of human flourishing related to national conflicts, in my opinion.

The need to develop alternatives to war is based on my explanation of how the flourishing of human beings is ultimately dependent on hope. Since for me flourishing is the goal of Adult Education, resolving such an important issue as war is required. This view of Adult Education puts me squarely in the tradition of

Humanism. My comments echo those of the humanist philosopher Corliss Lamont. “Manifestly any practicable and constructive scheme of world planning depends on the elimination of international war, the most terrible and destructive malady that has ever afflicted the human race.” (Lamont, 1957, p. 233)

What is my version of a Humanistic Adult Education philosophy?

From the philosophy of Humanistic Adult Education, I use the insight that cooperative learning creates a context within which adults can flourish. “In an educational setting, humanists attempt to attend to the affective and emotional dimensions of a learner as well as the intellectual. This is best achieved through improving interpersonal relationships in a cooperative, oftentimes group learning experience.” (Elias & Merriam, p. 129) I often make assignments to adult students that require shared responsibility for research, development and presentation of knowledge. In this way the students learn to support each other in learning. Through the sharing of knowledge they realize that more can be learned by cooperation than through the withholding of information that competition for grades can foster. In these types of assignments, adult students can more clearly focus on learning and supporting each other than they can with some individual assignments. Since learning to work in cooperative groups for common goals is essential for solving many problems that society faces, these types of small group learning assignments can begin to develop the communication and social skills needed to solve social problems that inhibit individual and national flourishing. Here I am in concert with John Dewey when he stated, “Any study so pursued that it increases concern for the values of life, any study producing greater sensitivity to social well-being and greater ability to

promote that well-being is humane study.” (Dewey, 1961, p. 288) Attempting to address the whole person with group assignments seems to be just such a “humane study.”

By attending to the “affective and emotional dimensions of a learner” (Elias & Merriam, p. 129), I can engage the adult student more fully with the subject matter. Unless students integrate what they are learning into the activities of their lives, the class becomes only an intellectual hurdle or activity totally isolated from their lives. If the learning becomes isolated trivia, it serves almost no useful purpose in the lives of adults and often is soon forgotten. When adult students become emotionally connected to the subject matter under study, in the sense of owning the information, they automatically find ways to connect the learning with their ongoing activities, thus making the knowledge useful.

This humanistic approach has put an emphasis on such crucial questions as: “Who Am I? What Can I Know? What Ought I To Do? What May I Hope?” (Stanage, 1987, p. 3) Responding to these questions has opened me to new learning, the possibility of self-actualization, and increased facility to live and work with other people. Using this philosophy, I can affirm the intrinsic worth of human beings, gain a richer view of what human flourishing is, and more often avoid the exploitation of other human beings. I can respond more fully to the diversity of human beings and in part transcend my cultural biases.

A Humanistic Philosophy of Adult Education is within me as an adult educator. It is lived out within a context defined by the values of human creativity and flourishing supported by the background feeling of hope. These are the examined values that anchor me as an adult educator and to which all other

values, actions, and reflections are attached. In order to flourish, people must first survive. Once the survival issue is addressed, then adults can engage in collaborative learning. Through multi-logue [multiple dialogues at the same time] with other adult students and teachers, their intellectual rigor can be challenged and developed. Flaws or omissions as defined by the individual can be corrected through the collaborative engagement with multiple perspectives from other students/teachers. John Dewey described this type of experience in terms of culture.

But social efficiency as an educational purpose should mean cultivation of power to join freely and fully in shared or common activities. This is impossible without culture, while it brings a reward in culture, because one cannot share in intercourse with others without learning—without getting a broader point of view and perceiving things of which one would otherwise be ignorant. And there is perhaps no better definition of culture than that it is the capacity for constantly expanding the range and accuracy of one's perception of meanings. (Dewey, 1961, p. 123)

In my words, this is a collaborative environment of adults committed to learning.

Within this collaborative environment, adults can investigate which possible social changes, determined through democratic processes, are a qualitative improvement on the status quo. Democratic processes are favored because they are most open to alternative perspectives. "A true democracy welcomes differences and disagreements and cherishes, as a creative force in society, minority criticisms of existing institutions and prevailing patterns of thought. The democratic spirit is not dogmatic, for it recognizes the value of constant challenges to basic assumptions." (Lamont, 1957, p. 218-219)

Once these adults have determined possible actions, they can evaluate those actions and begin to reflect on the results produced. By continuing this spiral of action and reflection with other people, democratic social change can

result which adds to the flourishing of all human beings. As an adult educator, I strive to more fully integrate this philosophy into my own praxis to continue my development and aid the flourishing of the adults I serve.

What is my definition of Adult Education?

With this educational philosophy in mind, I developed a definition of Adult Education. In its broadest definition, Adult Education would include all activities that mature persons engage in to learn subject matter that is important to them. [I arbitrarily define “mature person” as anyone old enough to make all their own decisions.] Adult Education as a field includes such programs as GED, literacy, basic education, and informal learning in churches and other community groups as well as formal higher education. Since I work as an adjunct instructor at four universities in specific degree programs, I primarily experience Adult Education in terms of academic degree programs. This is the segment of Adult Education that I know best.

Another layer of my definition of Adult Education addresses its purpose in the lives of those participating in it. In my definition, all Adult Education is a type of learning about the self. New learning most often must be connected to old learning if it is to be retained and used by an individual. This connection between the old and new learning is done internally. I have entered into Adult Education settings expecting to learn some specific subject matter only to find that I filter all the subject matter through myself and retain only that information that seems valuable to me at the time. It would be inappropriate for a white male from the United States of America to suggest that my experience is normative for women, people of color, or people from other countries. My guess is that other adults do

some filtering of information and make judgments about what to learn and what to ignore. Our value systems, the primary filters, could be quite different while the process of filtering could be very similar.

Adult Education is, for me, also collaborative. I do not think that adults can learn in isolation. No adult is devoid of influences from his/her culture and other significant people. I also consider reading books to be interacting with the authors and thus a collaborative process. One can reflect on one's own actions, but the language used in that reflection was learned within a culture and thus society has collaborated with the person to enable critical review of actions.

Thus my definition of Adult Education is: the intentional activity of a mature person to learn about subject matter and self through critical reflection in collaboration with others. The individual decides what will be learned and what will be left unlearned, but is open to the influence of other students/teachers on these matters. Also assumed in my definition, is the idea of taking in new information about the subject matter and the self, and being influenced by that new information after critical reflection. Adult Education, as I have defined it, is different than indoctrination which, for the most part, prevents the incorporation of new information, especially information that might contradict established dogma.

Summary

My philosophical assumptions are: (1) People have intrinsic worth. (2) People are meant to flourish. The definition of flourish is determined ultimately by the individual. (3) People are not meant to be exploited. People are to be seen as ends in and of themselves rather than means to other ends.

The philosophy of Humanism, when applied to Adult Education, best embodies my assumptions and fits with my definition of Adult Education. Humanism emphasizes both the cognitive and affective dimensions of the person. It combines an emphasis on scientific method with a deep appreciation of aesthetics. My definition of Adult Education is very harmonious with the unique combination of emphases in the philosophy of Humanism.

My definition of Adult Education is: the intentional activity of a mature person to learn about subject matter and self through critical reflection in collaboration with others.

Literature Review

How Do I Go Deeper?

How do I go deeper into myself?
What if it doesn't exist, that self?

How do I exist, alone, constructed?
Is deeper found or de-constructed?

Are emotions more primitive?
Are deep ideas more definitive?

I sense a hole to be filled.
Empty, lacking, void spilled.

Unfulfilled from without, within;
Wanting to start, where to begin?

Must I plunge into emptiness?
Will hope bring me to surface?
Will I confront my nastiness?
Or float above and sun my face?

In the depth will I gasp for air?
Will the pressure suffocate me there?

Will I breach the waves renewed?
Full of joy, insight or subdued?

With what demons will it strive?
I only know, its time to dive!

PLM—6/09/03

How did I begin this study?

I started my inquiry into the phenomenon of hope through my own reflection. I identified for myself four significant dimensions of hope. Those dimensions were: affective, cognitive, individual, and group. These dimensions were revealed to me as I probed my feelings and thoughts related to hope. During this process I began writing poetry and I designed a couple of diagrams that helped me conceptualize the interplay and intersections of the four dimensions of hope that I identified. [See Appendices C and D] It was difficult to draw and write about such a dynamic process, and I was never quite satisfied with the static diagrams I was able to produce.

It was after a series of attempts that I finally settled on the metaphor of the heartbeat. This metaphor communicates life, sustained activity, feeling, and an experience recognizable by other adults. While this metaphor seemed to summarize my poetry, it also moved beyond my static diagrams toward the phenomenon of hope itself. It was then that I turned to the literature in and

around the field of Adult Education to determine whether hope had been studied in the dimensions identified.

As I reviewed the literature, some confirmation began to emerge that the dimensions I had identified had been investigated but not, in most cases, specifically connected to the phenomenon—hope. After some time the following themes began to surface, though not in an orderly manner. Only after reflection was I able to clarify them into these questions:

- **Is hope that underlying feeling that enables a person to reach out to the world around them?**
- **What, if any, is the connection between fear and hope in Adult Education?**
- **Is hope the connection between the cognitive and affective dimensions of transformative learning?**
- **Is hope identified as linked to individual and group activity in Adult Education?**
- **Does hope require critical thinking to be effective in Adult Education?**

Sherman Stanage (1987) has done a phenomenological description of the distinctions between feelings and emotions. Antonio Damasio (1994) has written about a background feeling that puts a person in touch with phenomena and surrounds all cognition. Fear as a common emotion experienced in Adult Education is discussed by Parker Palmer (1998), bell hooks (2003), and Rosemary R. Reuther (1970). Paulo Freire (1989) talks about the connections between individual hope and hope for the group as a part of Adult Education's link to social change. While Jack Mezirow (2000) mentions intense emotions in the transformational learning process, his focus is on the cognitive aspects of the process. John Dirkx (1997) focuses on the affective side of transformational

learning. Ernst Bloch (1986) and Henry Giroux (1997) posit a connection between critical thinking and hope.

By bringing these themes together in a phenomenological study of hope, I intended to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon and thereby provide a platform on which to continue the dialogue about transformative learning, critical thinking, and social change in Adult Education.

What are the limitations of this study?

When I began my inquiry into the literature, I noticed that not much direct research had been done about hope and its relationship to Adult Education. Initially I found more dissertations related to hope in the areas of psychology, psychotherapy, and religion than I did within the field of Adult Education specifically. One such study dealt with hope in the lives of women with mental illness. (Jocksch, 2001) Another study focused on “the role of hope in psychotherapy.” (Talmadge, 2002) Both of these researchers were interested in how hope increased or decreased through the experience of certain events. My study focused not on changes in the level of the experience of hope, but rather on “what” the experience of hope is in the setting of Adult Education. While situations like therapy sessions or spirituality gatherings (described in the two studies cited) can certainly be seen as within the broadest definition of Adult Education, I looked at formal higher education degree programs within Adult Education for my study.

Another study looked at “the role of hope in an Adult Career Decision Workshop.” (Schemmel, 1999) This study used a “hope scale” to determine if hope played a significant role in “predicting the effectiveness of a five-session

career planning workshop. . .” (Schemmel, 1999) This approach used a positivist, quantitative framework which is in sharp contrast to the phenomenological approach of my study. By trying to find the essential structures of the experience of hope in formal Adult Education settings, I used a qualitative approach for this research.

Hope has also been studied in a theological context ever since the groundbreaking work of Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, in 1967. These investigations looked at the connection of hope to scriptures, worship experiences, and reflection within the Christian community. These situations also fit into the broadest definition of Adult Education. However, hope was seen as a byproduct of these other experiences rather than as an experience/phenomenon in and of itself. I am knowledgeable of this area of theology because of my Master of Divinity degree and my Master of Arts degree in Historical Theology. I am convinced that by studying the phenomenon—hope in this setting, it would be significantly more difficult to examine the phenomenon itself.

The nature of Christianity is to have many built-in expectations about how people should approach the future. A study of hope in a religious context by Gertrude A. Jocksch (2001) seemed to confirm this concern. She asked the following questions to her co-researchers: “Has God been a source of hope for you?” and “What aspects of your experience of hope have been or have not been nurtured in the spirituality gathering?” (Jocksch, 2001, p. 192) These questions indicate the expectation that hope is a derivative of something else, possibly religious experience of God. If I used a similar approach, I am convinced that

this expectation would inhibit a critical look at the phenomenon—hope because people interviewed in such a religious setting would likely want to attribute hope as a gift of God without fully examining the experience in and of itself.

What do the individual themes mean?

- **Is hope that underlying feeling that enables a person to reach out to the world around them?**

S. M. Stanage (1987) described the distinction between feelings and emotions in phenomenological terms. “All emotions at least arise within feeling, but not all feelings are emotions. Hence it would be improper analysis and description of both feeling and feelings to say that they are emotions or that they are what emotions reducibly are.” (Stanage, 1987, p. 116) He describes feelings as the basic way that human beings initially connect with the world around them. “A feeling is, first of all, feeling as sensing something, an identifiable stage of contacting, or of touching-with, the world in which I live and move and have my being.” (Stanage, 1987, p. 113). He further describes feeling as a source of energy. “As a focal region, feeling is a center of greater concentration and clarity of energy and activity, as for example, the *focus* of a disease is the principle seat of its manifestation.” (Stanage, 1987, p. 111) My research was intended to discern if Stanage’s understanding of feeling also describes the phenomenon—hope.

Beyond this, Stanage explains how feeling and consciousness work together to create knowledge.

Above feeling, consciousness attends-to the charged scanning field of feeling, distinguishes and individualizes feelings, selects them out, and continues to work away at them in countless ways: giving them edges and boundaries, articulating particular and unique feelings, clustering some of them as

complex wholes, looking into possible resemblances, 'mulling' them over, reflecting on them, searching out interpretations toward the end of understanding better and better these sensings, and thereby persons and ourselves within the world. (Stanage, 1987, p. 117-118)

This quote also explains how the process of creative cognition works within an open ended experience of feeling. Thus, if feelings are without edges, then they form the context within which cognitive work by a person takes place. Cognition defines the edges of concepts through investigation and categorization of information which leads to understanding of feelings.

If Stanage is correct, then cognition takes place within the context of feeling. For example, if my active scanning of the world triggers the emotion of fear, then my cognition would work at identifying what, if anything, I should be afraid of: a wild animal, a weapon pointed at me, or a change in the weather, for example. This cognition puts defining edges on the emotion derived from the fundamental engagement with the world through feeling. I studied hope in part to determine if it was the name that should be given to the phenomenon described by Stanage.

Stanage is not the only scholar to recognize the distinction between emotion and feeling. Antonio Damasio M.D. [the Van Allen Distinguished Professor and head of the department of neurology at the University of Iowa Medical Center] (1994, 2000) also maintains a distinction between feelings and emotions. Emotions, like anger and fear, are played out in obvious bodily changes while feelings are not. This is especially true of the feeling that Damasio describes as a "background feeling." (1994, p. 150) "I call it *background feeling* because it originates in 'background' body states rather than in emotional states. It is not the Verdi of grand emotion, nor the Stravinsky of intellectualized emotion but

rather a minimalist in tone and beat, the feeling of life itself, the sense of being.” (Damasio, 1994, p. 150) He gives no name to this “background feeling.” My study investigated the possibility that hope and Damasio’s “background feeling” are the same phenomenon.

In a seeming echo of Stanage, Damasio goes on to state the relationship between feelings and cognition. “Because the brain is the body’s captive audience, feelings are winners among equals. And since what comes first constitutes a frame of reference for what comes after, feelings have a say on how the rest of the brain and cognition go about their business. Their influence is immense.” (Damasio, 1994, p. 159-160) In my study, I intended to find out if the influence of hope is “immense” for people in Adult Education degree programs.

Since Stanage and Damasio appear to reach similar conclusions about feeling as the context for thinking, is it possible to name this feeling? Is it proper to give it the name “Hope”?

- **What, if any, is the connection between fear and hope in Adult Education?**

Parker Palmer (1998) has described and emphasized the affective dimension of individuals in his book *The Courage to Teach*. He states that the setting of many formal, Adult Education classrooms is characterized by fear, both within the students and the teacher. “Fear is what distances us from our colleagues, our students, our subjects, ourselves. Fear shuts down those ‘experiments with truth’ that allow us to weave a wider web of connectedness—and thus shuts down our capacity to teach as well.” (Palmer, 1998, p. 36) If Palmer is correct, learning cannot really take place until this fear is resolved between and within the student, teacher, and subject. His answer is to cognitively deal with the fear by

acknowledging it and planning course activities with it in mind. He does not offer an approach to integrate the affective and cognitive dimensions beyond this.

Rosemary Radford Reuther (1970) has explained how the institution of higher learning has helped create this atmosphere of fear. She analyzes the grading process in education using Karl Marx's understanding of the self-alienation of the person from the product of his/her labor.

The relationship that Marx is trying to describe can be translated into analogous situations. In the educational process, learning should be man's direct self-creation, his becoming as man; instead this self creation is alienated from him in the form of rewards or 'grades.' The grades then become an alienated expression of his learning activity that achieve a dictatorial power over him, so finally the grades themselves become the chief reason for learning. One learns only to get grades, which means that gradually the real substance of learning as a self-activity dries up, disappearing altogether, to be replaced by the externalized substitute of grades. Finally, the alienated expression of learning takes a social relationship in the power of the administration as master of the grades over the life of the student. The grades become the point through which the administration can threaten and control the life of the student. The administration itself learns nothing. The student does all the learning, but the administration 'possesses' the grades as an alien power over the student upon which his very life now depends. (Reuther, 1970, p. 100)

In this example, Reuther reinforces the insights of Parker Palmer about the educational process being an environment of fear and extends them by connecting fear to the use of power by the educational institutions. When educational institutions can threaten and control students through the administration of grades, fear is the byproduct for students. She does not offer a solution nor does she describe how students might resist this environment and maintain a focus on learning that is not subsumed into getting grades. I was interested in finding out if students described hope as the force that enabled them to overcome their fears.

bell hooks offers another analysis of the cause of this fear among students by examining the racist context in which most university education takes place in the United States. “In our nation most colleges and universities are organized around the principles of dominant culture. This organizational model reinforces hierarchies of power and control. It encourages students to be fear-based, that is to fear teachers and seek to please them. Concurrently, students are encouraged to doubt themselves, their capacity to know, to think, and to act. Learned helplessness is necessary for the maintenance of dominator culture.” (hooks, 2003, p. 130) This barrier to learning, fear, is a reality for all students regardless of their race because the dominator culture works on all persons in the same way. “The will to dominate knows no color. Every citizen in a dominator culture has been socialized to believe that domination is the foundation of all human relations.” (hooks, 2003, p. 75) By teaching helplessness, and I would add hopelessness, the dominator culture suppresses opposition which might eventually overturn that culture.

Whether fear is analyzed in terms of class, race, or individual experience, its existence is certainly interfering with adult learning. Palmer and hooks ultimately recommend love as the antidote to fear which will foster a democratic education. Reuther offers no prescription for this fear. I tried to determine if something precedes love as a remedy for fear because for me love requires choice. The recognition that choice is even possible precedes making a choice. That recognition may be associated with hope, which opens up possibilities in thinking and action. This study was intended to confirm whether my analysis was correct by more fully understanding and describing the phenomenon—hope.

- **Is hope the connection between the cognitive and affective dimensions of transformative learning?**

It was in the situation of formal, sustained Adult Education that Jack Mezirow (1978) has studied adult women who were returning to higher education after several years away. His studies revealed a process that goes beyond learning of subject matter to the transformation of the individual. The transformative learning experience has been described by Mezirow as a ten phase process (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22).

The Phases of Transformation:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

Because this process of ten phases involves selecting new behaviors, practicing them, evaluating them, and integrating them into one's life, it is an extended and reflexive process. It involves the whole person; relationships with other individuals and groups; emotional makeup (affective dimension); thinking (cognitive dimension); and action (both affective and cognitive).

Mezirow (2000) suggests that strong emotions can be instrumental in the process of transformative learning. In describing the phases of transformative learning, he identifies the second phase as "self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt and shame." (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) This points to an affective dimension of transformative learning. However, it is also clear that Mezirow

emphasizes the cognitive dimension of transformative learning much more. “Research in transformative learning focuses upon the process of rationality—of how reflective thought, discourse, and action come into being and what their consequences are. It confines itself largely to limited rather than universal claims.” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 222) Mezirow does not offer any explanation of how emotions and cognition might work together in the process of transformation. Further, he makes no distinction between emotions and feelings. To suggest that the emotion of anger with its dramatic energy display within the body of the individual is an energy that can sustain a ten step process is to ignore how quickly such emotions dissipate. I wondered if a sustaining feeling, possibly hope, is the kind of energy that would support an individual in the transformation process.

Partially because of his decided emphasis on the cognitive dimension, Mezirow has attracted criticism to his theory of transformative learning. One critic is John M. Dirkx who states his view as follows: “I argue that personally significant and meaningful learning is fundamentally grounded in and is derived from adult’s emotional, imaginative connection with the self and with the broader social world.” (Dirkx, 2001, p. 64) The effect of this debate between Mezirow and Dirkx, among others, is to create a two-sided discussion emphasizing either cognition or affect.

This contest for superiority can be further seen in an article written by John Dirkx and Jessica Kovan describing the transformations experienced by environmental activists. They claim that transformations among these persons are better described by emphasis on affective and spiritual dimensions of adult

learning as opposed to Mezirow's theory with its emphasis on the cognitive dimension. "The processes of transformation reflected in this movement are not stop-and-start events, bounded by a 'trigger' at one end a remarkable conversion at the other. Rather than epochal happenings the activists' experiences of transformation suggest a lived stance toward a sense of call, a form of practice reflective of deep spiritual commitments {Teasdale, W. (2002). *A Monk in the World: Cultivating a Spiritual Life*. Novato, CA: New World Library.} [Full citation added.], and a gradual unfolding of the self." (Kovan & Dirkx, 2003, p. 114) Because Dirkx does not make a distinction between emotion and feeling, I wondered if there is a sustaining energy that supports the work in the affective and spiritual dimensions and enables transformation over an extended period of time. If that energy does exist, is it properly called hope?

I found one study of sustaining energy which investigated hope along with feelings, actions, and thinking as contributing factors to sustaining energy. (Macdonald, 1996) "As the pattern emerged, it became clear that hope was the internal source of energy which motivated the participants to continue their caring actions." (Macdonald, 1996, p. 144) Since this study looked at the experience of sustaining energy rather than the experience of hope itself, it is significantly different than the study that I conducted. I started with the experience of hope and tried to determine if it is "sustaining energy" in and of itself rather than one source among others for "sustaining energy."

- **Is hope identified as linked to individual and group activity in Adult Education?**

One adult educator who has written extensively about hope and how it works to transform society is Paulo Freire. Freire (1989) describes the origin of hope in

human beings and their relationship to social struggle. “Hope is rooted in men’s incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search—a search which can be carried out only in communion with other men. Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it. The dehumanization resulting from an unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope, leading to the incessant pursuit of the humanity denied by injustice. Hope, however, does not consist in crossing one’s arms and waiting. As long as I fight, I am moved by hope; and if I fight with hope, then I can wait.” (Freire, 1989, p. 80) In his language about the human search for completion there is a resonance with the ideas of Damasio and Stanage about a feeling that leads to engagement with the world.

Freire also connects hope with struggle and fighting. This I suspect comes from his historical context and experience in Brazil. I find this language to be too violent for my historical context and experience in the United States. I would prefer the language of persuasion over that of violence, but I do not judge the necessity of such language for Freire writing about his experience. As a white male in the United States of America, I have little experience with oppression and effective approaches for resisting and overcoming it. Being the younger of two brothers, I have experienced being forced to do things against my will, but this experience pales in the light of true oppression known by African Americans and other minorities. Thus, my limited experience has prevented me from identifying with the language used by Freire of fighting for a common good.

Freire (1989) provides a conceptual understanding of hope, but does not directly support his concepts with traditional research. His insightful analysis of

his own experience is enlightening but left me wondering if Freire's experience is applicable beyond his historical context in Brazil. By conducting a phenomenological study of hope, I began the process of gathering data that will enable a fuller evaluation of the concepts provided by Freire.

- **Does hope require critical thinking to be effective in Adult Education?**

My study is also informed by the philosophy of Ernst Bloch. Hanna Gekle (1988) interprets Bloch in her response to his book, *The Principle of Hope*, by describing hope as a disposition unique from all others. "Hope can, consequently, be distinguished from all other dispositions, and in particular from fear, which is also directed to the future, through its goal of effecting practical changes in the world." (Gekle, 1988, p. 57) If Gekle is correct then hope might be an antidote to the fear scenario described by Parker Palmer, Rosemary Ruether, and bell hooks.

Bloch wants to do more than distinguish hope from other dispositions. He also wants to explain how it works in human experience. "He wants to unite reason with imagination and anticipation with science." (Gekle, 1988, p. 58) My approach to researching hope in formal Adult Education degree programs was investigating similar if not identical dimensions. It is the interplay among these dimensions that will reveal if hope is active in the educational process.

Bloch uses the concept of docta res to more specifically describe how the interplay of various dimensions takes place in human experience. "This concept forms the fundamental category of Blochian anthropology prior to any discussion of principles, because it functions as a kind of utopian reality principle which presents the successful way in which wish and knowledge—as well as affect, or

basic disposition, and cognition—can be accomplished.” (Gekle, 1988, p. 60) The concept docta res embodies the movement from desire, to dream, to cognitive scenario, to practical changes. It is this movement that is possibly connected to hope. Understanding how some people accomplish this movement in the process of formal Adult Education degree programs could have implications for transformative learning, critical thinking, and possibly social change.

Henry Giroux (1997) also puts emphasis on the role of critical thinking in relationship to hope when he describes the meaning of “critique” for the Frankfurt School. “. . . the notion of hope and the possibility of transcendence were embodied in the Frankfurt School’s notion of critique. That is, inherent in the latter view was the idea that a better world was possible, that people could speak, act, and think in terms that spoke to a qualitatively better life. Thus, the notion of critique and the development of an active critical consciousness were pointed to and focused on as the preconditions for cultural and political mobilization.” (Giroux, 1997, p. 63) This notion of critique would apply to the area of Adult Education as much as to any other part of human existence; in fact it may be more likely to happen within the sphere of Adult Education than in any other place in society. My study, by looking at the essential structures of the phenomenon—hope, was intended to confirm or deny this connection with critical thinking as necessary for the full experience of hope.

The fact that hope has been researched in psychology, theology, philosophy, and Adult Education speaks to its importance as a phenomenon in the lives of human beings. This literature review has confirmed that the dimensions of hope (affective, cognitive, individual, and group) that I first speculated about in my own

reflection have been investigated to a limited degree. The investigation of these dimensions has not, however, always been connected directly to hope. This lack of connection is the gap that my study begins to fill. Therefore the purpose of this study was to add to the already flowering multi-logue about the meaning of hope and its role in human life.

Summary

Hope has been studied more in the fields of psychology, philosophy, and theology than in the field of Adult Education. Paulo Freire is one adult educator who has written extensively about hope.

The questions that first emerged for me in this research into what has been written related to hope were as follows:

- **Is hope that underlying feeling that enables a person to reach out to the world around them?**
- **What, if any, is the connection between fear and hope in Adult Education?**
- **Is hope the connection between the cognitive and affective dimensions of transformative learning?**
- **Is hope identified as linked to individual and group activity in Adult Education?**
- **Does hope require critical thinking to be effective in Adult Education?**

These questions became the initial guides for this research project.

Methodology

Learning

I have learned my life in all situations,
Why do doubts arise with demonstration?

And always more, further, and deeper,
Calling; calling to awaken this sleeper.

When I conceive and act; I learn.
Application of ideas will confirm.

I am developed, even transformed
By the ideas considered and worn.

I am never the same after learning,
On the quest for knowledge, never returning.

Yet, through it all I recognize myself.
Where I was, and this different self.

A new, integrated, expanded mind beckons.
The familiar gives way to more in seconds.

Together goes my life and learning
Relentless in its turning, turning.

PLM—10/17/2003

What type of research study did I conduct?

I conducted a phenomenological study of hope. “Phenomenology is, in the 20th century, mainly the name for a philosophical movement whose primary objective is the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions.”

[H. Spiegelberg’s definition (as cited in Stanage, 1987, p. 402)] Following this approach, I looked at the phenomenon—hope in dialogue with other research participants. I analyzed what they said about hope and its meaning to them, the interaction between us during the dialogue, their feedback about my written report of their meanings related to hope, as well as my own responses during the interview, and whatever else presented itself to my consciousness during this process.

I engaged in research within the framework of *human science*. “A human science is an orderly and systematic investigation and description of a person’s

(and persons') felt experiences of direct phenomena through the various forms in which selected and relevant phenomena may appear or be manifested.”

(Stanage, 1987, p. 41) By interviewing nine participants, I gained information about how they felt the direct experience of hope. I gathered a variety of descriptions about how hope presented or manifested itself in their lived experience.

By interviewing and then getting feedback from participants after I created a summary of what I interpreted to be their meanings, I engaged in the process of intersubjectivity. “. . .the method of intersubjectivity makes it possible to describe both *what* a phenomenon is as it appears and the countless *ways* of its appearing. Both are dimensions of the ways of describing the relatings of a phenomenon.” (Stanage, 1987, p. 87) It is through this process of intersubjectivity that meanings are clarified and communicated between people.

The first part of the method of intersubjectivity was to sharpen my awareness of how a phenomenon presents itself to consciousness. This part of the method is called “intuiting” the phenomenon. “Unlike the methods of objective analysis which *reduce* a phenomenon to parts already known and make it depend upon something other than and less than itself, in intuiting the phenomenon we focus upon its uniqueness, upon itself as reducible to nothing but itself.” (Stanage, 1987, p. 87.) This type of intuiting about hope was the basis for my research project. “One of the none too numerous tenets shared by all phenomenologists is the principle that intuitive experience (*Anschauung*) constitutes the ultimate basis for the justification of all our concepts and beliefs.” (Spiegelberg, 1975, p. 80)

I also used hermeneutics with the intention of refining my understanding of the data gathered from interviews with participants. “Hermeneutics is the science of correct understanding or interpretation.” (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 218) By investigating the background and context of the statements made in the interviews with participants, I created “hermeneutic knowledge.” (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 221) “. . .hermeneutic knowledge deals with ‘structures of interactive forces’ where a singular event is understood by reference to whatever it is a part of, so that its meaning and purpose can be defined.” (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 221).

While phenomenological reflection is about the experience itself, once a description has been received the actual words can be reflected on for the nuances of meaning they contain. “Descriptive and hermeneutic methods supplement each other, the first focusing beneath the surface of individual events in order to describe patterns, the second focusing on the linguistic and nonlinguistic actions in order to penetrate to the meaning of these events.” (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 214) By incorporating both approaches in my research, I intended to increase the possibility of discerning a deeper level of meaning from the data supplied in the participant interviews.

To study the phenomenon—hope through the use of phenomenology and hermeneutics was the best choice for me because I did not find it to be studied directly in and of itself. Hope has been written about in theology as a way of understanding God. (Moltmann, 1967) Thus the goal of this writing was to understand God using hope as a lens. Hope has been studied in psychology and psychotherapy in terms of what degree it exists in the patient or in the

process. (Jocksch, 2001; Talmadge, 2002; Schemmel, 1999) These studies have tended to be quantitative and thus did not look for the essential meaning structures of the phenomenon—hope. Hope was also studied as a component of the sustaining energy needed by nurses who were also mothers. (Macdonald, 1996) While this study had the closest connection to my study, it still did not directly study the phenomenon—hope, in and of itself, but saw hope as a component of sustaining energy. Thus I made my choice to study hope using hermeneutic phenomenology to uncover its meaning structures in the lived experience of the research participants.

How did I select the participants in this study?

I interviewed nine members of cohort groups who have completed either the Doctoral or Masters Degree programs in Adult and Continuing Education at National-Louis University since 1996. My primary and secondary advisors forwarded a letter introducing me and a copy of the informed consent form, via e-mail, to the lists of graduates they maintained. From those contacted, twelve individuals volunteered to participate in this study. Of this group, eleven were women and one was male. Most resided in the greater Chicago area, though some were as far away as the west coast and the east coast of the United States. They represented a variety of religious backgrounds, ages, and types of participation in the field of Adult Education.

I had made several assumptions about this group of people before the selection process started. I assumed that the individuals in this group were able to describe their experiences of hope in the context of these Adult Education degree programs. By having been in a cohort group, I assumed that they were

sensitive to the interplay of group and individual dimensions of their learning experiences. I further assumed that they would have familiarity with transformative learning as described by Jack Mezirow (1991). I expected that these persons knew about qualitative research and were comfortable with the interview process.

One of the risks inherent in using such participants is that they would try to be too helpful and give answers they thought I, as the lead researcher, might want to hear. This is a problem to a greater or lesser extent with all research that relies on interviews as the primary data gathering method. The way I tried to avoid this situation was to ask open ended questions that were not specifically identifying concepts and themes that I was interested in. Also in this phenomenological study, I was focused on what the meaning of the experience of hope was for the individuals interviewed. "*Phenomenological questions are meaning questions.* They ask for the meaning and significance of certain phenomena." (van Manen, 1990, p. 24) By probing for meaning, I remained focused on the individual's experience of hope rather than on my own.

How did I collect data in this study?

As a preliminary step, I investigated and clarified my own understanding of hope. By bracketing my own perspective [or at least attempting to bracket], I desired to be more open to the perspectives of the participants in this study and to be better able to describe the phenomenon—hope based on the data they provided through interviews. In this qualitative study, I attempted to stay open to new learning and knowledge construction that had not been anticipated by

creating opportunities for corrective feedback from the participants in the research. My process was as follows:

Step #1: I secured a signed informed consent form from each participant prior to scheduling an interview. I also provided a brief story of my own experience with hope during my current doctoral program. I asked that they read the story prior to the interview session. [See Appendices A and B]

Step #2: I conducted an audio-taped interview with each participant of approximately one hour in length. Some of these interviews were conducted on the telephone and some were done face to face. Each interview started with a question asking for reactions to the story provided before the interview. For both types of interviews I used a semi-structured interview approach. In many of the interviews, I used almost the same questions although the order was changed or a different number of probing and clarifying questions was asked between the structured questions. (See Appendix B)

Step #3: A few days following each interview, I listened again to the audiotape of the interview and created a four to five page summary of the interview. This contained a few direct quotations from the person interviewed, but mostly it contained my restatement of the salient comments by the interviewees pertaining to the phenomenon—hope. I made the decision to make a summary instead of a verbatim transcript of the interview because “The aim [of phenomenological description] is to construct an animating, evocative description (text) of

human actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in the lifeworld.” (van Manen, 1990, p. 19) By making a summary instead of a verbatim, I have already started the process of creating an “evocative description” and making meaning with the person interviewed.

Creation of the summary is also my first attempt at “intuiting” the phenomenon—hope and starting the process of intersubjectivity with the interviewee about the meaning of the experience. “The process of intuiting of phenomenon is the first stage in the method of intersubjectivity. Unlike the methods of objective analysis which *reduce* a phenomenon to parts already known and make it depend upon something other than and less than itself, in intuiting the phenomenon we focus upon its uniqueness, upon itself as reducible to nothing but itself.” (Stanage, 1987, p. 82) The summary becomes a tool in meaning making with the participants which maintains their unique understanding of the experience of hope.

Once the summary was created I sent it to the individuals for review. I encouraged them to make any changes they thought were important. They added, deleted, or changed anything in the document because this was still data belonging to them. I needed confirmation that significant distortion had not occurred. I then used the summary with confidence that the data was accurate to what the person meant.

Step #4: I then updated the summaries of the interviews based on the feedback.

I also began a process of constant comparison between the interview summaries, looking for repeated concepts and emerging themes. At this point I relied mostly on my memory of the interviews to identify what had made an impression on me.

Step #5: Next I coded the data in the summaries. I used a color coding method for expected and emerging themes. Initially I used color codes for the following concepts related to the phenomenon—hope: cognitive, affective, individual, group, spirit, critical reflection, and energy. After coding all the summaries, I looked for the possibility of combining concepts into a larger theme. I looked for frequency of use of a concept for an initial guide to the significance of the concept or theme to the interview group. I also looked for unique concepts expressed by only one person that might add insight into the experience of the phenomenon—hope.

Step #6: I began a reflective and iterative process of imaginative experimentation with the concepts and themes intended to reveal the essential meaning structures of the phenomenon—hope. This step included discussing my impressions with peers and faculty in this doctoral program. I also reviewed my initial reflections on the phenomenon—hope. I was looking for similarities and differences between the interview data and my reflections.

Step #7: I next started writing down impressions, word groupings, and other reflections related to the interview data. I began writing longer passages which documented my reflections about specific topics raised in the data. I continued to share these reflections with my primary advisor.

Step #8: I assembled a rough draft of the entire Critical Engagement Project (CEP). I divided the document into preliminary chapters and began to work on transitions between the chapters. This step was repeated several times as I added diagrams, poems, and additional insights into the text. I continued to receive feedback from my primary and secondary advisors about areas that needed to be expanded, clarified, or supported with additional research.

Step #9: I sent the research participants a copy of the “Findings and Interpretations” chapter of the CEP for feedback confirming or correcting the use of their data.

Step #10: I wrote a final draft of the CEP incorporating feedback from the research participants.

What was my process for data analysis?

Spiegelberg has described a process for data analysis when using a phenomenological approach. “*Phenomenology* . . . is a cognitive approach to any field of study which aims at being rigorously scientific, i.e., to achieve systematic and intersubjective knowledge; it does so by (a) describing first what is subjectively experienced (‘intuited’) insofar as it is experienced, whether real or not (the ‘pure phenomenon’) in its typical structure and relations (‘essences’ and

‘essential relations’) and by (b) paying special attention to its modes of appearance and the ways in which it constitutes itself in consciousness.” (Spiegelberg, 1975, p. 113) This intuiting of the phenomenon is a two part process. The first is to become deeply aware of what the participants are describing about hope with the goal of being as accurate as possible to their experience. The second part of the intuiting will be to become deeply aware of what is happening in my own consciousness as I experience their descriptions. Since I, as the lead researcher, am the primary tool for gathering the data in this research project, I must try to discern what impact my own concepts and perceptions are having on the information I am receiving from the participants in the study. Only with this awareness will I be able to properly understand the insights of the participants.

Some imaginative experimentation was necessary to clarify the essential structures of the phenomenon—hope. I looked at the summaries and listened to the audiotapes from the participant interviews and tried to imagine what would happen to the experience of hope if certain details were eliminated from the description. If nothing would change, that would indicate that the detail was not likely part of the essential structures of the phenomenon. If the experience would be diminished by the elimination of such a detail, then that detail would be a likely candidate for being part of the essence of hope. The variety of descriptions from the participants assisted me in this process.

I also looked for similarities of terminology in the descriptions of the participants. I looked for the same words or similar words in the descriptions of their feelings during the experience of hope. In addition, I looked for references

to the multiple dimensions [affective, cognitive, individual, group] of hope that I thought might be a part of the experience. Further, I looked for connections in the description between the phenomenon—hope and transformative learning. These ideas were the ones that I needed to keep most bracketed as I reflected on the interview data of the participants. By having the participants check my interpretations, this possible bias was in part corrected and limited.

While I have described this process in a sequence of steps, that is not actually how this qualitative study was done. “In qualitative research, data analysis is *simultaneous* with data collection. That is, one begins analyzing data with the first interview, the first observation, the first document accessed in the study.” (Merriam, 2002, p. 14) I was using intuiting, imaginative experimentation, and word analysis in a process of continuous comparison between interviews from the beginning. I made interpretations and used participant feedback about my interpretations to gain depth of understanding. This process clarified the meaning of the reported experiences and suggested essential structures of hope.

How did my original questions inform my data analysis?

In general, the questions that I started with were too narrow and confining because most were constructed as binary questions requiring only a “yes” or “no” answer.

- 1. Is hope that underlying feeling that enables a person to reach out to the world around them?**
- 2. What, if any, is the connection between fear and hope in Adult Education?**
- 3. Is hope the connection between the cognitive and affective dimensions of transformative learning?**
- 4. Is hope identified as linked to individual and group activity in Adult Education?**

5. Does hope require critical thinking to be effective in Adult Education?

They were posed in such a way as to only seek confirmation or denial of my preconceived notions of what constituted the phenomenon—hope. The simple answer to question 1 is “yes,” but what does it mean to reach out to the world? Question 3 can also be answered “yes,” but not in the way conceived of in the question. Questions 4 and 5 can also be answered “yes,” but that answer provides little useful information. Question 2 is the only question that could not be answered “yes” or “no” and it provided the most beneficial guide to this inquiry. Research participant Nancy [a pseudonym] said, “When you have hope you are less likely to let your fears overtake you.” This statement indicates that at least one individual saw a relationship between hope and fear. This eventually raised another question for me, “Is creating an opposition between fear and hope the best way to describe how they interact?” Since Nancy was the only individual to make this direct connection between the two, it seemed likely to me that more was going on than just the interaction between fear and hope.

Looking back on these original questions, it seems clear to me that I was not as much seeking new information as I was trying to confirm my own analysis of hope. While these questions did reflect somewhat my investigation of the literature related to hope in the field of Adult Education, they did not expand or open the topic. This may have been in part because of my need to have a manageable project to complete for my doctoral program. I now think that it is more likely that I was following a positivistic, quantitative approach to this research instead of the qualitative approach that I said I was going to follow. My situation was not significantly different than that of other researchers using a

phenomenological approach. “The problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much. Or, more accurately, the problem is that our ‘common sense’ pre-understandings, our suppositions, assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge, predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question.” (van Manen, 1990, p. 46)

This positivistic approach may have also influenced my initial approach to coding the data in this study. I started coding the data in the interviews in a manner that proved to be too complex. I went through the first six interview summaries trying to code comments in terms of seven different topics (cognitive, affective, individual, group, spirit, critical reflection, and energy). I was thinking of these topics as unique dimensions of the phenomenon—hope. I was clearly still using a quantitative approach to this research rather than the qualitative approach that I said I was using.

The quantitative research approach puts its emphasis on the value of objectivity and the removal of the researcher from the research process. This tends to lead to breaking down experience into the component parts which create it. Thus an experience is always produced by a combination of parts.

In the qualitative research approach, emphasis is placed on the experience as a whole. Because the researcher is also part of the experience being communicated, s/he cannot be withdrawn from the research process. Rather, the researcher must be even more scrupulous to identify biases that could impact the interpretation of the data. By knowing and revealing these biases, the

researcher places the reader in position to make an appropriate judgment about the researcher's process and interpretation of data.

By trying to dissect the experience into pieces rather than examining the experience in a holistic manner I was using a quantitative approach to the research. I was seeking causes and effects when the express purpose of phenomenology is to avoid seeking causes and effects. “. . . .

[P]henomenological investigations require that alleged 'causal' relationships and theories about 'causal' relationships be put aside.” (Stanage, 1987, p. 39)

While I was aware of my bias toward traditional positivistic research, I was not aware of the depths it reached into my psyche. The most difficult assumptions to identify are those which are so taken for granted that they are used as a paradigm and not easily brought to consciousness for examination.

“Paradigmatic assumptions are the hardest . . . to uncover: They are the basic structuring axioms we use to order the world into fundamental categories.”

(Brookfield, 1995, p. 2) Brookfield goes on to explain, “Paradigmatic assumptions are examined critically only after a great deal of resistance to doing so, and it takes a considerable amount of contrary evidence and disconfirming experiences to change them.” (1995, p. 3) This is what happened to me during the interview process with the research participants. My unquestioned positivistic paradigm was not working.

The data did not respond favorably to my attempts to dissect it in this manner. I found that I had identified the same single quotation from one participant with all seven of the topics I was using for coding. Nearly every other quotation that I found significant in giving insight into the phenomenon—hope

was coded with three or four topics as being present. The data seemed to be resisting the pre-conceived framework which I was trying to impose on it.

How did I make the results of the study dependable?

The dependability of this hermeneutic phenomenological research project was determined in part by the rigor of the critical reflection done by me, the lead researcher, with the guidance of feedback from the participants in the research. This was a spiraling process in which I returned again and again to the interviews of the participants to sharpen my understanding of the meanings they associated with the experience of hope. “To *do* hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal.” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 18) While, I am clear that my research did not exhaust the experience of hope, I do think it contributes to the development of a richer and fuller description of the phenomenon.

I incorporated the feedback of participants as a check on my reading into their words and meanings my own understanding of the phenomenon—hope. “A . . . common strategy for ensuring validity in qualitative research is *member checks*. Here you ask the participants to comment on your interpretation of the data.” (Merriam, 2002, p. 26) Using member checks not only provided for correction of my understanding and interpretation, but it offered the opportunity for new information that supplied nuance to the meanings previously communicated. This was a valuable second contribution from those participating in this research project.

You, the readers of this research, can also compare my original analysis of hope based on my own reflection about the experience with the words and insights of the participants. “In qualitative research reports it is becoming accepted practice for the researcher to explain his or her perspective on and relationship to the problem.” (Merriam, 2002, p. 20) This allows you, the readers, to evaluate the impact of my personal bias on the findings of this research project. Ultimately you will determine the degree of validity of this research.

What was my transformation?

In looking back on my research into hope, I realized that I experienced a transformation that closely follows the ten stages identified by Jack Mezirow (2000, p.22). My transformation began before I started this doctoral program in Adult and Continuing Education; was informed and enhanced by coursework and cohort dialogues; deepened and reinforced through the research interviews, and was finally revealed to me in the writing of this Critical Engagement Project.

My “disorienting dilemma,” Mezirow’s phase one of perspective transformation (2000, p. 22), happened two years before I began this doctoral program. I was terminated from employment by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church (UMC) after 22 years of service. This was in spite of being a member of the privileged clergy class in the church. Before working at the Board, I had served four years in the parish ministry and knew after leaving that I would never return to that work. With that option closed and no other viable option within the UMC, I retired as a clergy. With this primary part of my identity gone, I had to re-define myself.

It is interesting to me that I soon initiated a project of writing my own version of a theology of hope. Over the next two years I wrote almost a hundred pages and even shared some of them with a close friend. Yet I was not finding the project satisfying. In an effort to make money, I had expanded my adjunct teaching for three different universities. In the midst of this, my wife Carol suggested that I apply for a doctoral program in Adult and Continuing education at National-Louis University (NLU). She had supported my attempt to enter a doctoral program in theology 25 years before. That was my first major rejection by the UMC, because I was denied admittance. With Carol's encouragement and the advice of some friends I applied and was fortunate to be accepted.

This entry into a program of higher education was different than the three previous times in my life when I had earned master's degrees. Those were motivated by expectations about career and financial reward. This time was about becoming a better person.

Mezirow's second phase of perspective transformation is "self-examination marked by fear, anger, guilt and shame." (2000, p. 22) I was definitely angry about my termination. I felt betrayed after providing what I thought was loyal service. I had made and was willing to make contributions in the future. I was decidedly afraid. I feared losing my home as well as the love and respect of my wife and daughter. For many years I have viewed guilt and shame as manipulative emotions fostered by others for their benefits and ends. These emotions I studiously avoided. The difference in my experience at this stage and that described by Mezirow is my almost immediate focus on hope. I was thinking and writing about hope for two years before starting the doctoral program. Two

and a half more years of thinking about, writing about, and researching hope in this program have not exhausted the experience or my interest in it. I have become more and more convinced through dialogues with others, research in literature on hope, and interviews with research participants that hope is an integral energy required for the process of perspective transformation. My anger subsided and my fears were alleviated, but the constant through this four to five year process of transformation has been the experience of hope.

The third phase of perspective transformation requires “a critical assessment of assumptions” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) I had to review my assumptions about a career in the church. I even had to assess my commitment to my religious faith. Would meaning in my life be lost if I withdrew from participation in the church? Over the next few years, almost without noticing, my participation in the church lessened and lessened. The excuses of school and seeing my granddaughter delayed my direct review of my behavior. While my financial commitment to the church continued, my participation became almost non-existent. Recently Carol and I have questioned whether it makes sense for us to continue this financial commitment without the desire to participate in the church. I have made the assessment that my life can have significant meaning without this religious commitment.

The fourth phase of perspective transformation as identified by Mezirow is “Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared.” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) In reflecting back upon many dialogues with members of my cohort, I can recall feelings of discomfort with the expressions made about faith in God. Some in the cohort had similar discomfort to mine while others were

very comfortable with those expressions of faith. With one close friend I directly express my doubts about faith in God. She had once been in a similar space but now had moved back to strong position of spirituality. In a more general sense, members described many of the changes in perspective they were experiencing. These comments I received as reinforcing of the changes I was experiencing.

One comment by my primary advisor, Dr. Strohschen, that she had noticed that I had been moving toward Humanism for some time caused me to think about what comments or actions of mine had led her to that conclusion. The idea that others were noticing changes in me but not finding these changes off-putting was also received by me as reinforcing that hope I started the program with; to become a better person.

The fifth phase of perspective transformation is “Exploring new roles, relationships, and actions.” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) Becoming a doctoral student was obviously a new role for me. Being in a cohort whose stated mission was to help everyone in the cohort graduate was also a new experience. In my previous degree programs an air of individualism and competition was evident. Even in the master’s degree program that was nominally a cohort group, I did not adopt a true commitment to collaboration or support of others. I mainly interacted with a few people and ignored others. There was no real sense of shared hope in those previous groups. As I was supported in hope and studied more about hope, I experimented in my teaching with ways to express and support hope with adult students.

Over the last four years I can recall being involved in several conversations in which I expressed my doubts about the concept of “hell” in Christianity. I saw

this concept as antithetical to love and hope. I saw as false, for me, the dynamic of basing one's hope for salvation on the view that other persons are worse sinners than I am. I analyzed this as false hope and ultimately as detrimental to one's self-esteem. I also began to see the church's interest in behavior control as also detrimental to the individual. I experimented with a theology that attempted to justify universal salvation and true respect for the decisions people make. Finally I saw that, for me, belief in universal salvation removed the need for salvation by a God external to myself. This began my transformation from theology to a philosophy of Humanism; from a supernatural explanation of my lifeworld to a human and finite explanation of my experience.

This transformation in my perspective was the reason I chose to consciously avoid asking research participants about any connection between their religious faith and their experience of hope. One of the faculty members in the doctoral program had specifically suggested that in my research on hope I look for connections with spirituality. I rejected this suggestion but at the time I had no well thought out rationale for that decision. It is only after the fact that I realize more fully what was going on in me.

The sixth phase of perspective transformation is "Planning a course of action." (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) As I proceeded through the doctoral program, I initially planned to be a full time adjunct faculty by working for multiple universities. I also planned out my research on the phenomenon—hope. These plans also caused me to look at what and how I was teaching. I saw that I was having longer and more contentious dialogues with students about topics like the "divine command theory" in ethics and evolution in a world history classes. My exposure

to teachers and cohort members on issues of racism and oppression caused me to examine the very human causes of these behaviors and the need for human rather than supernatural intervention to remedy these relationships. I realized that I needed to plan differently for the courses I was teaching and the materials that I was including and excluding.

The seventh phase of perspective transformation is “Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plan.” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) The course work in this doctoral program with its emphasis on introspection as well as acquisition of new information has supported my process of transformation. The program’s design of an inductive rather than deductive process has helped me learn that returning and returning to a topic with new and varied dialogue is a way to deepen understanding and meaning of an experience or concept. The process of conducting research interviews and writing about them was an inductive process that led me to a new understanding of hope and myself.

Specifically, having to write about my Adult Education philosophy was an example of this inductive process. I read one book (Elias & Merriam, 1995) that described a number of educational philosophies. I used my interest in pluralism as an approach to ethics to pick and choose elements from each philosophy noted in the book. I created a nice little paper that expressed this eclectic view. I shared this paper with one of the faculty members of my doctoral approval committee, Dr. Rita Weinberg, and she gave me the feedback that she did not understand what I had written. This feedback was part of my impetus to do a deeper investigation of some of the educational philosophies I had read about. I had written an artificial, academic explanation that I did not truly own as my

philosophy. When I delved deeper into Humanism, I discovered that I was in almost total agreement with it. C. Lamont summarized the essence of Humanism in the following paragraph:

“Humanism is the viewpoint that men [sic] have but one life to lead and should make the most of it in terms of creative work and happiness; that human happiness is its own justification and requires not sanction or support from supernatural sources; that in any case the supernatural, usually conceived of in the form of heavenly gods or immortal heavens, does not exist; and that human beings, using their own intelligence and cooperating liberally with one another can build an enduring citadel of peace and beauty upon this earth. (Lamont, 1965, p. 14)

In Humanism, I had identified the philosophy that had been replacing my theology over the last four years.

The eighth phase of perspective transformation is the “Provisional trying of new roles.” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) The first role of doctoral student is where my provisional trying of roles began. Through feedback of teachers and colleagues I was confirmed as somewhat successful in this new role. The teaching assignments I collaborated on with others demonstrated to me that I was changing and reducing my need to be a “star.” I became more and more connected to the other members of the cohort and their successes. I realized that their success was no threat to my learning. I was no longer competing but collaborating in reality.

I also began revealing to students in the classes I taught that I am a humanist. Some were interested to find out what had prompted me to adopt this philosophy while others were not interested. By claiming my perspective, I thought I was providing the students with information with which to evaluate my comments and responses to their questions. This was a new behavior because previously I had

not thought it necessary to identify myself as in the mainstream of the dominant culture. I can see now that this omission limited the way that others could respond to my comments and feedback on their papers. I have also put greater emphasis on the fact that students do not have to agree with me to earn a good grade. This assurance, although given previously in classes I taught, has become more important now that I am not representative of mainstream thinking in the United States.

The ninth phase of perspective transformation is “Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships.” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) The surest sign of this stage for me has been my growing willingness to express in a variety of settings the change from theology to Humanism. I have been concerned that I would be clumsy in expressing my new philosophy and thus cause pain to others by implying something might be wrong with their faith or spirituality. I was also concerned about being so obviously out of the main stream of social ethos in the United States. Would I be engaged in endless conflicts of values? Would I be rejected by others for this newly adopted perspective? I have concluded that I must state my perspective tactfully but firmly in order to be honest with myself and others. In other words, I have to live as myself in the world and not as others might prefer that I live.

A second sign of this stage is my claiming and retreating from the claim of collegueship with the faculty of this doctoral program. I want to be clear that this unevenness of perceived status is in no way the fault of faculty. They have consistently and frequently encourage my growth toward being their full colleague. They have more than once asked what holds me back from being

confident in the quality of my thinking and writing. I am still growing into the role of adult educator which I perceive they have fully attained.

The final or tenth phase of perspective transformation is “A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective.” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) The fact that I have stopped attending church services and am contemplating ending my financial support of the church are signs that I have in part entered this stage. I have also noticed the development of a greater appreciation for the potentials of human beings to face issues and create innovative responses to them. I no longer expect or even desire some supernatural intervention into the issues that I face. I trust that human beings can identify or create the necessary actions to bring about positive outcomes. In other words, human beings can create a qualitatively better future than the status quo. I have also noticed in myself a greater frustration with the self-limiting behaviors that human beings take before fully engaging an issue. When students express an attitude that the status quo cannot be changed or at least the actions of one person cannot change it, I am more animated in my response based on what I have learned and experienced of hope. I want to support their hope by supplying affective, relative [pronounced re-**lay**-tive], and cognitive energies. I want students to more fully and deeply experience the human phenomenon—hope. By reinforcing their hope I want to contribute to their ability to act creatively and change their lifeworld.

I have described my perspective transformation in a very linear way. That was in part caused by wanting to comment on each of the stages in relation to my experience. In reality, my transformation is better described as an inductive

and spiraling process. Each time I returned to the issue of my Adult Education philosophy some parts receded and others moved forward. Some of my old ways of thinking were no longer satisfactory and had to be replaced. Yet it was in the writing of this Critical Engagement Project that the full recognition of my perspective transformation became obvious to me. Even the writing of this document has been an inductive, spiraling process that has returned me time and time again to the foundational questions of this program: “Who am I?” ; “Who am I becoming?”; and “What are my commitments?” To these three I add a fourth question taken from Stanage; “What may I hope?” (Stanage, 1987, p. 3)

How did I report progress on this research?

Over the semesters of the doctoral program I was periodically asked to report on my CEP research. In a report I wrote in September 2003 some precursors of my analysis of the phenomenon—hope were identified. On one slide of my PowerPoint presentation I asked myself two questions: “Why so many dichotomies?” and “Where are the triads?” My entire report had been about the questions I was posing in relationship to my research topic. During the preparation of the report I recognized that I had been posing a series of dualistic questions like: “Wisdom or Hubris?”; “Philosophy or Self-Story?”; “Insight or Defense Mechanism?”; and “Transformation or Self Deception?” All these questions were about me and what I was experiencing in this research project. When it dawned on me that my preoccupation with dualistic questions was limiting and that I needed to expand the complexity of my questions to at least triads, I was unknowingly preparing my mind to accept the construct of how

affective, relative [pronounced re-**lay**-tive] , and cognitive energies interact with hope that I would arrive at almost exactly a year later.

In that same report I created what I called my “flower” diagram. I based the diagram on the idea of intersecting ellipses around the one foci of hope with the other foci being the individual person.

Flower Diagram

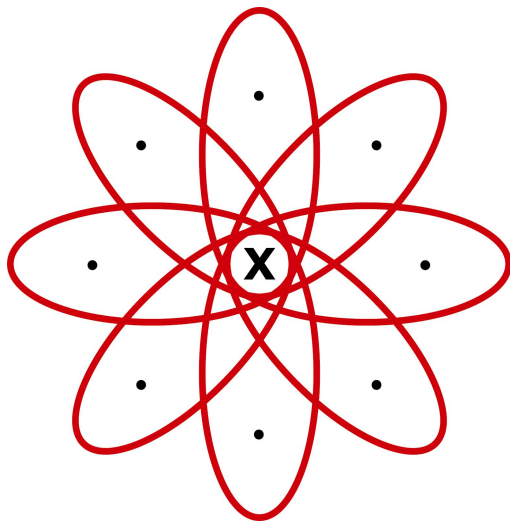


Figure #1

As I look back now, I see that I was creating a model of how the interviews I conducted in this research project would relate to each other. I was also identifying how my research could possibly fit in with other research in the field of Adult Education. If hope is a central foci, then each person interviewed is another foci around which is created the ellipse of their lived experience of the phenomenon—hope as reported by them in the interviews. It is then my responsibility to bring these various “petals” together in a beautiful “flower” of description of their experiences of hope. In this study I am the one finally in charge of meaning making and beauty creation relating to the phenomenon—hope. Yet my attempt is only a precursor to later studies that will surpass my

efforts, because more “petals” will be added to the “flower” which is the description about the experience—hope. And I will be ever grateful to those willing, insightful, and generous participants who shared their experiences of hope. They provided the critical data that enables the phenomenon—hope to be experienced in yet another nuanced way.

How else can the flower diagram be used?

This flower diagram can also be used to explain my Adult Education philosophy which brings together the creation of knowledge and beauty through collaboration.

Multi-logue Intersubjectivity Diagram

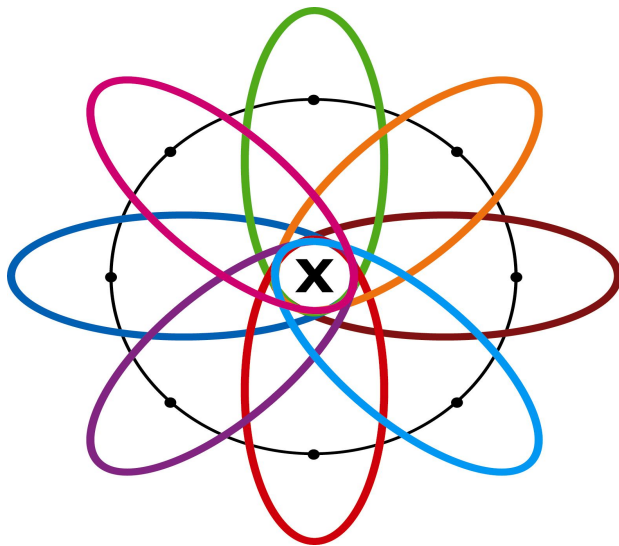


Figure #2

By making one foci Adult Education [instead of hope] and the other foci the adult learner, an elliptical petal is created by that relationship of foci. Collaboration is displayed by the overlapping of the petals around the center foci of Adult Education. Each individual student/learner creates knowledge, and the sharing of that knowledge is displayed by the overlapping petals. Beauty is created as

the shared knowledge creates the flower image. This all fits very well with the important parts of humanistic philosophy.

Humanism focuses on the development of the individual and is represented by the various petals. The beauty created through collaboration fits well with Humanism's emphasis on aesthetics. Even the ellipse itself hints at the scientific approach to knowledge that is a foundational element of Humanism. I recognized these connections between Humanism and the flower image that I had created only after the fact. This causes me to wonder if I had subconsciously adopted Humanism before I became cognitively aware that I had become a humanist.

In a larger sense my research project will, at its best, contribute one "petal" to the beautiful flower of research about adults and education. I can only suggest how this "petal" of research fits with others to begin the creation of that flower. By identifying this goal for my research, I was participating in the experience of hope. While I had some vision of an outcome, the actual details were and remain beyond my ability to identify. The goal was definitely connected to a reality of people, interviews, written summaries, and critical reflection. Yet the specific outcome was not possible to completely define in advance. The **affective** energy can be seen in my desire for the creation of beauty as well as knowledge. The **relative** [pronounced re-**lay**-tive] energy can be seen in the framing of the "petal" in terms of an ellipse which is defined by the relationship of two foci and the involvement of the other research participants in this project. The **cognitive** energy can be seen in the critical reflection that I have used to

create meaning from the diagram and apply it to this study and the field of Adult Education.

Summary

I conducted a phenomenological inquiry into the phenomenon—hope. I interviewed nine graduates of the masters and doctoral programs in Adult Education at NLU. I made summaries of the interviews and sent copies of the summaries for review (member checks) by the research participants. I used phenomenology and hermeneutics to analyze the data in the interview summaries as updated based on the feedback from the research participants. I also reflected on what arose in my consciousness in response to the research participants during the interviews, while writing the summaries, and following their feedback. I also used dialogues with my cohort group and advisors concerning this research project to develop insights and verbal expressions to accurately express the meaning of the data.

My initial conceptual framework for the phenomenon—hope proved inadequate to interpret the data. As I relied more and more on the data, my conceptual framework, as represented in my diagrams, changed dramatically.

During this process, I recognized that I had experienced a perspective transformation from a Christian theology to a humanist philosophy. Because of the significance of this perspective transformation, my analysis of the data from the research participants was affected and had to be reviewed critically to determine if it distorted the data. By providing the research participants a copy of the “Findings and Interpretations” chapter of this CEP for feedback, I attempted to mitigate being overly influenced by this perspective transformation.

Findings and Interpretations

Hope as Source

Hope is the headwaters for the river of love.
Hope is the fountain that lets joy flow.

Hope is the magnet that draws the ore of friends.
Hope is the fire that purifies the metal of dreams.

Hope is the heart that pumps energy to the frame.
Hope is the blood we sweat before the cool change.

Hope is the spirit of movements that change the status quo.
Hope is the sun that illumines beauty of soul.

Hope is the beauty that causes the eye to tear.
Hope is the wind that drives sails across deep water.

Hope is the memory of scaling tall mountains.
Hope is the food that gives strength to build fountains.

Hope is the wisdom that mercy teaches.
Hope is the silence true desire reaches.

Hope is the peace that brings the end of wars.
Hope is the rocket that stretches to the stars.

PLM—03/12/2003

In this section I will be revealing how my thought process developed during this research project. Some of my early ideas and diagrams were discarded and the reasons for those choices are given. Yet, it would not have been possible to move to my later insights and diagrams without those first attempts to clarify my own experience of the phenomenon—hope.

I have already mentioned my bias for positivistic research approaches. In reviewing my earliest thoughts and diagrams in light of the interviews with research participants, this bias was once again evident to me. With that revelation, I was freed to look afresh at the data more consistently from the phenomenological approach I had selected for this research. The following

pages will demonstrate what took place in my thinking over the months of this research project.

What did the data tell me during this research?

I started identifying statements from the various interviews that seemed to have a connection in my mind. Mary, one of the research participants, made the following statement in describing the experience of being in a cohort for her doctoral degree: “Some of it you get hope from because you make good friends.” Nancy described how she asks students in an education class she teaches to develop metaphors for what education is and what it should be which are analyzed collaboratively in group dialogue. She stated, “And so that in itself that process of collaboration and that discussion of those metaphors and how they relate to each other, students walk away with a much richer, much broader, and much more hopeful view for education or the conditions of society.” Claudia stated “Hope is where I engage the belief in myself that I can move forward and others around me.” Dawn stated, “The ultimate fear for me is being alone and that the only way to ensure not to be alone is to make commitments. . . .That’s where hopefulness comes from for me.” Hanna said the following about hope and relationships, “Support maybe would not go into it [hope]. It’s something on the side.” “It’s like they’re hopeful for me.” These statements seem to be about the connection to other people when hope was experienced by some of the research participants.

From these and other statements, I made a grouping of words like “collaborating,” “friends,” “support,” “dialogue,” “engaged,” “commitments,” “acceptance,” and “approval.” This type of language was so frequent among the

research participants that it made me wonder if this is an essential structure of the phenomenon—hope. Is hope only fully experienced when it is shared with other people? In dialoguing about this word grouping with my primary advisor the idea of relational or **relative** [pronounced re-**lay**-tive] energy surfaced. This was followed shortly by the question: “Does hope interact with relative energy to begin the identification and recognition of the experience of hope?”

Once this idea of hope being a feeling that interacts with one kind of energy surfaced, it was not long until our conversation turned to the question of what other energies might be interacting with that feeling which would later be identified as hope. As I looked through different word groupings that I had created previously, it became clear that **cognitive** energy was also interacting with the feeling that would be identified as hope.

One of the word groupings had arisen from statements like this one from Claudia, “There are some things I continue to do even though the return is not there and I do that because I made the choice to hope.” Catrina said “I think you can decide to be hopeful. . . I am not going to look at this negatively. I am going to focus on the possibility.” Albert was very concise with this statement, “Hope is whatever you decide that it is.” Dawn said that “Hope is an important part of making the most of the opportunities you have.” Nancy said this in describing her doctoral degree experience, “One of the things that was incredibly important for me in thinking about it as hope or thinking of hope is that of reflecting critically on where I am and where I’m going.” She also said, “When you have hope, you are more likely to want to go beyond your ignorance.” Claudia stated “Hope is

about a sense of self possession regardless of what is going on in the external environment.”

These research participants had associated words like “choice,” “decide,” “realism,” “opportunities,” “self possession,” and “pioneering” with their various experiences of hope. These words indicated to me that significant cognitive energy was a part of the experience of hope for the research participants.

Deciding what vision of the future is “realistic” or an “opportunity” is the product of cognitive assessment of one’s lifeworld. “Choosing” or “deciding” are based on a cognitive assessment of one’s agency in relationship to one’s lifeworld.

Another set of statements from the research participants also coalesced in my mind. In response to the question of how do you know you are feeling hope, Mary said “You have peace. You’re satisfied or you’re happy.” Hanna said, “You get this feeling of elation.” “It’s very uplifting.” Albert stated, “I think hopefulness also takes some fearlessness too. Educators love to go into a room only when they already have all the answers. It is hard to be self reflexive enough to figure out what went wrong and what you did wrong. That takes some fearlessness too. And it is difficult because it makes you vulnerable.” Kasay said, “When I am hopeful about something, I feel good. It is a good expectation that something good is going to happen.”

The word groupings also seem to reveal a third energy that interacted with the feeling that was later described to me as hope. The third energy was emotional or **affective**. The research participants associated the words “joy,” “liberated,” “elation,” “confidence,” “optimism,” “destiny,” “fearlessness,” “vulnerable,” “peace,” and “feel good” with their various experiences of hope.

How did I react to this data?

The first reaction that I had was to try to create a drawing or diagram to help me visualize the interaction of these energies with hope. The diagram that I created, after several revisions, is below.

Individual and A.R.C. Energies

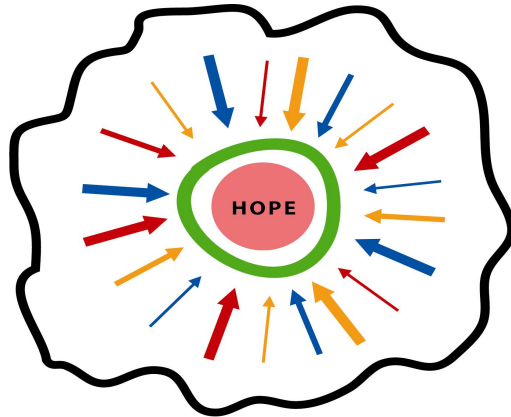


Figure #3

Once I had this diagram in mind, I returned to the data provided in the interview summaries to try a new approach to coding the emerging themes of energies.

This time I looked for only the three energies of **affective**, **relative**, or **cognitive**, or as I was later to call them in my reflections, the **A.R.C.** energies.

When I identified the various energies interacting with hope, I then tried to assess the impact of that energy on the interviewee's hope. Did the energy support, inhibit, or misdirect the hope? I interpreted certain statements to fall into

these themes. It seemed that the **A.R.C.** energies could each have all three of the impacts (support, inhibit, misdirect) on the participant's hope.

Sometimes the participant's thinking helped him/her realize that movement in hope was happening. At other times, thinking inhibited or limited what was possible for the person. Thirdly, thinking sometimes encouraged behavior that was not aligned with the person's hope. The same can, it seems to me, be said for the interaction of affective and relative energies with hope.

It will be clear from some of the interview quotations that these **A.R.C.** energies may be distinguished from each other for the purposes of identification and discussion, but they are often experienced at the same time. Individuals had emotions related to ideas they were thinking about. This thinking and emotional experience was sometimes experienced as part of the dialogue with other persons. That is a partial explanation of my somewhat arbitrary identification of a quotation as an example of **affective** energy when it may also be an example of **cognitive** or **relative** energy. To focus on the exactly proper location of a quotation within one of the energy themes is to de-emphasize the interplay of the energy with hope. It also suggests that human experience is less complex than it really is. Human beings experience emotions and thoughts while engaged in dialogue with other persons. Because this is true, it is best to describe and interpret without being overly rigid about categories for energies or their impacts related to hope.

My original construct of two pairs of intersecting dimensions of hope [individual versus group; affective versus cognitive], also proved to be inconsistent with the data that I gathered from interviews. One reason these

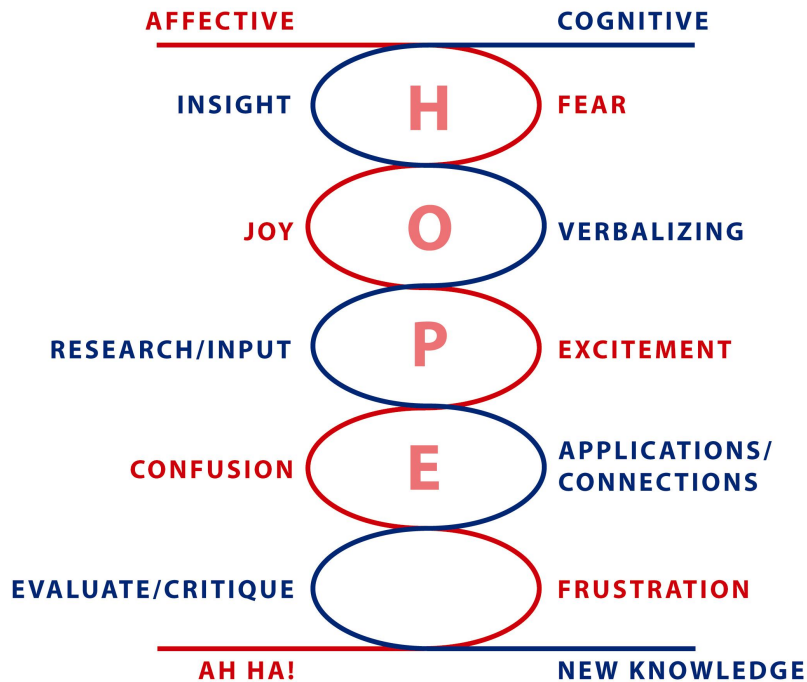
proposed dimensions are incorrect is because the individual **is** the context within which hope is experienced. Even the construct of hope having dimensions now seems inadequate to describe the data gathered. It now appears to me that hope is better described as an energy that interacts or has interplay with other energies. Energy is a more fitting term for hope because it removes any view of it as an object to be divided and examined in terms of its parts. That would be a positivist approach to analysis rather than a phenomenological approach.

This original construct of two pairs of intersecting dimensions [individual versus group; affective versus cognitive] of hope was likely overly influenced by my Humanism and its acceptance of the traditional scientific method for examining reality. I was following that pattern with its emphasis on taking things apart to look at the pieces rather than the whole. Also quite common with the traditional scientific method is its binary thinking. By putting these supposed dimensions into intersecting pairs, I was almost unconsciously accepting as valid this type of binary thinking. At first, I thought I was avoiding this approach by identifying multiple dimensions of the experience—hope. However, it seems to me now that it is more probable that I was repeating the process of binary thinking to “find” these four dimensions.

The diagrams I created over time show changes in my awareness related to hope. The first diagram of the interaction of affective and cognitive dimensions of hope was based on my own reflections and reactions to my literature review. Below is an image of my initial understanding of the interplay of the affective and cognitive dimensions of formal, sustained adult learning processes.

Affective—Cognitive Helix

Below is an image of my initial understanding of the interplay of the affective and cognitive dimensions of formal, sustained adult learning processes.



The points at which the lines cross are the moments of deepest integration of ideas and feelings.

Figure #4

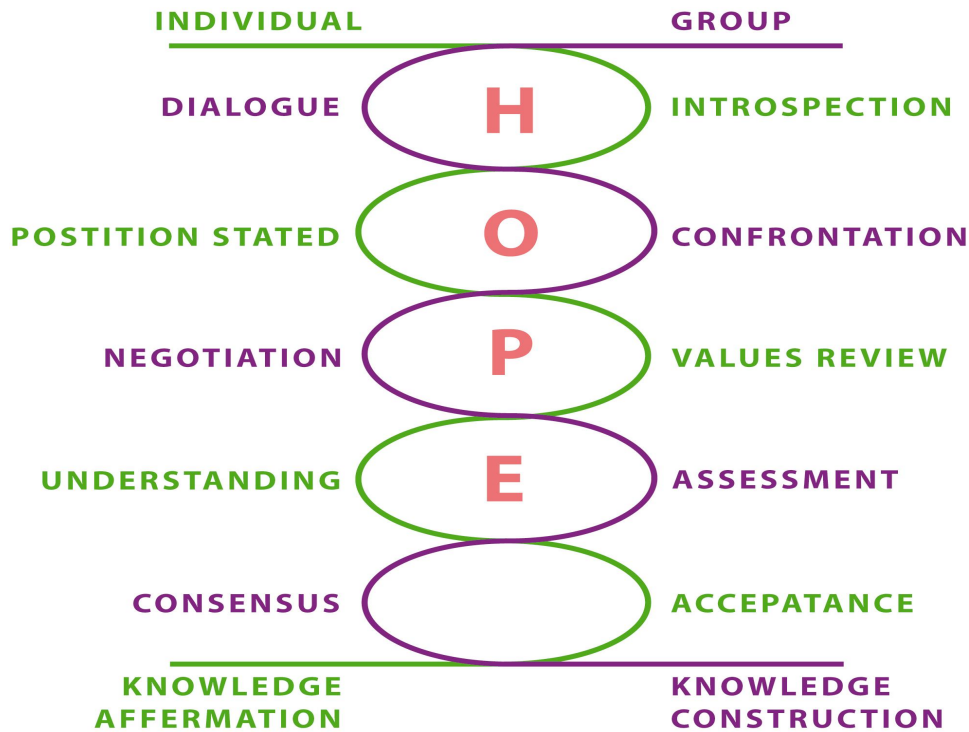
The points at which the lines cross are the moments of deepest integration of ideas and feelings.

In looking at the affective and cognitive as dimensions of hope I was seeing them somewhat like facets of a diamond, as different faces being presented. Yet in the diagram I positioned hope not at the points of intersection of the affective and cognitive, but in the loops formed by the interactions. Looking back from where I am now, I can say that the interactions of the affective and cognitive were taking place around hope and not with hope.

I followed the same pattern of thinking in the second diagram I created for the interaction of individual and group dimensions of hope. Below is an image of my initial understanding of the interplay of the individual and group dimensions of formal, sustained adult learning processes.

Individual and Group Helix

Below is an image of my initial understanding of the interplay of the individual and group dimensions of formal, sustained adult learning processes.



The points at which the lines cross are the moments of deepest integration of individual and group activity.

Figure #5

The points at which the lines cross are the moments of deepest integration of individual and group activity.

When I tried to combine the two diagrams, the result was unreadable and unhelpful. I cannot claim that this was an insight that moved me away from the idea of four dimensions of hope, but it did provide some insight that my diagrams were inadequate. I thought it was mostly a product of my limited creativity rather than a flaw in my understanding of the phenomenon—hope.

What limitations did I find in my diagrams?

When I reflected on the interviews with the research participants, these first diagrams proved to be inaccurate. The data from the interviews suggested a different view of hope than dividing it into dimensions. Hope appeared to be closely associated with other energies like emotional energy or affect; cognitive energy; and relational energy. While these energies are often associated with interactions with other people, they are really experienced within the individual.

Human beings can have individual responses to the same stimulus. When different people hear a type of music, they often have unique responses to it. One may recall a particularly pleasant experience from the past for which the music was a reminder. Another person could focus on the progression of the chords used. While these two people might agree on the style of the music; rock, blues, or classical; their individual experiences of it would be nuanced in quite different ways because of what each one focused on. Through the process of intersubjectivity they could expand the similarities in their experiences of the music, yet their nuanced experiences of the music would remain unique to each individual. The differences in their lived experiences of their realities would make it so.

All choices and actions of individuals take place within their unique individuality. However, because human beings are alike in many physical ways and those in a particular society have been socialized in a similar way through language, laws, customs, etc., we can communicate with confidence that our individual experience will be understood by others to a large degree, even if not completely or exactly. We have general agreement on the meaning of the word hope, but the additional nuances carried in words like dream, wish, expectation, or desire color the meaning uniquely for each person.

When the energies I call **Affective**, **Relative**, and **Cognitive** interact with hope, they may support, inhibit, or misdirect hope. These energies do not always work together in the same direction at the same time as would seem to be indicated by the diagram below. It was created to show that each of the **A.R.C** energies could have any of the three effects.

HOPE and A.C.E. ENERGIES (General)

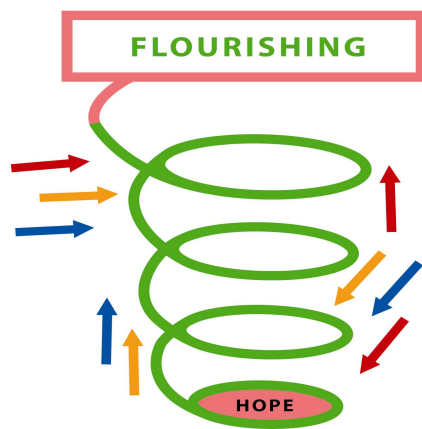


Figure #6

One can identify support for hope by the increase in energy experienced by the person. The inhibiting of hope is experienced as a decrease in energy even to the point of being paralyzed into inaction. Hope is experienced as misdirected when energy is spent on activities that are marginal to the purpose(s) one has chosen for life. If I as an adult teacher write one poem to communicate some important thought on a subject and then imagine that I am a poet, my hope has been misdirected. Poetry is only one of the methods by which I might communicate related to the subject matter that I am teaching and learning with students. To shift my self conception from teacher to poet on the basis of one action is a sign of misdirected hope.

When individuals in this study described their experiences of hope, what they said can be understood and appreciated through the created intersubjective meaning. This also created a **relative** energy which could inhibit, support, or misdirect the energy of hope as experienced uniquely by each person in the relationship. Kasay described how she used a candle to re-mind and re-create relational energy with a colleague to support hope and the completion of her Critical Engagement Project. Dawn described the **relative** energy in her marriage that misdirected her hope and prevented her enrollment into a graduate degree program. This misdirecting of hope partially explains her nearly twenty year delay in completing her doctoral degree.

Cognitive energy can also support, inhibit, or misdirect the energy of hope. **Cognitive** energy can inhibit one's hope through focus on self-doubt concerning abilities, knowledge, or self-image. Dawn described her initial acceptance of a "male image" of professorship. The energy from this cognitive image and her self

talk about it inhibited her hope and delayed her enrollment in graduate school.

When **cognitive** energy matures into critical reflection, it is more likely to support hope. Claudia described her process of cognitively reviewing her past successes when faced with a situation challenging her hope. These intentional reflections on past successes tended to support or reinforce her hope and make change a more real possibility. Misdirection of hope, can occur when one accepts the thinking of other people without doing one's own critical reflection.

A third energy that interacts with hope is emotional energy or **affective** energy. Once again it can support, inhibit, or misdirect the energy of hope. Dawn described fear as an inhibiting energy in relation to the experience of hope. "The opposite of hope is fear, for me anyway." Claudia identified kindness and empathy as energies supporting the experience of hope. "These two things always lead me to a place of hope." She went on to identify the **affective** energy of acceptance as also supporting the experience of hope.

Below is a diagram that I created to represent the complexity of the **A.R.C.** energies in relation to hope and human flourishing.

Hope and A.R.C Energies (Specific)

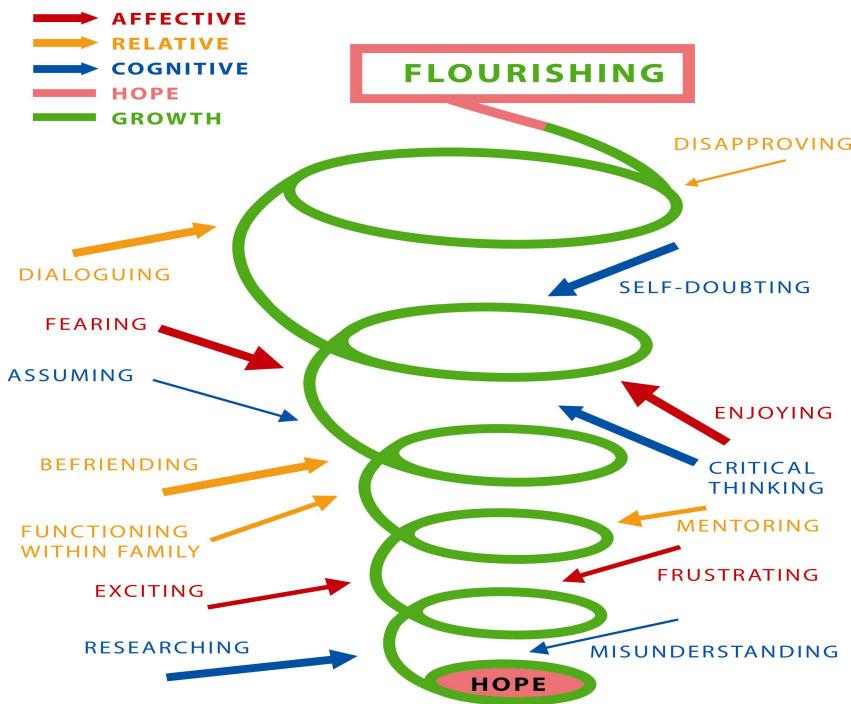


Figure #7

In diagrams #6 and #7, I have returned to the concept of “flourishing” that I described in detail earlier (pages 16 and 17) and its connection to hope. The diagrams combine the concepts of the **A.R.C.** energies to hope and flourishing. The aim of hope, as I see it, is to support the growth of an individual toward flourishing. How flourishing is defined would be uniquely nuanced by each individual with some general characteristics mostly shared by all. The **A.R.C.** energies demonstrate that a person can use **Affective** and **Cognitive** energies in creative ways to enhance one’s life. The **Relative** energy indicates that individuals tend to be engaged with other people in the process of growth toward flourishing. Underneath, in the background like a heartbeat, the energy of hope brings all these other energies together and enables the developmental/growth process that moves a person toward flourishing. This aim is never completely

reach because more meaningful levels of flourishing are always possible for the individual.

What have others said about such energies?

Jack Mezirow identified the **affective** energies of fear, anger, guilt, and shame as significant in phase two of perspective transformation. (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22) While I agree with Mezirow that these emotional energies can initiate movement in the individual, these energies were not mentioned by the participants in this study related to changes that they made during their degree programs. The data in this study suggests that more research is needed to determine if other emotional energies and hope are connected to transformational learning.

While John Dirkx (1997, 2001) has done research in this area it has been, in my opinion, in opposition to Mezirow rather than as an expansion of that theory. Dirkx posits that Mezirow puts too much emphasis on the cognitive aspects of transformational learning. Dirkx emphasizes the affective aspect of transformational learning as the controlling aspect. If, however, hope is experienced as a background feeling (Damasio, 1994) rather than an emotion and provides the context for cognitive thought, then it might be possible in future research to inquire about the potentially deep connections between affective and cognitive aspects involved in transformational learning.

Parker Palmer has described fear as the common experience of teachers and students in the classroom. (Palmer, 1998) His analysis is likely correct but it may be too simplistic. Erich Fromm (1941) offers a deeper analysis of the human condition by looking at the issue of freedom as experienced by individuals. “. . .

[M]odern man, freed from the bonds of pre-individualistic society [medieval society], which simultaneously gave him security and limited him, has not gained freedom in the positive sense of the realization of his individual self; that is the expression of his intellectual, emotional, and sensuous potentialities. Freedom, though it has brought him independence and rationality, has made him isolated and thereby, anxious and powerless.” (Fromm, 1941, p. viii) One response to the fear in this situation (anxiety and powerlessness) is submission to a leader.

(Fromm, 1941) The willingness of “students” to blindly follow the “teacher” is an attempt to quell their fears. This could create fear in the “teacher” caused by the burden to always be correct. This is, in part, what I think Palmer is talking about. The school and the classroom are institutional examples of the hierarchies in Nazi Germany which Fromm says were created to deal with the fears of isolation or aloneness and powerlessness. “A hierarchy was created in which everyone has somebody above him to submit to and somebody beneath him to feel power over; the man at the top, the leader, has Fate, History, Nature above him as the power in which to submerge himself.” (Fromm, 1941, p. 262) Above the “teacher” is the “discipline” which is a force in which people can submerge themselves.

Fromm’s solution for dealing with these fears is spontaneous activity which leads to the realization of the self. (Fromm, 1941) “We believe that the realization of the self is accomplished not only by an act of thinking but also by the realization of man’s total personality, by the active expression of his emotional and intellectual potentialities.” (Fromm, 1941, p. 284) In Fromm, I can see connections to the **A.R.C.** energies identified in this research project. His

identification of the necessity of expressing emotional (**affective**) and intellectual (**cognitive**) potentialities certainly connects to two of the energies I identified as interacting with hope. Fromm's emphasis on the need of humans to avoid aloneness connects to the third energy, **relative**, that I identified. If Fromm's analysis of the situation of modern human beings is correct, then Adult Education has the opportunity to address the fears of adults and support them in the spontaneous expression of their whole persons. This can be done, I think, by supporting the energy of hope in each adult by collaborating with them to generate supportive affective, relative, and cognitive energies.

What essential meaning structures of hope were identified?

One association that was very consistent in the descriptions of hope by research participants was its association with **change**. The people interviewed connected hope to changes made in the past as well as to changes they anticipated for the future. Albert stated it very directly in this way, "I think hope is about the potential for life to change and grow, and for you to grow." Dawn's words were, "Hope is not something that sort of floats in the air. Hope is something that you can actually make work for you. . . ." Both these statements make it clear that hope in their experience was connected to changes they had made or were considering making. All these comments lead me to the conclusion that **change** is an essential meaning structure for the phenomenon—hope.

It is my judgment that **human agency** is also an essential meaning structure of the phenomenon—hope. For these research participants, hope related to changes that had taken place or they were planning to make happen in their lived

experience. When they talked about visions of life that were not connected to reality, then they tended to use a word like “dream” rather than hope. Hope did not seem to exist apart from their ability to choose and act in a direction they saw as moving toward, in my words, flourishing. Their words led me to conclude that **human agency** was an essential meaning structure of the phenomenon—hope for these research participants.

This emphasis on **change** and **human agency** can further be seen in the use of words like “choice,” “decide,” “commitment,” “accomplishment,” and “pioneering.” All these words emphasize human agency in the real world of lived experience. Nancy described this experience as follows, “I think hope enables us to deal with the most frustrating of situations, the most inexplicable of circumstances in a positive way.” For her the **human agency** associated with hope did not just apply to making a good situation better, but equally applied to difficult situations and changing them for the better.

Dawn expressed a different nuance about **human agency** when she said, “Hope is an important part of making the most of the opportunities you have.” She was saying, I think, that a person has to recognize opportunities exist before one can act. Hope can help one recognize opportunities, but Dawn said that her class and gender sometimes interfered with her recognition of opportunities. In fact, she said that finally having a mentor helped her overcome limitations she attributed to her class and gender.

The arena within which change and human agency take place is the person’s sense of reality. Change had to be possible in the real world for these people to associate it with hope. Claudia stated the connection very clearly when she said,

“Hope requires engagement in something that is possible.” Claudia’s words “. . . I made the choice to hope” also confirm this connection. “Making the most of opportunities,” as Dawn said, is another example of the connection between perception of reality and **human agency**. Nora associated **human agency** with confidence, “When I have hope, I have confidence of success. When I don’t have hope, I lack confidence of success. And my level of expectation defines the way I behave in a situation.” Use of the words “possible,” “opportunities,” and “confidence of success” indicate that these research participants were dealing with issues in their perceived reality and trying to make changes.

Change and **human agency** are bounded by a sense of reality and fostered by the choice of actions within the power of the person involved. The idea that change is bounded by a sense of reality and fostered by the choice of actions within the power of the person involved has led me to speculate about the possibility that hope is a process. It might, in its simplest form, look like this: Assessment of reality; Choice of responses to that assessment; and Changes as a result of those actions.

How can hope be described as a dynamic and complex process?

Hope as a process is not best described as linear. It is more like a vortex of energies that continue to loop back upon themselves. The spiraling nature of hope returns one to issues that remain unresolved in one’s life. Each time a person returns to an issue the configuration of energies is different. Because the energies are different, new, and more creative solutions or actions may emerge. At other times the initiating energy of hope is blocked or diverted and the status quo is maintained or a misdirection of the energy into non-productive activities

can happen. Because of the spiraling nature of hope, all actions are temporary and can be reassessed at another time.

If the hope process begins with a personal assessment of one's reality, then change is sought most often because there is some dissatisfaction with that lived experience. It could be that one has experienced great difficulties or that one desires more development of good experiences. This experience of dissatisfaction would seem most aligned with **Affective** energy.

Next, one must also have had experiences that confirm that "reality" is malleable. One must have tried and succeeded in choosing and changing some aspect of his/her lived experience. This would seem to take both **Affective** and **Cognitive** energy. One would also have to develop some vision of how the status quo could be made better through actions taken by the individual. This would likely take **Affective**, **Relative**, and **Cognitive** energies to accomplish.

Once actions are selected and taken, feedback from the universe would indicate what progress if any had been made in the direction of hope. A new reality would have been created and thus the process starts over. If the selected actions did not create the desired change, then it is likely that fear and self doubt would increase. Increase in fear and self doubt would likely partially block awareness of hope, making future actions for change more difficult to take. If the selected actions did create the desired change then confidence and optimism would likely increase. Increases in confidence and optimism would likely enhance the awareness of hope, making future actions for change less difficult to take.

How do the A.R.C. energies relate to other concepts?

With the identification of the **A.R.C.** energies, I also began to think about hope in terms of force field analysis. Kurt Lewin developed this approach to analyzing change in organizations. “Force field analysis—despite its ominous title—is simply a technique for defining and assessing the forces that collectively affect a particular problem. These forces may either impede a solution or support it.” (*How...to use force field analysis*; Dec2000/Jan2001, p3) Force field analysis posits that equilibrium exists between forces for change and forces resisting change which create the status quo. For change in the status quo to occur, forces for change have to increase in power or forces resisting change have to decrease in power, or both. The forces for change are often aligned with hope and a vision of how things can be better in the future. The forces resisting change are often aligned with fear and a vision of how things might be worse in the future if changes are made. The implications for Adult Education could be that practitioners must become more effective at supporting the forces aligned with hope and diminishing the forces aligned with fear in order to assist change in the adult learners.

Some of the forces identified by adult students that are aligned with hope are the drive to; make more money, have different job opportunities, increase self-esteem, and have a better life. Some of the forces identified by adult students that are often aligned with fear are the costs of education, the time involved, the complications of child care, the difficulty of travel, and previous unsatisfactory educational experiences. If adult educators choose actions that convince adult students that they have intrinsic knowledge to share with others, we will have

increased the forces aligned with hope and decreased the forces aligned with fear. If adult educators choose actions that convince adult students that teachers have all the answers and that adult students are deficient, we will likely have increased the forces aligned with fear and decreased the forces aligned with hope. These are choices that adult educators need to examine in light of their own lived experience of hope.

What did the research participants say about spirituality and hope?

I originally set out to avoid asking questions of the research participants about any connection between hope and spirit or spirituality. As I stated earlier, I thought this connection might be laden with the expectation that hope is a derivative of religious experience. I also thought that this might interfere with studying the phenomenon—hope in and of itself. What I did not anticipate was that, without my prompting, so many of the research participants would associate their experience of hope with spirituality without prompting. Seven of the nine persons interviewed directly associated their experience with spirituality or God. Mary said, “Hope is spiritual, but you loose sight of it and you question your faith. . . .” Nora put it this way, “I think that idea of hope, I can’t see it as disconnected from one’s belief or disbelief in God and what that means to one. One’s relationship to God.” Hanna stated, “Spirituality and hope, they go hand in hand.” “Without spirituality, hope is kind of like empty, this empty feeling.” These three examples show how strongly hope can be associated with the spiritual by some individuals.

In looking at this information in terms of the **A.R.C.** energies and their interaction with hope, the association with spirituality might be seen as a

combination of **Affective** energy and **Relative** energy. The level of emotional commitment to this association can be quite high as seen in the statement of Nora. The relational aspect can be seen in the comment by Mary. Something that goes in and out of view can be sustained by a confidence or trust in the relationship that one has with that object.

This association of hope and spirituality may also be influenced by the culture in which one participates. Mary, Hanna, and Nora seemed to have strong connections to organized religion which may have influenced the way they thought about hope. This could also be a cumulative type of relative energy which was experienced by their participation in their religious community.

Why did the research participants so frequently want to tell me about their association of spirituality with hope? My reflection on this question leads me to the idea that hope has most often most clearly been discussed in a religious or spiritual setting. In such settings a kind of ultimate hope of life after death is often talked about. For some people this belief in life after death gives meaning to their current life. It is not unusual that persons involved in such religious traditions would consistently mention those traditions when asked about their experience of hope. It is my analysis that the association of spirituality and hope is a culturally conditioned overlay on the phenomenon—hope.

I think that some of the insights from Elizabeth Tisdell's work (1999) support my analysis. She stated that “. . . [S]pirituality is about how people construct knowledge through images and symbols, which often emanate from the deepest core of our being and can be accessed and manifested through art, music, or other creative work.” (Tisdell, 1999, p 93) This is a process, I think, that starts

from a feeling that is then reflected on in the manner suggested by Stanage (1987).

Above feeling, consciousness attends-to the charged scanning field of feeling, distinguishes and individualizes feelings, selects them out, and continues to work away at them in countless ways: giving them edges and boundaries, articulating particular and unique feelings, clustering some of them as complex wholes, looking into possible resemblances, 'mulling' them over, reflecting on them, searching out interpretations toward the end of understanding better and better these sensings, and thereby persons and ourselves within the world. (Stanage, 1987, p. 117-118)

This reflecting, mulling, clustering, and sensing become associated with the cultural input of music, art, ritual, etc. to be connected to the source phenomenon—hope. Tisdell confirms such a conclusion when she states “. . . [S]piritual development and the meaning attached to image and symbol cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context of the learner.” (Tisdell, 1999, p. 94) She is even more explicit on this issue when reporting her research with women adult educators teach for social change. “In fact, the study suggests that spiritual development appears to require a rational component; it is import to critically think about one’s spiritual experience not as a substitute for the spiritual experience itself, but because critically analyzing messages from the larger culture, including one’s religion of origin, is an important part of claiming one’s own identity.” (Tisdell, 200, p. 324)

The women that I interviewed who mentioned spirituality most [Kasay, Nora, Hanna, Mary] also mentioned a strong involvement in specific religions. This would be expected based on the insights of Tisdell that spiritual development is in part “claiming one’s identity.” (Tisdell, 2000, p. 324) It would have been very unusual for these research participants not to tell me about their association of spirituality with hope because it would have meant denying part of their identities.

Because of this analysis, I have concluded that spirituality is not an essential meaning structure for the phenomenon—hope.

When doing a phenomenological inquiry, it must be remembered that the researcher is also a supplier of data for analysis. In this research project, I continually returned to the data and also my responses to the data as information to be considered in the overall inquiry project. “Phenomenological investigations start with *both* the thinking subject, the ‘I,’ *and* the object world of this thinking subject. Hence, phenomenological research consists of investigations of both the thinking subject and what is thought by this thinking subject.” (Stanage, 1987, p. 47) It is in this spirit that I reflected on the association of hope with spirituality in the interviews of the research participants and my own experience of hope.

In reflecting on my own experience of hope, I have disconnected my religious/spiritual experience from the phenomenon—hope. I have found in my experience that no dependency exists between the two: religion and hope. I have determined that, for me, hope is a totally human experience with its origin in the natural sphere rather than the supernatural sphere. This conclusion is somewhat surprising since the beginnings of my research interest in hope started two years before I entered the Adult and Continuing Education doctoral program at NLU with my attempt to write a theology of hope.

This separation of religion and hope was part of my own transformation into a humanist. I began more and more to resist the supernatural explanation of experiences in the lives of people. Phenomenology had helped me realize that the human being is the context of all experience. In a sense, then nothing from outside the person was needed for him/her to have an experience. Even when

collaborative activities are designed for student/learners, the learning and meaning-making takes place within the individual. While concepts, descriptions, and energies are shared intersubjectively with others, it is the appropriation of those concepts, descriptions, and energies by the individual that creates their uniquely nuanced meaning of an experience or a phenomenon.

The research participants in this study demonstrate this in their uniquely nuanced definitions of hope. Each person had areas of overlap in understanding and meaning for the term hope and yet each one had a unique experience of the phenomenon—hope which their varied descriptions reveal. I was able to maintain an intersubjective connection with their experience through the overlapping meanings I shared with them for the term hope and yet each one added unique nuance to the description of the phenomenon that may have enabled me to create an expanded and possibly more beautiful description than any one of us would create alone.

What difference did my gender make in this study?

My gender difference from all but one of the research participants raises the question of validity about my approach of comparing my experience of hope with the experiences reported by the women in this study. Is my lack of connection between hope and religion a product of my male perspective rather than data that calls into question religion as a core meaning structure of the phenomenon—hope? It is not possible for me to get outside of the fact of my male gender. I did ask for feedback from the research participants to correct any obvious misinterpretations of their words and meanings. This would not entirely prevent

me from drawing conclusions that could be questioned based on my gender perspective.

I could also be seen as a disgruntled former religious person based on the fact that I was terminated from an agency of the United Methodist Church. While I did have and continue to have some strong emotions related to my perceived mistreatment, I do not think this has played any part in my interpretation of the data from the participant interviews. Since the interviews were conducted almost four years after my termination, I am convinced that my emotions about that experience have been properly limited in their influence on my thinking. The blow to my self-esteem was partially restored by my employment as an adjunct faculty member for four different universities. Further, my acceptance into this doctoral program also bolstered my self esteem. For these reasons I think there has been minimal distortion by this researcher related to the connection between spirituality and hope.

What did I learn about intersubjectivity in this research?

The more I reflected on the experience of the nuanced descriptions of hope by the research participants, I realized that the more viewpoints involved in a multi-logue about a topic the greater the possibility of increased intersubjectivity and understanding. Since I was the only connection between the participants in this research project, the intersubjectivity was limited by my awareness. If I had conducted focus groups with some or all of the research participants, they would have had an opportunity to greatly increase their area of intersubjectivity and expand their various understandings of the experience of hope by interacting with each other.

Some of the possible benefits that I saw of this increased intersubjectivity are:

- Greater appreciation for persons with different perspectives. This is because the focus is on greater understanding rather than overwhelming one view with another.
- Greater appreciation for the limitations of one's own perspective. Striving for a deep, rich description that values all of the insights from all the participants helps put one's own view in perspective.
- More focus on the areas of agreement or overlap while recognizing the uniqueness of each person's experience and having the diagram reinforces this understanding.
- Fewer attempts to get complete agreement with my view from another person because I see, feel, and understand how their perspective contributes to the larger whole and can enrich my viewpoint.
- Less confrontation and opposition, because it generates interest in understanding the whole of the experience rather than defending one's experience as the complete experience of the phenomenon.
- Greater awareness that my nuanced part of the meaning of an experience contributes to the whole but is not mistaken for the whole. Knowing that one has something to contribute elevates the value of the person as well as his/her responsibility to participate in the creation of knowledge.

All of these benefits from intersubjectivity call for all adult educators and Learners to help each other in the process of education.

Summary

I discovered that my original questions guiding this research project were too binary and therefore unhelpful in interpreting the data from the interviews. In an effort to accurately reflect the data, I developed, rejected, and finally accepted some diagrams to make the meaning of the data more visual.

I determined that, for this group of research participants there were two essential meaning structures for the phenomenon—hope. Those meaning structures are: **change** and **human agency**. First, hope could not be conceived of apart from desiring a change in a positive direction from the current status quo. Secondly, this group made the inseparable connection between hope and human agency. This meant to me that, unless viable human actions were identified in order to make the desired change possible and more likely to occur, one was not dealing with hope.

I also learned that the data supported the interpretation of the phenomenon—hope as an energy that interacts with three other energies: **Affective**, **Relative**, and **Cognitive**. I called these the **A.R.C.** energies. These interactions of energies can inhibit, support, or misdirect the energy of hope.

Finally, I learned that it is possible that my gender and Humanistic philosophy affected my interpretation of the data supplied by the research participants about spirituality and its connection to hope.

Implications and Recommendations

Body of Hope

Hope, the heart of my life, beats.
Moves energy, acts complete.

Hope's blood pulses in my veins.
My life force it does contain.

Hope moves my arms with wisdom,
Embracing the world's freedom.

Hope opens my eyes to light,
Transforming self without fright.

Hope sets my feet to walking,
Reaching others and talking.

Hope animates my thinking.
Keeps me from despair, sinking.

Hope is in the air I breathe,
Open futures it conceives.

Hope is ringing in my ears.
Inspires me and quells my fears.

Hope is feeling reaching out.
Shyly; boldly with a shout.

Hope to our bodies gives life.
Our bodies with hope build life.

PLM—2/20/2004

What does this study mean for Adult Education?

It seems to me that the impact of hope interacting with the **A.R.C.** energies is what keeps people progressing through their educational experiences. This could, in part, explain how people can return to school after having found it a difficult experience earlier in their lives. They now have **Affective**, **Relative**, and **Cognitive** energies that can create a new equilibrium with those past educational experiences and enable them to move forward with their learning.

People might drop out of formal Adult Education experiences because those settings reinforce previous inhibiting **Affective**, **Relative**, and **Cognitive** energies which reduce their hope. Learning to create supportive **A.R.C.** energies that enhance people's hope may be necessary to enable more successful Adult Education. Awareness and appreciation for the unique learning styles, issues, and patterns would seem to be necessary to support hope in these individuals. Critical reflection seems to be needed on how to provide sincere encouragement (relational energy), how to request information about their needs (affective

energy), and how to engage the subject matter with them (cognitive energy).

One way of doing this would be to use a tool like the Critical Incident Questionnaire developed by Stephen Brookfield (1995). He suggests that the following questions be used to solicit feedback from student about the classroom experience to guide future choices about learning activities.

1. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
 2. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening?
 3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most affirming and helpful?
 4. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most puzzling or confusing?
 5. What about the class this week surprised you the most?
- (Brookfield, 1995, p. 115)

It is obvious in these questions that the affective energies in the class are an important factor for Brookfield in evaluating the learning experience. Words like “engaged,” “surprised,” and “distanced” tend, in my opinion, to gather information on the affective energies. Asking students what was “most puzzling or confusing” is in my opinion asking about the cognitive energy in the classroom. Focusing on actions of the students or teacher also seeks information on the relative energy in the situation to be reported. While I might try different wordings of the questions to solicit more directly how the **A.R.C.** energies are interacting with hope in the students, it seems to me that Brookfield has provided a helpful model for gathering information about whether these energies are aligned in support of hope.

In other words, choice is related to these energies and how they interact with hope. Some choices will magnify the energy of interaction and some choices will reduce it. Choice of which energies to act on and which not to act on are critical

if hope is to be supported. Wise choices of action in the direction of growing and flourishing most often require critical thinking with others providing feedback. All of this is, I think, realized in the context of hope.

What are the implications for cohort groups?

Cohort groups are well constructed for providing **A.R.C.** energies to interact with hope. **Affective** energy is released when individuals in the cohort group talk about the passion that brought them to this specific learning environment. What specifically did they want to learn in this Adult Education setting?

Cognitive energy is provided when the cohort engages in critical reflection about a particular subject, like the impact of post-modernism on Adult Education. During the dialogue, ideas and perspectives are placed in the midst of the group for critique, following as much as possible Habermas' principles for discourse. ["These rules of discussion involve the equal rights of all concerned, having appropriate evidence in support of arguments, an obligation to provide reasons for challenging what others assert, and the examining of alternative and other people's perspectives." (Fleming, 2002, p. 1)] Watching and listening as a person explains how s/he reacts to and interprets a perspective into his/her life provides an energy that can support similar actions by another member of the cohort. After several people have shared insights there is often a very positive energy that lifts the group and supports the individual in his/her hope to move toward flourishing. This was certainly my experience during this doctoral degree program at NLU.

Because cohort groups maintain ongoing and often in-depth relationships among their members, **Relative** energy is apparent. It is a frequent experience

that others in the group express interest or even excitement about the topic another member has chosen for an in-depth study. Such confirmation of the significance of one's chosen subject by other people creates a supportive energy that encourages ongoing movement toward the completion of one's inquiry.

To be balanced in this discussion of cohort groups, one must acknowledge that the **A.R.C.** energies can have inhibiting and misdirecting effects as well as supportive effects. Sometimes, conflicts can arise between members of a cohort group that inhibit progress on one's inquiry. One can be distracted by comments that seem to diminish the significance of one's inquiry. This leads to self-doubt that paralyzes action for a period of time. This negative affective energy must be met with supportive **A.R.C.** energies if one is to resume movement and increase hope.

Relative energy in the cohort can be inhibiting or misdirecting when ongoing issues in the group remain unaddressed. For some in the group, resolution of the problem issues becomes the focus of their attention which pulls them away from the inquiries they started. If an issue exists such as racial groupings dividing the overall cohort group, an unrealistic expectation that years of individual experience and social conditioning can be completely changed during the course of a doctoral program can be a significant misdirection of hope. The hope that Adult Educators can lead positive social change must also be seen within a realistic context of what changes human beings are able to make in a short period of time. While perspective transformation is possible for every human being, it cannot be expected of every person in a cohort group during the

same time period. This is one of the essential meaning structures for hope from my perspective, that it be strongly linked to the reality of human agency.

Cognitive energy can be inhibiting and misdirecting in another way. When one is confronted with a large number of new concepts, one can want to gain an in-depth knowledge of the meaning of these concepts immediately. This expectation is unrealistic and could lead to a sense of frustration. One can also be distracted by cognitive energy when one finds each new idea as a fascinating topic for inquiry. The inability to choose between an ever broadening array of concepts can keep one from narrowing down to a specific topic for in-depth inquiry.

What are the implications for research related to transformative learning?

This research about hope, if confirmed by further research, has something to contribute to the theory of transformative learning. The two meaning structures of hope that I identified [Change and Human Agency] are also evident in the phases of perspective transformation described by Mezirow (2000). Change is evident in many of the phases. It may even be a part of the identification of a “disorienting dilemma.” Why do persons with similar events in their lives see them quite differently? Why does one see the event as a “disorienting dilemma” requiring change while another person sees it as just another experience in life?

Human agency is easily seen in several of the phases which require actions of selecting new behaviors, planning a course of action, practicing new behaviors, and reintegration of these new behaviors into one’s lifeworld.

(Mezirow, 2000)

Since both change and human agency are quite evident in transformation, it seems reasonable to conclude that where the meaning structures of Change and Human Agency appear, hope is also present. Research to confirm this conclusion and integrate hope with transformative learning is needed.

Why return to the metaphor of the heartbeat?

The human heartbeat is an interaction of energies. In the brain synapses exchange information (chemical energy) causing an impulse (electrical energy) to be sent to the heart muscle. The muscle contracts (kinesthetic energy) pushing blood carrying oxygen (nutritional energy) throughout the body. In this way the heartbeat underlies all that the body does though the person is usually unaware of it.

In a similar way, hope interacts with other energies to animate the learning process in adults. **Affective**, **Relative**, and **Cognitive** energies interact with hope to propel the learning process forward. However, unlike the heartbeat, the interaction of the **A.R.C.** energies with hope is more complex because they can also inhibit or misdirect hope as well as support it toward human flourishing. Adult Education needs to more deeply understand the interaction of these energies so that the learning experiences will more frequently and consistently resemble the heartbeat which supports all of human life. This metaphor provides some direction for future research related to hope.

What future research could be done related to hope?

One type of research that occurs to me that could be done is phenomenological inquiries with other groups of people outside the field of Adult Education regarding their experiences of hope. Will groups of office workers,

factory workers, executives, homemakers, social workers, entrepreneurs, etc. experience hope as an interaction with the **A.R.C.** energies? Will their various experiences of hope be very different from those described in this research project? The only way to find out is to do the research.

A second type of research to be considered is research on the classroom experiences of adult learners. What choices of activities, materials, and styles of instruction were made by the Adult Education practitioners? What impact, if any, did these choices have on how the adult learners experienced hope? How can these choices be associated with the **A.R.C.** energies? Do the choices tend to channel these energies in support of hope in the adult learners, or do they inhibit or misdirect hope?

A third area of research related to hope would be to determine its relationship to transformational learning. Is my personal experience of hope being critical to my transformation typical or atypical of persons who have experienced perspective transformation as defined by Mezirow (2000)? Because transformational learning has become a significant area of study in the field of Adult Education, combining research on hope with this established area of inquiry could deepen the understanding of both experiences. There is the possibility that the theory of transformational learning will be further developed by looking at it in relation to hope.

A fourth area of research that was suggested to me as a product of this research on the phenomenon—hope is in the area of feeling and emotion education. Cognitive development has been a focus of Adult Education since its inception. Is it possible to educate one's emotional process in a manner similar

to educating one's thought process? Some people have suggested that one can choose one's emotions in any situation or at least how one behaves in relationship to an emotion. I am not talking about suppressing emotions. I am wondering if it is possible to teach a person to not feel anger or fear; or to at least drastically reduce the number of stimuli which might trigger such emotions. I have learned that people can be cured of phobias. Does this area of study hold insights for Adult Educators as we seek to remove barriers to learning? By understanding how emotions are experienced and the possibility of influencing them through education, the development of adult learning experiences could benefit greatly.

How are the implications affected by the questions I asked?

A set of recurring questions that were raised throughout our course of study helped me to experience the **A.R.C.** energies as most often supporting my hope rather than inhibiting or misdirecting it. Those questions were: "Who am I?"; "Who am I becoming?"; and "What are my commitments?" One can see connections to each of the **A.R.C.** energies in these questions.

When I engaged the first question in the form of a personal history paper, I was uncertain how such an assignment would move me forward toward my goal of obtaining a doctoral degree in Adult Education. As I reflect back on that experience after discovering the interaction of my hope with the **A.R.C.** energies, I can see examples of the impact of each of these energies on my development. I began that paper with comments about my lack of confidence and low self-esteem. One can see that these affective energies were seen by me as inhibiting my development as a person and as a student.

Later in that personal history paper I talked about my relationship with my wife, Carol, and our decision to get married. It is easily seen in this example that I was speaking of relative energy that was supporting my development toward flourishing.

In my personal history paper I described my intellectual development and attainment of three master's degrees. It can be seen that I am claiming the support of cognitive energy in my development.

I also described, in this life history paper, my experience of being rejected for a doctoral program in theology by the seminary from which I graduated. This was such a significant blow powered by the affective energy of self-doubt that it was over twenty years before I again dared to apply for a degree at the doctoral level. This experience shows that my hope was at least misdirected into another career. This misdirection was supported by relative energy from Carol and our daughter Megan, as I was able to be the primary bread-winner during those years. I had many experiences that built some confidence in my abilities to face difficult situations and resolve issues. Over those years the **A.R.C.** energies were again reconfigured and I was able to develop a new self-understanding.

Another disorienting dilemma presented itself when I was fired by the employer that I had served for twenty-two years. I was not as devastated by this rejection as I had been when I was rejected for graduate school. Within about eight months I had applied and been accepted into the doctoral program in Adult and Continuing Education at NLU. The **A.R.C.** energies had been mostly supportive of this rekindled hope in higher education.

While this was in some respects the re-affirmation and re-direction of hope toward an outcome dreamed of years before, it was also very different. My original interest in pursuing a doctoral degree had been mostly about career and money. My fortunate entry into this doctoral program was mostly about my flourishing as a human being. I wanted to be a better human being so that I could be a better teacher, husband, father, and grandfather. Those three questions [“Who am I?”; “Who am I becoming?”; and “What are my commitments?”] helped me recognize and appropriate the **A.R.C.** energies in support of my hope. I opened myself and let others in the cohort supply some of the **A.R.C.** energies needed to complete this degree program. Only others in the cohort can say if I supplied any of the **A.R.C.** energies that supported their completion of the degree. Now I seek as a teacher to be a source to others of these hope-supporting **A.R.C.** energies and to limit my use of these energies as limiting, inhibiting, or misdirecting the hope of others.

Who am I?

A man of hope.

Who am I becoming?

A source of **A.R.C.** energies to support hope in others.

What are my commitments?

(1) To make hope central in my teaching; (2) To seek colleagues who can help me increase my ability to be a supplier of hope supporting **A.R.C.** energies; (3) To make hope central in Adult Education by helping colleagues increase their abilities to be suppliers of hope supporting **A.R.C.** energies.

Summary

More research on the phenomenon—hope is needed to determine if the essential meaning structures for this group of research participants (change and human agency) are present in any other groups outside the field of Adult Education.

Some tools exist which can assist Adult Educators in looking at the interaction of the **A.R.C.** energies and hope. Brookfield's Critical Incident Questionnaire and the cohort model for Adult Education may be some of those tools. The three questions of this doctoral program (Who am I? Who am I becoming? And What are my commitments?) plus one from Sherman Stange (What may I hope?) (1987, p. 3) may be other tools for examining this interaction of energies. It still needs to be determined if such an analysis of energies in the learning situation helps Adult Educators make wise decisions about activities.

Final Comments

Studs Terkel (2003) entitled one of his books "Hope Dies Last." While I agree with him on this assessment, I don't think he goes far enough. I have concluded that hope is that underlying feeling beneath all human activity that is aimed at flourishing. Because of this I assert that "Hope lives first." As an adult educator, I want to build on the existing hope that every adult learner has and support its development and direction toward that goal of flourishing as defined by each individual. By doing that I will pass on what was given to me by my best teachers. Being part of that process which enables persons to use the **A.R.C.** energies in support of hope to reach their visions of flourishing will create meaning in this life I live.

Appendix A: IRRB Documents

National-Louis University

Review of Student Research Involving Human Participants

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

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Research Title: Hope: Heartbeat of Adult Education

Data Collection Start Date: March 2004

Note: Unless designated "Exempt" at the program and department level, this project must receive formal clearance in the form of an approval letter from the IRRB chair prior to the start of data collection. Projects designated exempt must still be submitted to the IRRB within two weeks of that determination.

It is assumed that all research requires the full review of the IRRB unless it meets criteria specified on page 3 of this form. Using the guidelines on page 2 and the criteria on page 3, address the each of the following explicitly and separately in an attached narrative:

Identification of Researcher:

I am a student in the Doctoral Program in Adult and Continuing Education at National-Louis University. As part of the requirements of this program, I must complete a Critical Engagement Project. This is a research project intended to add to the field and practice of Adult and Continuing Education.

Purposes of Study:

I will be conducting a qualitative study of the phenomenon—hope to meet the requirements of the Critical Engagement Project. The purposes of my study are to describe: how hope manifests itself as the vital force or energy that enables the interplay of affective, cognitive, individual, and group dimensions, how it interacts with fear in the learning process, how it connects to transformational learning, and how it relates to critical thinking; within the context of formal adult degree programs.

The following questions are the basis of this study:

- Is hope that underlying feeling that enables a person to reach out to the world around them?
- What, if any, is the connection between fear and hope in adult education?
- Is hope the connection between the cognitive and affective dimensions of transformative learning?
- Is hope identified as linked to individual and group activity in adult education?
- Does hope require critical thinking to be effective in adult education?

Data Collection Protocols and Processes:

My process will be as follows:

Step #1: Have an interview with each participant and ask for one or two contextual descriptions about his/her experience of hope. I would be using a semi-structured interview process.

- Ask about an adult education experience during their degree program most exemplifying hope.
- Ask in what sense, if any, this experience of hope would be considered transformational learning.
- Ask in what sense this, if any, this experience would be related to dealing with fear.
- Ask for identification of dimensions of the experience of hope [affective, cognitive, individual, group].
- Ask in what sense, if any, that critical thinking was a part of the experience of hope.
- As the lead researcher, record what presents itself to my consciousness during the interview and begin reflecting upon it.

Step #2: Review of interviews by me, the lead researcher.

- Develop commonalities of language, feeling, emotion, individual, group, and cognitive dimensions.
- Develop contrasts in language, feeling, emotion, individual, group, and cognitive dimensions.

- Look for additional dimensions and relationships among their descriptions.
- As lead researcher prepare a detailed description of my experience of hearing and reacting to their contextual descriptions.

Step #3: Write a summary of each interview and provide a draft of his/her interview summary to each participant for feedback.

- Ask for clarification of the participant's meaning as reported.
- Ask for corrections if the participant's meaning in describing the experience has been distorted.
- Continue, as the researcher, the reflexive process related to the detailed descriptions of the phenomenon—hope.

Step #4: Update the summaries of the interviews based on the feedback.

Step #5: Write a final draft of the research findings following feedback.

- Describe the essential structures of hope based on insights from the interviews.
- Incorporate the clarifications and corrections about meaning from the participant feedback.
- Continue, as the researcher, the reflexive process of detailed descriptions of the phenomenon—hope.

Step #6: Write draft of implications and conclusions and provide draft to each co-researcher for feedback.

- Describe what implications the research suggests for adult education practice.
- Describe what further research is needed to build on the insights developed in this study.
- Continue, as the researcher, the reflexive process of detailed descriptions of the phenomenon—hope.

Step #7: Update the draft of implications and conclusions based on the feedback.

Step #8: Write final draft of the research findings, implications, and conclusions.

- Provide a copy to all participants who want it.

The potential time commitments of the participants are as follows: The initial interviews should take between 60 and 90 minutes to complete. Feedback on the draft of the interview could take 60 minutes. Feedback on the draft of implications and conclusion could take 30 minutes.

Procedures for Obtaining Informed Consents, Confidentially Form, and Data Storage:

Informed consent forms would be sent out in advance of the initial interview and would be signed by the participant and myself before conducting the initial interview. The participant would be giving consent to be audio-taped during the interview and subsequent feedback dialogues, to provide feedback in writing or in audio-taped dialogues on preliminary written drafts of the project, and to have their comments used in the final written Critical Engagement Project. It will also be clearly indicated that participation is voluntary and that a participant can withdraw their information from the study at any time prior to December 2004. This would provide time for replacement of the participant, if needed, before the completion date of April 2005 for the Critical Engagement Project.

All participants would be advised verbally and in writing that their participation would be kept confidential. Any references to the interview in the write up of the Critical Engagement Project would be disguised to protect their anonymity. All tapes of the interviews, field notes, and write ups would remain in my possession only. They would be kept locked in storage in a safety deposit box accessible only by me.

Potential Risks or Benefits to Participants:

I can envision no significant risks to participants in this process. It is possible that the relating of events connected to the research on hope could be emotional, but it is not anticipated that these would be negative experiences for the participants.

Some small benefit could accrue to the participants as they better understand their own experiences of hope by being asked to relate these experiences and reflect on their meaning.

Participants:

I am expecting to interview up to ten members of cohort groups who have completed the Doctoral Program or the Masters Degree in Adult and Continuing Education at National-Louis University since 1996.

Contact Information:

Contact information will be initially provided in a letter of introduction to potential participants in this study. Potential participants will be asked to contact Phillip L. Moulden by letter at: 1935 Tanglewood Drive, Apt. B, Glenview, IL 60025; by e-mail at pcmoulden@comcast.net; and by telephone at 847-657-0771 or cell phone number 847-828-3309.

For further information my primary advisor, Dr. Gabriele Strohschen, can be contacted by letter: c/o School for New Learning, DePaul University.

Certification

I certify that I have read and understand the policies and procedures for research Projects that involve human participants and that I intend to comply with University Policy. I understand that all non-exempt projects require annual review. Significant changes in the study protocol need to be submitted on a Change Form for review prior to those changes being put into practice.

Researcher: _____
Phillip L. Moulden Date:

Check one of the following, indicating the category into which this research falls

According to Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46:

Project is exempt. **Cite exempt category: 46.101b**

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

Project is referred for full IRRB review.

***Committee Chair/Primary Advisor:**

Dr. Gabriele Strohschen Date:

*** Depart Chair/Program Director:**

Dr. Thomas Heaney Date:

*If one individual holds both positions, the Chair/Advisor of committee should request another Director or senior faculty member to review and sign this certification.

TITLE OF PROJECT: Hope: The Heartbeat in Adult Education, A Phenomenological Study

Lead Researcher: Phillip L. Moulden; doctoral student in the department of Adult and Continuing Education at National-Louis University.

Contact Numbers for Questions:

Phillip L. Moulden 847-657-0771 or 847-828-3309 or e-mail pcmoulden@comcast.net

Primary Advisor: Dr Gabriele Strohschen
c/o School for New Learning
DePaul University

Purpose of the Research:

To investigate how hope presents itself in all its dimensions during an adult education degree program and what relationship, if any, it has to fear, transformational learning, and critical thinking.

Procedures/Methods to be Used:

You will be interviewed for approximately 60 to 90 minutes at a time and place that is mutually agreeable to you and the researcher. You will be asked to describe fully and accurately your experience of hope during your adult education degree program. The researcher will ask additional questions about your understanding hope and what you associate with the experience. Your responses will be recorded on audio-tape. You will be asked to provide feedback, audio-taped verbal or written as you choose, to the summary of your interview. You will also be asked to provide audio-taped verbal or written feedback about the implications and conclusions developed in this study.

Inherent Risks and Benefits:

No significant risks to participants are envisioned in this process. It is possible that the relating of events connected to the research on hope could be emotional, but it is not anticipated that these would be negative experiences for the participants

Some small benefit could accrue to the participants as they better understand their own experiences of hope by being asked to relate these experiences and reflect on their meaning.

Confidentiality:

All reasonable efforts will be taken to ensure your anonymity in this study. Summary information will be the primary portion of what is reported. When quotations are used to illustrate a point in the report, a pseudonym will be used instead of your name. No identifiers beyond gender and approximate age will be stated in the report. The audio tape of the interview, field notes and preliminary write-ups will be kept in the possession of the lead researcher exclusively. Following the conclusion of this research project the audio tape, field notes, and

preliminary write-ups will be kept in a safety deposit box accessible only by the lead researcher. They will be kept in this location unless used in future research projects.

Participation:

I understand that my participation in this research project is voluntary. It is also my understanding that data from my interview can be used in research beyond this project.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent and stop participating at any time prior to December 2004. I understand this would permit my replacement in the Critical Engagement Project with a completion date anticipated to be in April 2005. Upon withdrawal of consent all audio-tapes, field notes, and preliminary summaries related to my interview will be given to me and not used in the Critical Engagement Project report.

I have read and understand the information stated in this form and willing sign this consent form. My signature acknowledges that I have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document.

Participant Name (printed)

Participant Signature

Date

Lead Researcher Signature

Date

1935 Tanglewood Drive Apt. B
Glenview, IL 60025

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Phil Moulden. I am a doctoral student in the department of Adult and Continuing Education at National-Louis University. I am beginning the Critical Engagement Project which is direct research related to the field of adult education. My project is a qualitative study on the theme of hope within the context of formal degree programs in adult education. This study will be looking at how hope presents itself in all its dimensions during the degree program and what relationship, if any; it has to fear, transformational learning, and critical thinking. I expect to interview approximately 10 people in this study.

If you would agree to participate in this research, you would be agreeing to an audiotaped interview of 60 to 90 minutes. You would be asked to describe your experience of hope during your degree program and all the associations you made with that experience. In addition, you would be agreeing to provide feedback on my summary of your interview. This would allow you to make adjustments and corrections to my interpretation of the interview. Finally, I will be asking you to provide feedback about the conclusions and implications of the study. I will be especially interested in whether you will find them to be consistent with your experience of hope.

I think you will benefit from having an opportunity to reflect on your experience of hope during your degree program. You might develop insights that could assist you in future endeavors. I anticipate this experience to be entirely pleasant and non-threatening.

If you are interested in participating or would like more information before deciding, you may contact me at my home phone 847-657-0771 or on my cell phone 847-828-3309. You may also contact me via e-mail at pcmoulden@comcast.net. Please review the attached Informed Consent Form for more details about what you would be agreeing to do if you decide to participate.

Peace and Hope,

Phillip L. Moulden

Appendix B: Interview Documents

Typical Interview Questions

1. In terms of demographics, how would you describe yourself?
2. Have you had a chance to read the "Hope Story" I sent? What reactions, if any, did you have to it?
3. What were you thinking and feeling when you began the degree program?
4. How did these thoughts and feelings change during the course of the degree program?
5. How intense was the experience of change in these thoughts and feelings?
6. What were your thoughts and feelings as you approached the completion of the degree program?
7. Was there an object, image, or metaphor that came to be symbolic of your experience of hope during the degree program? How would you describe it?
8. How would you define hope based on your experience during the degree program?
9. How does your experience of hope during the degree program carry over into your practice as an adult educator today?
10. How do you know when you are feeling hope?
11. What else would you like to say about hope?

Hope Story

Confidence of success has never been one of my strengths. Having been rejected for entry into another doctoral program, I was especially sensitive to those make or break points in the Doctoral Program in Adult Education at National-Louis University. In April 2003, it was made clear to me that I must gain approval for my Concept Paper by June or be dropped from the program. The pressure was on me to demonstrate my knowledge and my commitment to a research project.

Two weeks after the April assignment was given, I sent my primary advisor a first draft of my Concept Paper. I realized that I could not afford to wait getting started on this important paper. When I received the feedback from my primary advisor via an attachment to my e-mail, I was looking forward to seeing it. Once I opened the document, I was almost paralyzed with fear. Her comments and questions were inserted into my document in bright red type. At first glance, it seemed that more was written in red type than had been written by me in black type.

After I caught my breath, I began to read through some of the comments and questions. Rather than being devastated by the comments, I had responses ready for most of the questions. I had resistance to some of the changes and I readily accepted others which were clearly moving me in a more positive direction. Later on, I was able to joke with my advisor about this experience. It was clear that this was not going to be the best way for me to receive her feedback. From that time on, we have mostly worked face to face in the process of feedback. I began to assert my perspective more strongly while remaining

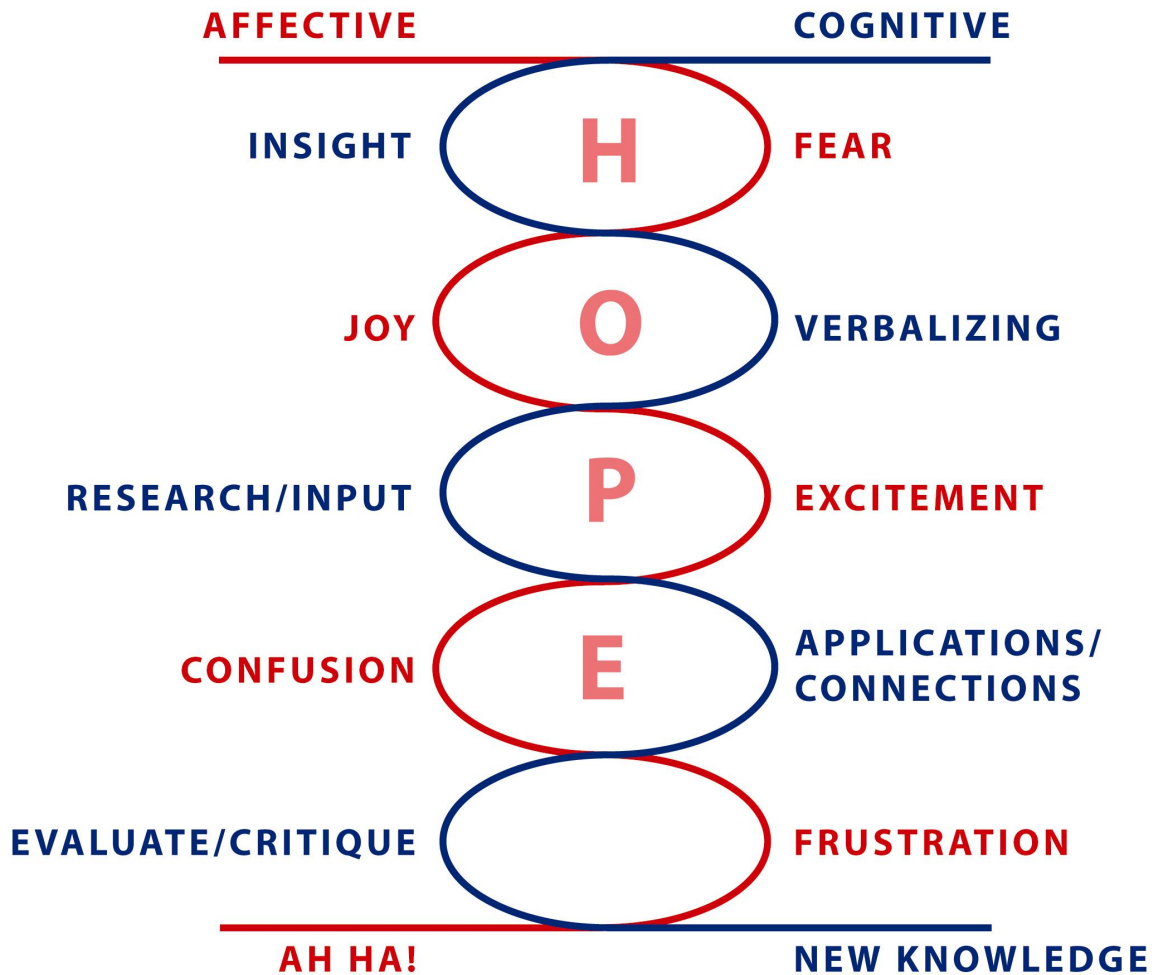
open to suggestions that were helping me improve my communication of my proposed research project.

I had at least two more feedback sessions with my primary advisor before the summer residency started. I felt confident and prepared. As I engaged in dialogue with others, I was challenged to more fully explain my research project. Through that dialogue I realized that I had my research topic backwards. I had originally planned to study adult education degree programs through the lens of hope. During the first week of residency, I realized that I really wanted to study the meaning of hope in the context of Adult Education degree programs. Once this change in perspective became clear, the writing of the Concept Paper came together easily.

On a Monday or Tuesday in June, I was asked to discuss my Concept Paper with my primary and secondary advisors. They asked me several questions about the paper which I felt comfortable answering. We really seemed only to be talking about options on how to proceed with the research, when my primary advisor said something like, "Well I guess I had better go get the Certificate of Approval for the CEP Concept Paper." In that moment, I realized that I was creating my future as an Adult Education research-scholar. I saw that all the preliminary work done in April and May, the scary first feedback, and the dialogues with other students had enabled me to realize a dream of being a doctoral candidate that had languished for over twenty years. I realized that I could truly become a colleague of my advisors in the field of Adult Education. It was the moment when my hope and lived experience began to merge and I started to become a new person. I was elated.

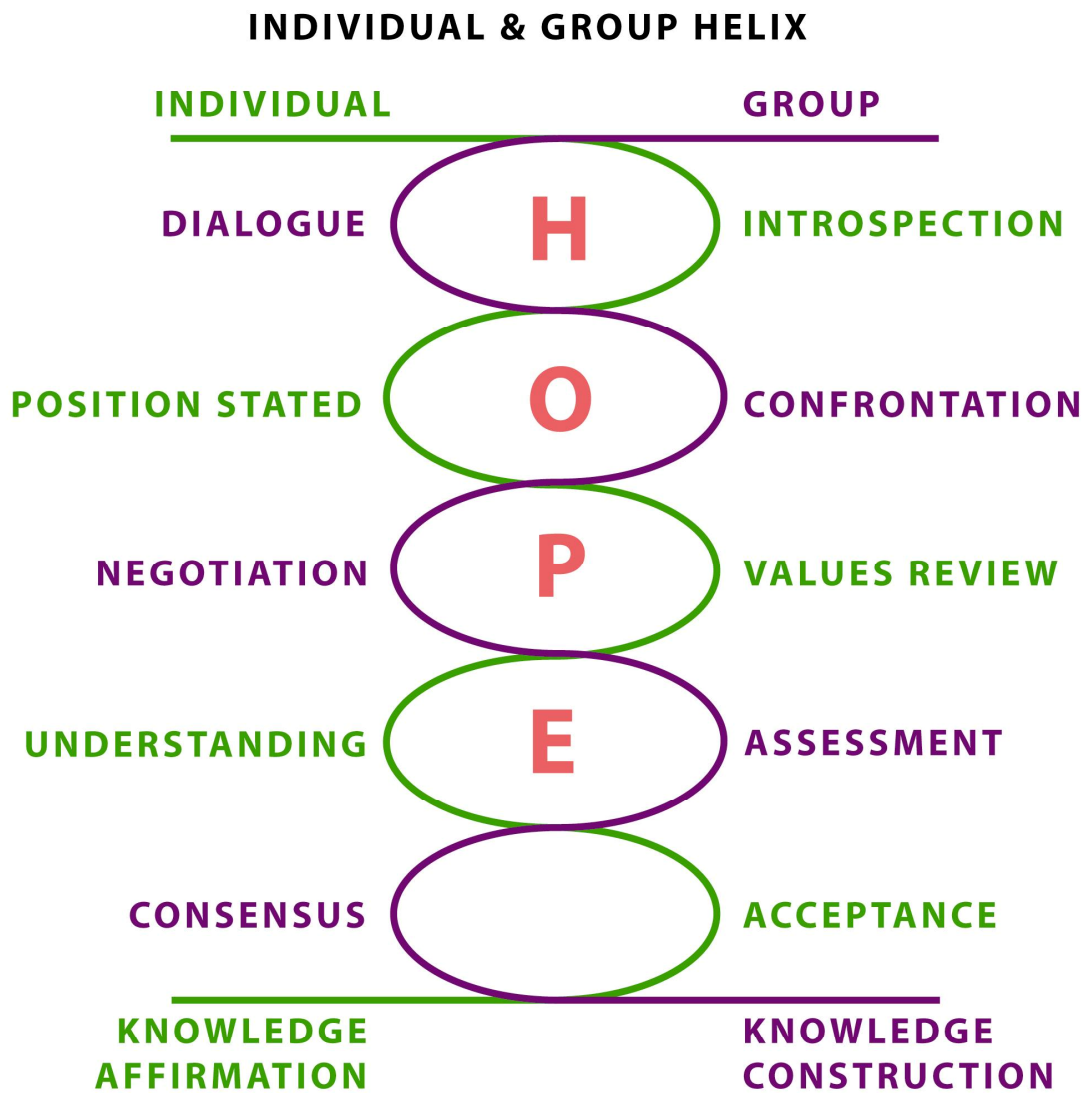
Appendix C: Figures/Diagrams

Below is an image of my initial understanding of the interplay of the affective and cognitive dimensions of formal, sustained adult learning processes.



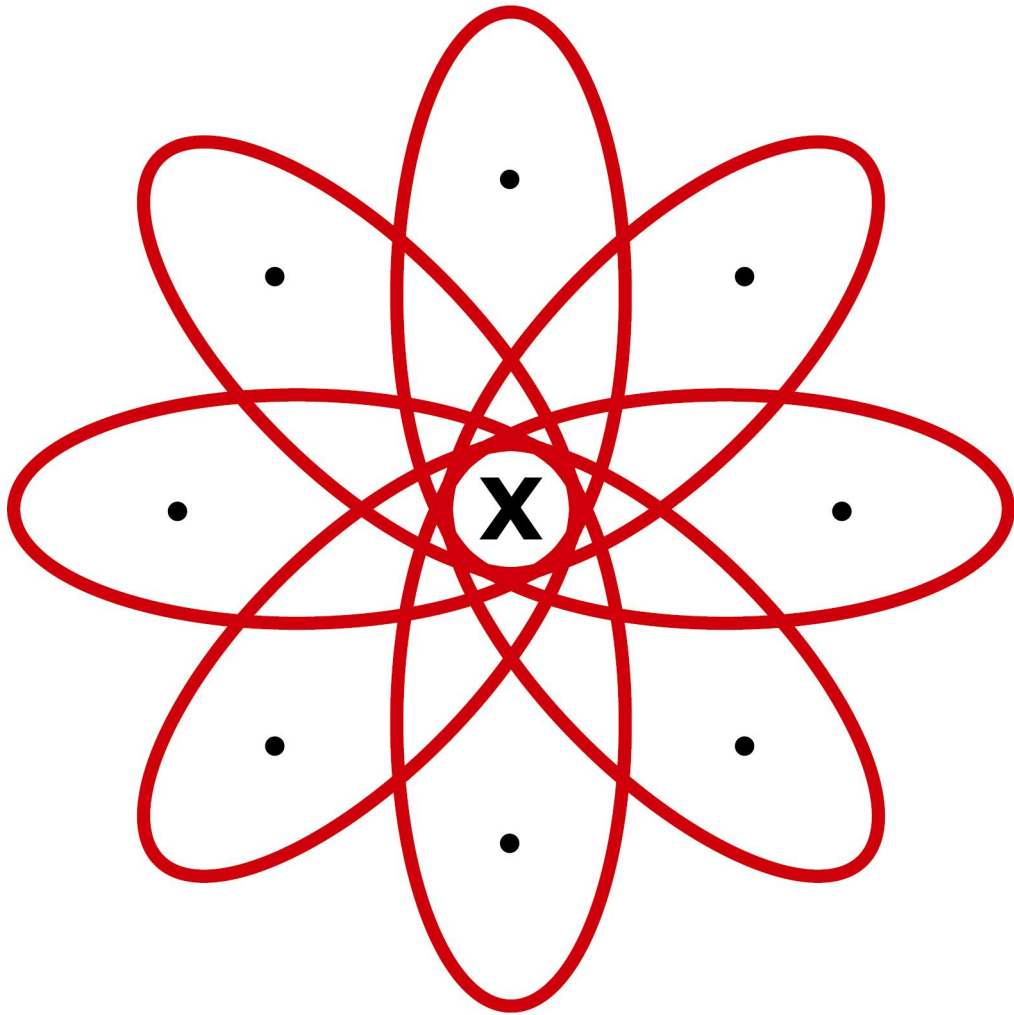
The points at which the lines cross are the moments of deepest integration of ideas and feelings.

Below is an image of my initial understanding of the interplay of the individual and group dimensions of formal, sustained adult learning processes.

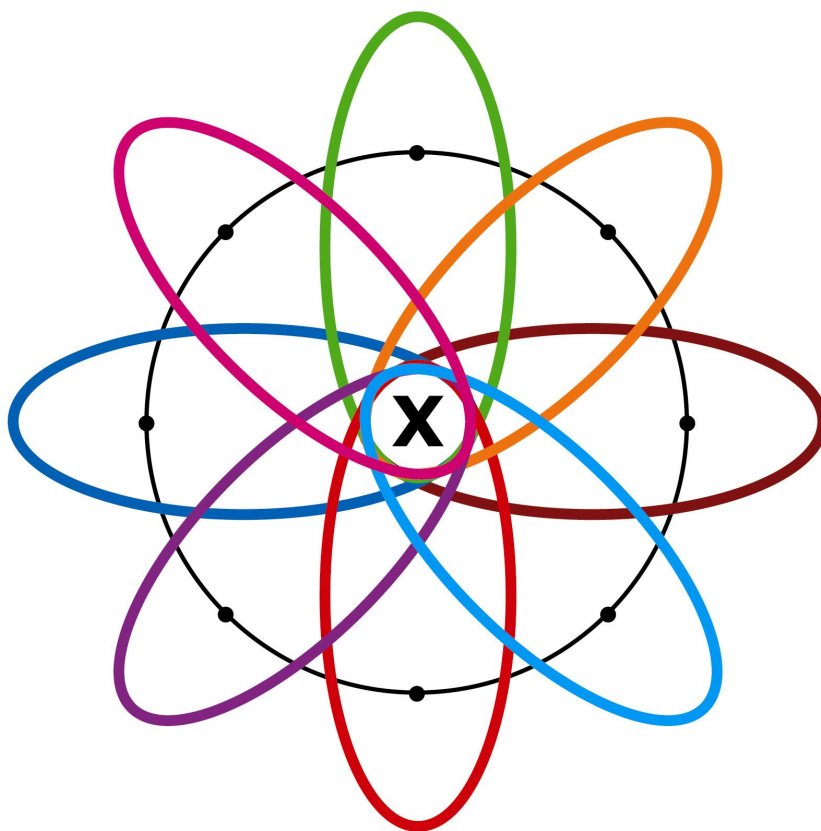


The points at which the lines cross are the moments of deepest integration of individual and group activity.

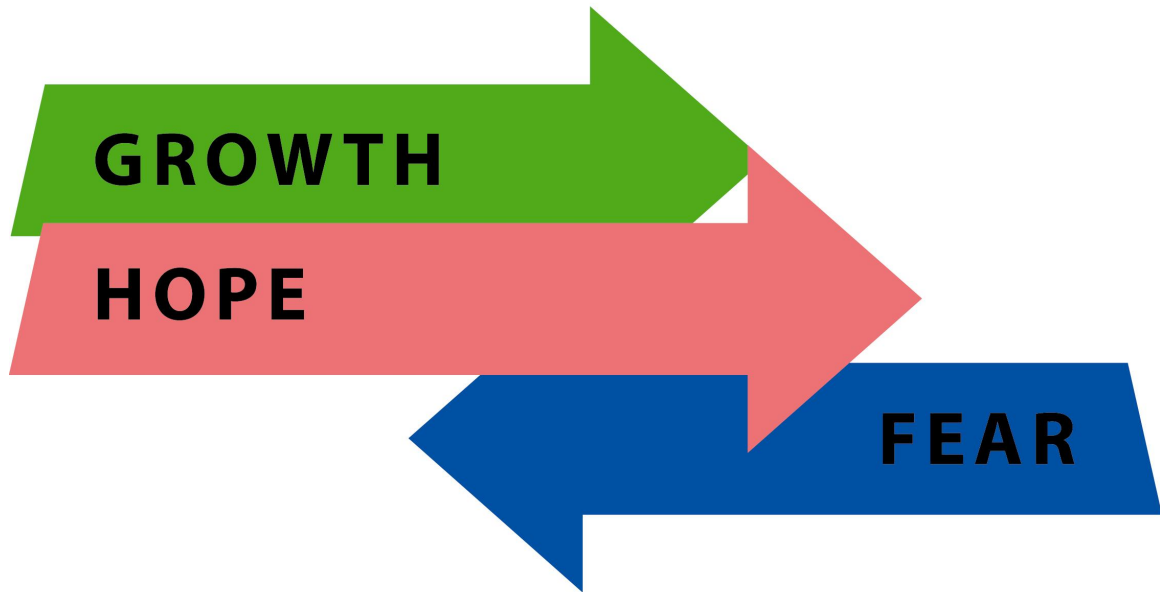
Flower Diagram



Multi-logue Intersubjectivity Diagram



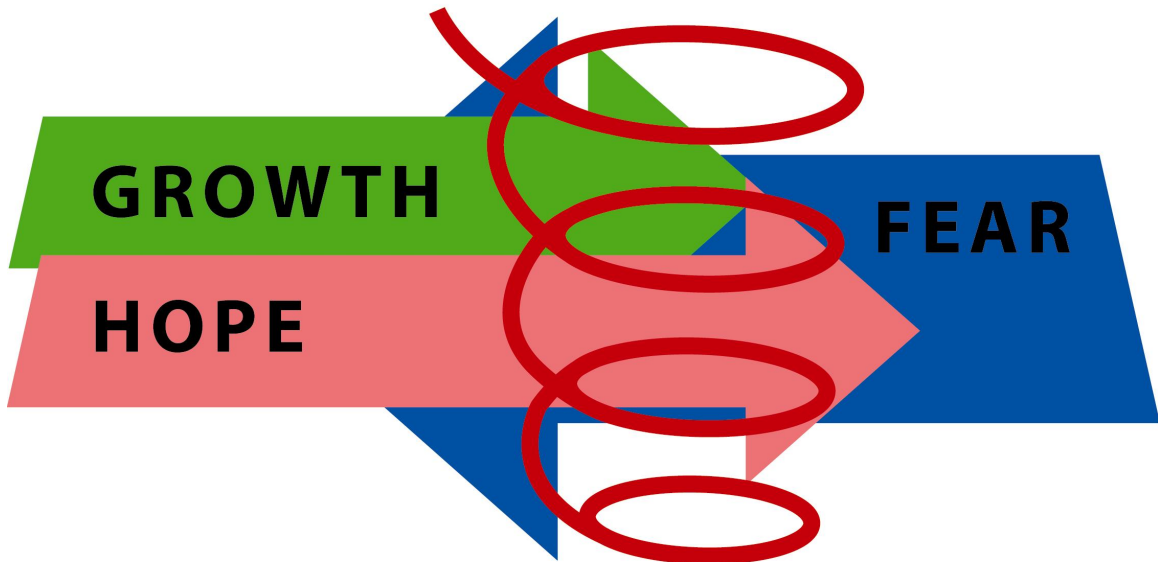
Growth—Hope—Fear Diagram



This image was an early attempt to visually explain the relationship of Hope to Growth and Fear

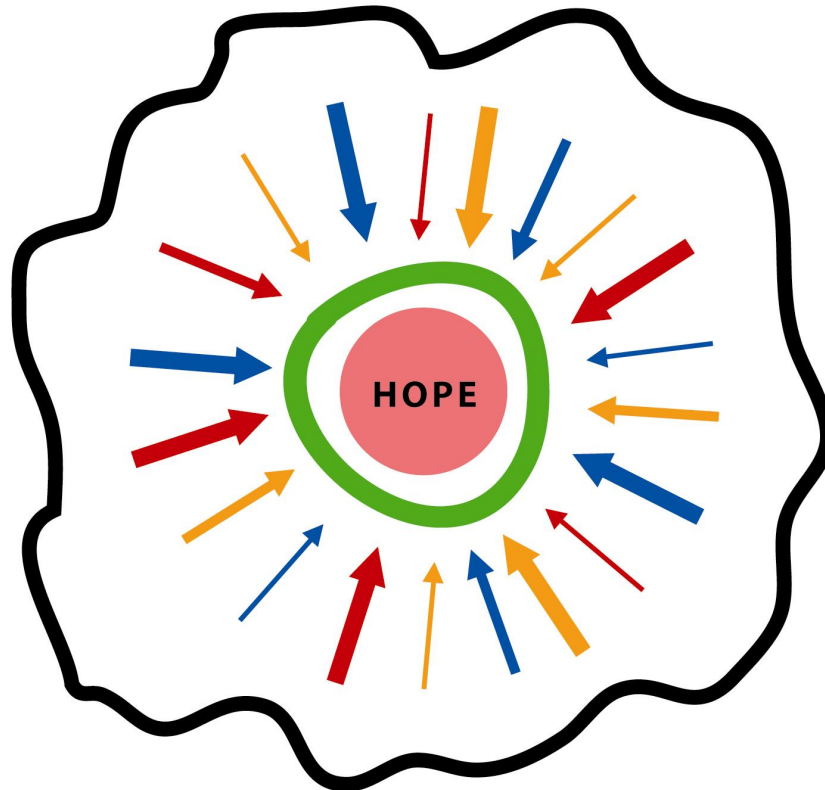
A.C.E.

AWARENESS
CREATING/
COMPOUNDING
ENERGY



This was a second attempt to visually explain the complex relationship of Hope to Growth and Fear

Individual and A.R.C. ENERGIES



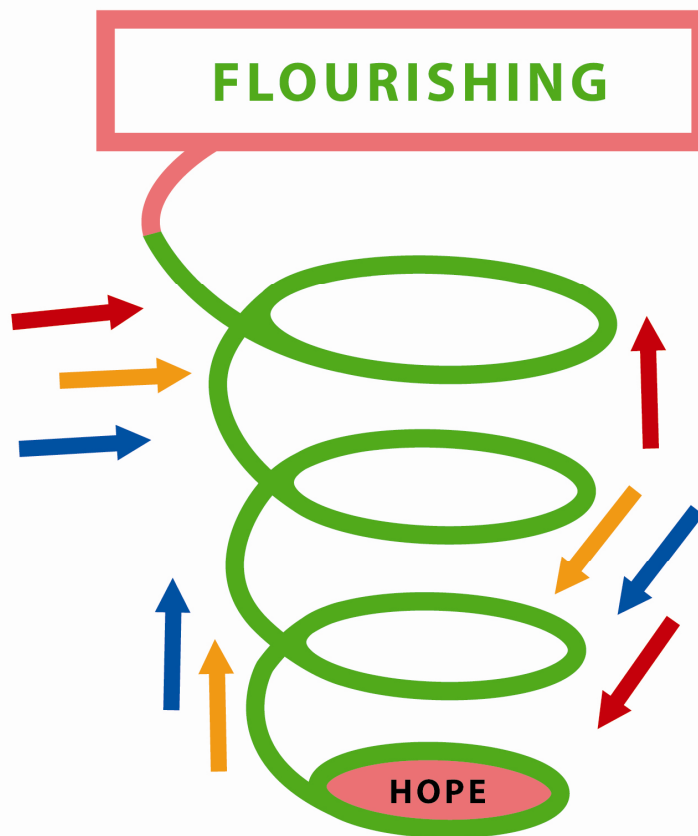
→ AFFECTIVE
→ RELATIVE
→ COGNITIVE

**— INDIVIDUAL/
PERSONAL**
— GROWTH

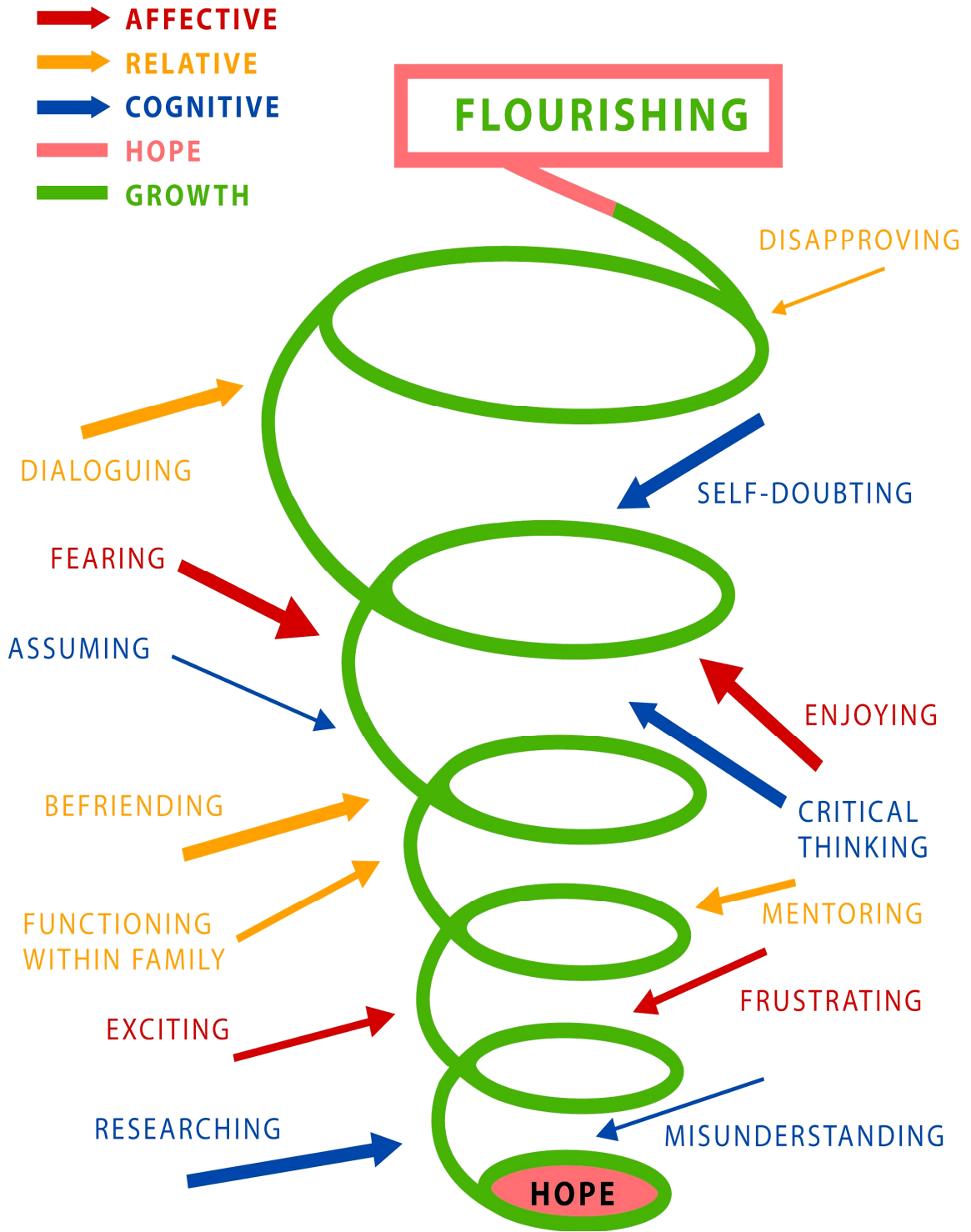
HOPE and A.R.C. ENERGIES (General)

→ AFFECTIVE
→ RELATIVE
→ COGNITIVE

— HOPE
— GROWTH



HOPE and A.R.C. ENERGIES (Specific)



Appendix D: Poetry

Hope, Where Are You Taking Me?

Hope, where are you taking me?
What I'm lacking will you fulfill?
In the end, what will I be?
Will I be at peace and still?

Hope, where will I go with you?
Will I be part of social action?
Will I shrink back and nothing do?
Will I be status quo or transformation?

Hope, I have the faith but not the action.
I talk a good game, but behavior lags.
I am excellent at avoiding self-examination.
All this defensiveness the question begs.

Hope, you have given me many insights.
Now help with the decisions that manifest.
The changes, the growth, the difference that delights
My soul and fills all my being with zest.

Hope, make from my dualism one person,
Join me with others to make new life meaning.
Draw me toward the light, the sun.
Create with me that new spiritual being.

PLM—12/12/2002

Edited 7/25/2004

Hope is like. . .

Hope is like the sun, it illuminates.
With it is much done.

Hope is like the wind, it lifts/carries.
With it much ascends.

Hope is like coffee, it stimulates.
With it much is free.

Hope is like friendship, it invigorates.
With it much is hip.

Hope is like blue eyes, it reveals.
With it much is sky.

Hope is like a door, it opens.
With it, no poor.

Hope is like a foundation, it solidifies.
With it, determination.

Hope is like a group, it expands.
With it, learning loops.

Hope is like a decision, it focuses.
With it, much direction.

Hope is like a feeling, it energizes.
With it, much reeling.

Hope is like interaction, it exchanges.
With it, much attraction.

Hope is like interiors, it's decorated.
With it, no inferiors.

Hope is like sharing, it participates.
With it, well-being.

Hope is like breath, lost in an instant.
Without it, death.

PLM—01/03/2003

What Hope Does

Hope so precious, yet easily lost.
Hope so expected, but not the cost.

Hope so private, yet public too.
Hope so shared, but unique too.

Hope confronts, sometimes shatters our fears.
Hope soothes, and often causes our tears.

Hope calls for change.
Hope never leaves us the same.

Hope, when we decide causes worlds to collide.
Hope, when it abides reconciles disparate sides.

Hope renews, if we let
The past wounds to forget

Hope is all we do and are.
From its tower we can see afar.
Not clearly or in detail,
but just the horizon toward which we sail.

When we let hope melt away,
All that we're left goes astray.

With hope we can accept our shadow,
Appreciate weakness, and fully know.

PLM—01/10/2003

Hope as Source

Hope is the headwaters for the river of love.
Hope is the fountain that lets joy flow.

Hope is the magnet that draws the ore of friends.
Hope is the fire that purifies the metal of dreams.

Hope is the heart that pumps energy to the frame.
Hope is the blood we sweat before the cool change.

Hope is the spirit of movements that change the status quo.
Hope is the sun that illumines beauty of soul.

Hope is the beauty that causes the eye to tear.
Hope is the wind that drives sails across deep water.

Hope is the memory of scaling tall mountains.
Hope is the food that gives strength to build fountains.

Hope is the wisdom that mercy teaches.
Hope is the silence true desire reaches.

Hope is the peace that brings the end of wars.
Hope is the rocket that stretches to the stars.

PLM—03/12/2003

Rejection and Hope

Rejection slices deep in the soul.
Leaves bleeding not part but the whole.

When ideas are dismissed I feel the pains.
Depression, disorientation and hurt remains.

The swirling of anger, fear, damaged self-esteem.
Being pulled down and down is more than a dream.

How can hope break in and me redeem?
What is its plan, strategy, brilliant scheme?

It happens sometimes when I see a smile.
Hope returns with the hug of a grand child.

A new dialogue begins and I try to speak.
A new question intrigues and I seek.

More people think and challenge and ask.
With them, I talk and start the task.

Hope once again makes me vulnerable.
Communicating again as best I'm able.

Rejection overcome, my hope restored.
On with life. All aboard.

PLM 04/05/2003

How Do I Go Deeper?

How do I go deeper into myself?
What if it doesn't exist, that self?

How do I exist, alone, constructed?
Is deeper found or de-constructed?

Are emotions more primitive?
Are deep ideas more definitive?

I sense a hole to be filled.
Empty, lacking, void spilled.

Unfulfilled from without, within;
Wanting to start, where to begin?

Must I plunge into emptiness?
Will hope bring me to surface?
Will I confront my nastiness?
Or float above and sun my face?

In the depth will I gasp for air?
Will the pressure suffocate me there?

Will I breach the waves renewed?
Full of joy, insight or subdued?

With what demons will it strive?
I only know, its time to dive!

PLM—6/09/2003

How Do I Carry the Pain?

How do I carry the pain
Of visions/missions lost,
Of friendships with frost?

Full of promise and hope we started.
Now we struggle, risk being parted.

Was tension always there, hidden?
For peace, was discord forbidden?

Now it's here and with force
Energies rough and course.

Certainty mocks confusion.
Judgments make illusions.

Sometimes together, often moving alone.
Sharing occasionally a condescending tone.

Seeds of bitterness have been sown.
Forgiveness, as experience, unknown.

Can we rebuild, rebind?
Unity, compassion find?

We reach out with feeling,
The hands of others seeking.

With dreams/illusions gone.
It's time to sing a new song.

How do I carry the pain?
With others, committed the same.

PLM—12/09/2003

Learning

I have learned my life in all situations,
Why do doubts arise with demonstration?

When I conceive and act; I learn.
Application of ideas will confirm.

I am never the same after learning,
On the quest for knowledge, never returning.

A new, integrated, expanded mind beckons.
The familiar gives way to more in seconds.

And always more, further, and deeper,
Calling; calling to awaken this sleeper.

I am developed, even transformed
By the ideas considered and worn.

Yet, through it all I recognize myself.
Where I was, and this different self.

Together goes my life and learning
Relentless in its turning, turning.

PLM—10/17/2003

Body of Hope

Hope, the heart of my life, beats.
Moves energy, acts complete.

Hope's blood pulses in my veins.
My life force it does contain.

Hope moves my arms with wisdom,
Embracing the world's freedom.

Hope opens my eyes to light,
Transforming self without fright.

Hope sets my feet to walking,
Reaching others and talking.

Hope animates my thinking.
Keeps me from despair, sinking.

Hope is in the air I breathe,
Open futures it conceives.

Hope is ringing in my ears.
Inspires me and quells my fears.

Hope is feeling reaching out.
Shyly; boldly with a shout.

Hope to our bodies gives life.
Our bodies with hope build life.

PLM—2/20/2004

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