

**ETHICAL ISSUES AND CODES OF ETHICS:
VIEWS OF ADULT EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS
IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

by

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, practice ethics in adult education has become an increasingly visible topic of interest and concern in the literature of the field. However, relatively little research has been done in the whole area of ethics and codes of ethics. This study was undertaken to broaden the empirical data base within the field and provide further insight into the area of practice ethics.

The purpose of the study was to examine the views of adult educators in British Columbia about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education and to identify the issues, concerns and dilemmas experienced by them. The study is an approximate replication of a 1991 study by McDonald in the state of Indiana.

Using survey methodology, three groups of adult education practitioners (N = 460) received a mailed questionnaire that included items related to the study topic and demographic characteristics. A 60% return rate was achieved. The major findings generated by this study confirm positive practitioner views about codes of ethics and support the findings reported in the Indiana study. The findings of this study include:

- The majority of adult educators surveyed believe there should be a code of ethics for the field of adult education.
- Less than a majority of adult educators surveyed knew of the existence of, or were currently operating under, a code of ethics.
- The majority of adult educators surveyed indicated an overall positive view about the general functions of a code of ethics.
- Issues related to the learner are most frequently cited as needing to be addressed in a code of ethics for the field of adult education.
- The professional association was the most frequently identified organization that adult educators believe should create, disseminate and enforce a code of ethics.
- The majority of adult educators either disagree or are unsure about the regulating function of a code of ethics.

- The majority of adult educators surveyed cited examples of ethical issues/concerns/dilemmas from their practice settings.
- The most frequently cited ethical issues/dilemmas relate to confidentiality concerns and learner/adult educator relationship issues.

Historically, the debate about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education has been focused within the academic community. This study contributes a practitioner perspective to the ongoing debate. The strong message conveyed by British Columbia adult educators about the need for a code of ethics also clearly reflects the growing trend of code development by professional associations in Canada and the United States. Continued emphasis on educational efforts to address the issues arising from this study and further research in the area of practice ethics are suggested.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

General Statement of the Problem

Ethics has not been a very visible topic within the field of adult education yet ethics serves as a basic foundation for responsible practice in many fields with a strong service orientation such as social work, counseling, medicine, nursing and law. It has only been since the early to mid-nineteen eighties that the adult education literature has reflected any substantive concern with normative ethics and specifically, codes of ethics. Research related to ethics in the field has also clearly been limited. Furthermore, the paucity of systematic empirical inquiries related to the ethics of practice clearly speaks to the critical need for more research to address this lack of information about the topic. Without adequate data about ethical issues and problems, efforts to address them will be guided by anecdotal evidence. A number of authors (Singerella and Sork, 1983; Rich, 1984; Brockett, 1988; 1990; Rose, 1993; Lawler & Fielder, 1993), have called for more research to be done on the topic of ethics and codes of ethics for the field. Questions raised by these authors suggest that the participation of adult education practitioners in this research is both appropriate and necessary given that the field has grown out of a practice tradition. In summarizing the importance of research based studies in this area, Brockett (1990) notes, "A research agenda that systematically contributes new information and insights is vital if we are to move beyond the mere description of ethical issues" (p. 11).

In 1991, a study by Kimberly McDonald investigated adult educators' ethical dilemmas and attitudes regarding the need for a code of ethics to guide their practice. Through the use of survey methodology, three major groups of adult education practitioners in Indiana responded to

various questions about ethical dilemmas and their perceptions about the need for a code of ethics to guide professional practice. Results of this study demonstrated that the majority of the members in the three groups supported the notion of a code of ethics for the field of adult education. These practitioner groups included: (1) adult basic educators listed with Indiana's Department of Education; (2) members of the four Indiana chapters of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD); and (3) members of the Indiana Council on Continuing Education (ICCE). Although the results of McDonald's study indicated majority support for a Code of Ethics for adult educators, this support was not overwhelming, "28% were not sure about the need for a code largely because of problems associated with implementation and enforcement of a code" (McDonald, 1991, p. iii). In addition to identifying practitioner attitudes about codes of ethics, the study also produced findings related to ethical dilemmas encountered by adult education practitioners. Ten major domains of ethical dilemmas were identified and rank ordered as to frequency of occurrence. The need for replication of the study with other adult education practitioners was suggested in order to "broaden the empirical data base and check these findings" (McDonald and Wood, 1993, p. 243).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the views of adult educators in British Columbia about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education and to identify the ethical issues, concerns and dilemmas experienced by them. As an approximate, or operational replication, this study involved repeating the original study "under similar conditions, following the methods as closely as possible" (Haller and Reynolds, 1986, p. 250). The intent was to determine whether the findings from the original study would be confirmed despite some minor

changes in the research conditions and context. Included in the study were changes to the research methodology suggested by McDonald.

Research Questions

This study addressed similar research questions (applied to a Canadian population) that were addressed in McDonald's original study.

The major research question this study addresses is: What are adult education practitioners' views about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education?

A number of additional questions are also answered by this study and include:

1. Are adult educators aware of the existence of a code of ethics to guide their practice?
2. Are adult educators currently operating under a code of ethics?
3. How do adult educators view existing codes of ethics?
4. What issues should a code of ethics address?
5. Who should be involved in the creation and dissemination of a code of ethics in adult education?
6. What are adult educators beliefs about the regulating function of codes of ethics?
7. Who should be responsible for enforcing a code of ethics in adult education?
8. What situations have adult educators encountered in their practice that have created ethical issues, concerns or dilemmas for them?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this replication study, three of the four terms defined in the original study by McDonald were used as previously defined. These included the terms, adult education, adult educators and code of ethics. The definition of the term ethical dilemma, as defined by White and Wooten (1983) in the original study, was replaced with the broader term, ethical issue/concern/dilemma. The broadening of the original term was viewed as a way of facilitating participant responses about ethics in practice rather than limiting responses to examples of ethical dilemmas.

The terms relevant to this study are defined as follows:

Adult Education: a process whereby persons whose major social roles are characteristic of adult status undertake systematic and sustained learning activities for the purpose of bringing about changes in knowledge, attitudes, values, or skills (Darkenwald and Merriam, cited in McDonald, 1991, p. 5)

Adult Educators: Individuals in a variety of roles whose basic functions in adult education include instruction, counselling, program development and administration of educational programs (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982).

Code of Ethics: A formalized statement of principles and values to guide one in determining the rightness or wrongness of present and future behaviour (McDonald, 1991, p. 5).

Ethical issue/concern/dilemma: A circumstance or situation that raises questions about what is the proper, right, fair or responsible thing to do within the context of decisions or actions that affect other people (Hosmer, 1987).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is based primarily on the value of replication research to (a) validate the findings of the original study, (b) generate new information from different populations, and (c) broaden the empirical data base regarding codes of ethics and ethical issues/concerns/dilemmas. This study is important for the same reasons identified by McDonald in her 1991 study. Just as the Indiana study was the first study that identified practitioner attitudes about a code of ethics for the field of adult education in the United States, this replication study will begin to fill the same void in the research on ethical beliefs and conduct in a Canadian setting.

Additionally, increasing the visibility of ethics in adult education through continuing research will also serve to foster and facilitate the ongoing debate regarding the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education. The dissemination of research findings from studies of ethical issues, concerns, and dilemmas in adult education may provide current and future practitioners with a greater understanding of the ethical implications of their professional practice decisions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study addresses the area of practice ethics in adult education. As a replication of the 1991 study by McDonald, it is intended to broaden the empirical data base within the field and to determine if the original findings are relevant in a Canadian context. Research related to the ethics of adult education practice provides the initial focus of the chapter. The remainder of the chapter examines pertinent journal articles and scholarly writing on ethical issues/dilemmas in adult education and codes of ethics.

Ethics Related Research in Adult Education

According to McDonald, "research based literature on ethics in adult education is almost nonexistent" (1991, p. 11). Much of the literature in this area focuses on ethical issues as they pertain to specific areas of the field; teaching (Cafferella, 1988), teaching and learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991), business ethics in continuing education programs (Pearson & Kennedy, 1985), continuing education administration (Sisco, 1988), program evaluation (Brookfield, 1988) and program planning (Singarella & Sork, 1983; Sork, 1988; Cervero & Wilson, 1994).

Until the 1991 study by McDonald, few empirical studies had been completed. Two research studies, both by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), and two doctoral dissertations were found related to the topic of ethics in adult education.

As part of a larger study by the ASTD on professional roles and competencies, Clement, Pinto & Walker (1978) asked society members to provide examples of behavior they had observed which they deemed to be unethical or improper for a training and development

professional. Through the process of content analysis, seven major categories of unethical behavior were found and rank ordered by frequency, as follows:

1. Lack of professional development
2. Violation of confidences
3. Use of "cure-all" programs
4. Dishonesty regarding program outcomes
5. Failure to give credit
6. Abuse of trainees
7. Other improper behavior, i.e. lack of follow-up, entertaining rather than training (Clement et al., 1978, p. 11).

In their summary, the authors note that both managers and trainees should be aware of the potential for unethical or improper behavior in the training and development process (1978, p. 12).

"More recently, select members of the ASTD were asked to identify the major ethical issues facing human resource and development practitioners. A task force, in consultation with role experts, generated a list of thirteen issues for the ASTD Models for HRD Practice" (McLagan, 1989 cited in McDonald, 1991, p. 12):

- Maintaining appropriate confidentiality;
- Saying "no" to inappropriate confidentiality;
- Showing respect for copyrights, sources and intellectual property;
- Ensuring truth in claims, data and recommendations;
- Balancing organizational and individual needs and interests;
- Ensuring customer and user involvement, participation and ownership;
- Avoiding conflicts of interest;
- Managing personal biases;
- Showing respect for, interest in, and representation of individual and population differences;
- Making the intervention appropriate to the customer's or user's needs;
- Being sensitive to the direct and indirect effects of intervention and acting to address negative consequences;
- Pricing or costing products or services fairly;
- Using power appropriately (McLagan, 1989 cited in McDonald, 1991, p. 13).

In his 1979 doctoral dissertation on the existential moral dimension of adult education, Russell Knudson surveyed selected professors of adult education in the United States and Canada

about ethical issues in the field. Specifically, participants were asked to identify and describe situations they had experienced that they thought were unethical or immoral. These situations were to reflect the “teaching/learning”, “program planning” and “evaluation” areas of adult education (p. 397). The goal of Knudson’s research was to gain insight into potential future directions for the development of ethical or moral guidelines in the practice of adult education. Categories of unethical behavior arising from the situations identified by the adult educators who responded to the survey included:

- conflicts of interest
- improper credentials
- inappropriate use of power/abuse of trainees
- use of training programs as “cure-alls”
- dishonesty regarding program outcomes/evaluation
- lack of learner involvement in any part of the planning process (pp. 399-403).

The findings by Knudson reflect similar ethical issues identified in the ASTD studies of 1976 by Clement et al. and the 1989 study by McLagan.

A dissertation completed in 1990 by Shirley Barber, also addressed ethical issues in the field of adult education. In this study, Extension professionals in the state of Minnesota were surveyed (N = 428) about the perceived importance of ethical issues in 27 situations and the frequencies with which the issues or dilemmas were experienced in their work. Seventeen demographic variables were examined for significant differences with each of the 27 issues. Findings from each of the tests were reported for both importance and frequency. The variable which had the most association with ratings of importance and frequency with the 27 ethical issues was the position of the respondent. The variety of issues addressed in Barber’s study serve to confirm the common themes related to justice and fairness identified in previously noted studies.

McDonald's 1991 study on the attitudes of adult education practitioners about codes of ethics was the first major survey to specifically determine adult educator's views on the desirability of a code of ethics. Through the use of survey methodology, adult educators in Indiana responded to various questions about their experiences with codes and their perceptions about the need for a code of ethics for adult education. Ethical dilemmas experienced by adult educators were also identified in the study. Eight major findings regarding practice ethics and codes of ethics were reported:

1. The majority of adult basic educators, ASTD and ICCE members in the state of Indiana believe there should be a code of ethics for them as adult educators.
2. The majority of practitioners do not cite situations encountered that have created ethical dilemmas for them.
3. The most frequently cited ethical dilemmas involve confidentiality concerns and ownership of instructional materials.
4. The overwhelming majority of adult basic educators, ASTD members and ICCE members in Indiana have had limited experience with codes of ethics.
5. Even though there appears to be a lack of experience with codes, the majority of practitioners feel positive about the function of codes of ethics.
6. Learner centered issues are most frequently cited as issues a code for adult education should address.
7. Across the total study population, the professional association is the favoured organization to create and disseminate a code of ethics.
8. It is not clear to adult educators whether a code of ethics should have a regulating function (pp. 111-121).

Although the results of McDonald's study generally reflected positive support for a code of ethics, the results were not overwhelming since 28% of the study respondents were not sure about the need for a code. A greater educational focus on ethics for practitioners and more research on practice ethics in adult education were suggested.

Since 1991, three surveys on ethical problems, dilemmas and codes of ethics have provided further data from the adult education practitioner point of view (Devogel, 1992; Lawler & Fielder, 1993; Lawler, 1996). In her study, Susan Devogel surveyed 509 randomly selected members of the Organizational Development professional practice area of the ASTD (response rate of 47%) about ethical dilemmas, resolution strategies and decision making styles. Thirty-nine ethical dilemmas, identified through reviewing the literature on professional ethics, were used as a basis for determining respondents' preferred resolution strategies and decision making styles. Negotiation, open confrontation and action research were the most commonly reported resolution strategies used when organizational development consultants were faced with ethical practice dilemmas. The most frequently used decision making styles were reliance on internal resources, discussion with other people and pragmatism. The findings also indicated that neither ethical codes of organizations nor decision making models are used by respondents. Among the recommendations from this study were the continued discussion of ethical dilemmas and codes of ethics in organizations and the inclusion of ethical thinking skills in educational curricula.

In their 1993 study, Patricia Lawler and John Fielder surveyed 156 of 700 Association for Continuing Higher Education (ACHE) members. The data revealed most ethical dilemmas resulted from incidents or conflicts with supervisors, faculty, students and colleagues. No apparent ethical problems were reported by 23% of respondents. Two major themes emerged from the survey. These included concerns about (1) the mistreatment of vulnerable groups such as

students, adjunct faculty and staff and (2) organizational and program integrity. Lawler's 1996 study, was designed to provide guidance to ACHE members in developing a code of ethics. The research sought to elicit a consensus from the members about the ethical dilemmas in their practice and guiding principles to be used in addressing these dilemmas. Ethical dilemma case studies and associated principles were evaluated in two surveys of 1,640 members of the Association for Continuing Higher Education (10% and 21% return rates respectively). Two main themes characterized the membership consensus. First, respondents preferred principles emphasizing student advocacy, principles of adult learning and their role as professionals. Second, issues of role conflict between principles of adult education and the demands related to administrative functions were also apparent.

Ethical Issues/Dilemmas

Research based studies in the area of ethics in adult education are limited. However, the literature in the field is increasingly reflecting awareness of and discussion about the variety of ethical issues and dilemmas that arise from the broadly diverse practice of adult education. This increasing focus and recognition of ethics is not limited to the field of adult education. The importance of ethical considerations in both personal and professional behavior has clearly become a current and relevant discourse as we approach the next millennium. As Lee (1986) notes, this increasing attention to ethics is likely rooted in an amalgam of motivations not the least of which is the enormous change and restructuring occurring in every part of our society (p. 31). Sisco (1988) echoes this view, "We live in an interesting and provocative time. There is evidence of turbulence and unpredictability all about us" (p. 64). Scandal and impropriety in the public and

private arenas have called into question ethical and moral practices in many fields as society grapples with the issues of living and working ethically in a pluralistic society.

Adult educators, whether employed as program planners, administrators, teacher/trainers or consultants in the public or private domain, are involved in making decisions on a daily basis that are fraught with the potential for ethical dilemmas. The ethical issues and dilemmas that adult education practitioners are likely to face have been addressed in the literature by a number of authors in a variety of areas of adult education practice.

A number of ethical issues are encountered by practitioners in the program planning process. Sork (1988), identified nine such examples as follows:

- Responding to “felt” or “expressed” needs of adult learners
- Basing a program on a need not acknowledged by the learner
- Basing the planning process on learning “deficiencies” of adults
- Claiming that specific capabilities will be developed by learners who participate in a program
- Designing programs in which participation is compulsory
- Maintaining confidentiality of information
- Selecting instructional and other resources
- Deciding who will be involved in the planning process
- Determining fees for programs (pp. 39-46).

Using an interactive program planning model, Caffarella (1994) also identifies examples of ethical issues encountered by program planners as they relate to selected components of the interactive model. These examples primarily reflect those identified by Sork (1988) while extending the potential issues to include those based on the values inherent in a comprehensive interactive program planning model. According to Caffarella, common ethical issues and dilemmas may be encountered within the following components of an interactive model:

- Establishing a Basis for the Planning Process
- Identifying Program Ideas
- Developing Program Objectives
- Coordinating Facilities and On-Site Events
- Designing Instructional Plans

- Formulating Evaluation Plans (p. 37).

A further perspective on the program planning process is offered by Cervero and Wilson (1994, 1996) who view planning practice as a social, political and ethical activity. "Planning in the face of power and interests is a daily necessity and a constant ethical challenge. Ethical dilemmas arise in this process as planners make decisions about whose interests will be represented by which people in constructing educational programs" (1994, p. 25).

The marketing of educational programs is often integral to the program planning process and may also give rise to ethical issues including: marketing programs to potential participants for whom there is little value or benefit (Apps, 1985), presenting course outcomes or benefits unrealistically in promotional material (Pearson and Kennedy, 1985; Burns and Roche, 1988), using sophisticated marketing methods, creating issues of presentation over content (Johnston, 1992), offering programs expediently, due to increasing competitive pressure from outside providers offering similar programs (Sisco, 1988). In articulating the significant risks and rewards of the marketing process and hence the opportunities for abuse, Burns and Roche stress the importance of examining the process from an ethical perspective using systematic inquiry. The following four questions are suggested in marketing educational programs to prevent decisions from becoming unethical ones:

- Does the proposed action conflict with the purpose or mission of the institution as I understand it?
- Would the proposed action meet genuine consumer needs in the marketplace, as I understand those needs?
- Is the action consistent with the objectives we have set forth for the program?
- Is it feasible for our organization to deliver the program with the resources at our disposal? (1988, p. 61).

Marketing issues and the ethical dilemmas that may arise from them are not unique to the program planning process. As Sisco (1988) succinctly notes, within the context of continuing

education administration "there is increasing pressure to behave more as a business and less as a citadel of ideas. With this pressure have come certain dilemmas of purpose and mission" (p. 76).

Within the context of evaluating adult education programs ethical dilemmas are also experienced. Brookfield (1988), identifies six typical dilemmas faced by adult educators in their day to day practice as evaluators:

- Is covert participant evaluation ever justified for the accuracy of the data it produces?
- Are evaluators ethically bound to share the findings of reports with the subjects of those reports?
- Should the criteria of success being used to evaluate always be made public at the outset?
- Are evaluators responsible to report distressing or harmful practices they observe that aren't covered in their evaluative responsibilities?
- Are evaluators duty bound to respond to evaluative comments in the terms in which they are phrased by the learner?
- Are evaluators ever justified in depriving control groups of important services in the cause of research accuracy? (pp. 91-100).

Although Brookfield provides some suggestions for addressing the dilemmas--for example, ethically harmful practices must be reported regardless of evaluative responsibility, he also notes that, "evaluation is a value laden and ethically ambiguous venture...there are no easy solutions or ready rules of conduct to be followed" (p. 101).

Scriven (1991) identifies a number of ethical issues in the general practice of evaluation including confidentiality, fairness, harassment, misrepresentation and misuse. In addition to applying professional standards of practice to guide ethical behavior, Scriven suggests that addressing the balance of power should be built into any evaluation design, and that "the power relation of evaluator, evaluatee, and client should be as nearly symmetrical as possible" (p. 64).

Merriam and Caffarella (1991), in exploring the ethical dilemmas in teaching and learning, note that "dilemmas may arise with regard to three aspects of an adult learning situation: determining the goals of learning, implementing the learning activity, and assessing the

consequences of learning” (p. 287). The authors note that “as long as there are competing courses of action, each based on competing beliefs and assumptions, ethical dilemmas result” (p. 297).

Ethical issues are found in the multiple responsibilities that teachers of adults assume. These responsibilities may include not only instruction but also administration and program planning. Given these competing roles, the teacher may not be as fully prepared when other responsibilities take precedence (Caffarella, 1988). The ethical dilemmas teachers face in their practice often relate to the primary roles of adult educators: “to be content specialists and/or to be facilitators of the learning process” (Caffarella, 1988, p. 108). According to Caffarella, ethical questions faced by content specialists include use of unfamiliar content, presenting content that has not been updated and whether to explain personal biases to learners. Ethical questions that can be raised for teachers choosing the facilitator role include; how to ensure student self-direction, the potential for abdication of the instructor role and the issue of facilitator as a catalyst in the learning process.

Among the issues that Lenz (1982) has identified in the teaching of adults are “conflicts of interest, particularly among part-time teachers engaged in other full-time pursuits and hidden agendas, where self-interests of the teachers can erode the teaching process” (p. 100).

Other authors (Wilson, 1982; Baca & Stein, 1983) have also addressed ethical issues in the teaching of adults in higher education. In this area, Wilson notes, “In the creation of ethical issues, academic life is bountiful” (p. 268). Disparities of power, the competing demands of teaching and research and the displacement of educational leadership with administrative matters reflect the range of issues invested with ethical questions in academic teaching (Wilson, 1982). Conflicts of interest related to teaching, research, consulting and private practice have been

identified by Baca & Stein (1983) resulting in the potential abuse of power in faculty/student relationships.

The Human Resource Development context also provides additional ethical issues that evolve from teaching/training adults. The use of repetitive training methods and pre-packaged programs can create dilemmas for both the consultant and the organization (Maidment & Losito, 1980; Gross & Robinson, 1985). Maidment and Losito note that consultant trainers conducting the same training repeatedly instead of building new skills or who use a packaged format or pre-arranged analysis short change clients (pp. 11-14).

Issues of participant confidentiality in the teaching/training environment are also problematic, particularly where human resource professionals provide services to individual employees while at the same time serving the management of the organization that pays their salaries (Wallace, 1985; Schultheiss, 1990). Wallace notes that being privy to confidential information from both employees and management can provide conflicts in decision making (p. 32). Schultheiss addresses the issue of the trainer's imperative to create a safe learning environment for the adult learner. An instructor who relays problems to upper management based on participants classroom comments clearly jeopardizes a trusting learning environment (p. 28).

Consultants in the organizational development (OD) field also experience ethical problems and dilemmas primarily by virtue of their change agent role. White and Wooten (1983) focus on five types of ethical dilemmas experienced by OD practitioners. These include:

- Misrepresentation and collusion
- Misuse of data
- Manipulation and coercion
- Value and goal conflict
- Technical ineptness (p. 691).

Thirty one specific ethical dilemmas identified by White and Wooten are discussed in relation to the stages and purposes of organizational development change. The authors note that possible ethical dilemmas are most likely based on the nature of the specific relationship between the consultant or change agent and the organization or "client system" (p. 695).

Ethical questions, issues and dilemmas have been reviewed and discussed within the context of practice areas in adult education. However, many of these issues are not limited to specific areas of practice but cross over the various settings in the field. For example, confidentiality, evaluation, conflicts of interest, the use of power, to name a few, are issues with the potential to cause ethical dilemmas for practitioners regardless of their roles as program planners, teacher/trainers, administrators or consultants.

Codes of Ethics

"Adult educators are clearly in a situation where conflict and controversy can be a way of life" (Brockett, 1988, p. 3). Just as in other helping professions such as medicine, nursing and social work, adult education practitioners are also confronted with ethical issues and conflicts on a daily basis. Although ethical issues may seem much clearer and more profound in the health care field with its focus on critical life and death situations, Sork (1988) notes, "in adult education, the consequences of unethical behaviour are less dramatic, but may nevertheless be quite serious" (p. 46).

Given the numerous ethical issues and dilemmas found in the ordinary and everyday world of adult education practice, the development of a code of ethics for the field has been suggested by a number of authors (Exton, 1982; Mager & Cram, 1985; Brookfield, 1986; Griffiths, 1991; Connelly & Light, 1991; Sork & Welock, 1992; Lawler & Fielder, 1993; Robertson, 1996; Wood,

1996). It is not to say that codes of ethics in adult education have not existed at all. McDonald (1991) noted the importance of providing some historical perspective on the existence of codes of ethics and standards of practice guidelines in selected areas of adult education practice. These documents were identified as follows:

The American Society for Training and Development's Code of Ethics (ASTD, 1990), The Stand (1986), the Council on the American Association of University Professors' "Statement on Professional Ethics" (Rich, 1988) and the Council on the Continuing Education Unit's "Principles of Good practice in Continuing Education" (Brockett, 1988) (p. 19).

However, as Boulmetis & Russo (1991) note, "a carefully developed, clearly stated, widely recognized and accepted code of ethics for adult educators does not currently exist" (p. 115).

Wood (1996) echoes this continued state of affairs some five years later. As Brockett (1988) states, "the code of ethics question is not easily resolved" (p. 9).

Since McDonald's review of existing codes in particular areas of adult education practice, some organizations have continued to develop ethical guidelines and codes of ethics. For example, the Michigan Adult and Community Education Professional Code of Ethics, 1992; the Coalition of Adult Education Organizations (CAEO) Guidelines for Developing a Code of Ethics for Adult Educators; the Learning Resources Network (LERN) Code of Ethics, 1994; the National Society for Performance and Instruction (NSPI) Code of Ethics, (R. Johnston, personal communication, May, 1995); and the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education's (STLHE), "Ethical Principles in University Teaching", 1996. Mallet (1994), notes that the Michigan code is believed to be the first code of ethics for a state's adult and continuing education practitioners. The CAEO guidelines reflect the organization's belief that even though there may be "honest differences about what constitutes ethical behavior, ...there are central issues of ethics that need to be addressed even in the face of controversy" (1993, p. 1). It is envisioned that the STLHE

document will provide the basis of an ethical code for university teachers across Canada (Murray et al., 1996).

Reasons for and functions of a code of ethics are numerous and include: serving as guidelines for individual and collective responsibility in response to societal needs for competent, accountable practitioners (Griffith, 1991; Connelly & Light, 1991;), enhancing the credibility for a field of practice by functioning as a means of self-regulation (Schurr, 1982; Conneley & Light, 1991; Bandman & Bandman, 1995;), providing guidelines or acting as a framework for professional practice and conduct (Maidment & Losito, 1980; Wallace, 1985; Molander, 1987; Freeman, Shaeffer & Whitson, 1993).

Some codes are used to assist practitioners with ethically ambiguous situations and decision making when confronted with ethical dilemmas in their work (Barnes, 1986; Boulmetis & Russo, 1991; Sork, 1992). Other authors have addressed the educational purposes of a code of ethics including its use as a mechanism for discussion and problem solving (Barnes, 1986; Berenbeim, 1986; Welock, 1989; Lankard, 1991). Berenbeim argues that the code may be less important than the discussion it provokes and that, "codes are more likely to affect employee behaviour if they are supported by ongoing educational programs" (p. 17).

Yet other authors have identified that codes of ethics, with their self regulatory provisions, provide a means of avoiding regulation by government or other bodies (Schurr, 1982; Molander, 1987; Bowie, 1979 cited in Weller, 1988). Still other reasons for codes of ethics include providing direction for conflict of interest situations (Schurr, 1982), assuring clients of fair treatment (Shay, 1965), protecting the public from unethical conduct (Shay, 1965; Mager & Cram 1985; Radomski, 1989), increasing the prestige and legitimacy of the profession or organization (Shay,

1965; Schurr, 1982) and communicating an organization's identity, culture and values (Ruddell & Pettegrew, 1988; Sork, 1992).

Sork and Welock (1992), in taking the position that adult education is obliged to develop a code of ethics, identify five specific benefits as follows:

- a code will provide a tool that practitioners can use to guide them away from ethically hazardous practices.
- a code will provide direction to adult education organizations and agencies in policy making.
- a code will provide limited protection from unethical practice for adult learners (depending on how the code is used).
- a code can be used in professional preparation programs for adult educators to better communicate the shared values of those in the field.
- a code will raise the visibility of the moral dimension of practice (p. 120).

In noting the benefits from the development of a code of ethics, the authors suggest that, “the question of whether adult education should develop a code of ethics is no longer relevant. The relevant question is how to best get on with the task” (p. 121).

Robertson (1996), notes there is little discussion of code content within the field of adult education; that most of the discussion and debate centers on whether there should be a code of ethics. In asserting that a code is necessary for the field, Robertson focuses particularly on the need to include issues related to the “educational helping relationship” due to the potential complicated interpersonal dynamics involved in learner/adult educator relationship (p. 49).

Both skepticism about and opposition to codes of ethics also exist. Some critics believe that “codes are mere window dressing and a smokescreen to head off more stringent methods of social control” (Bowie, 1979 cited in Weller, 1988, p. 389). Callahan (1982) questions the usefulness of a code and perceives that codes have rarely been adequate devices for dealing with the ethical problems of other fields or disciplines. He notes “that at best, they only serve to help formulate and make public some ideals of the professions; and that, at worst, they provide a shield

behind which practitioners can hide, meanwhile doing business as usual" (p. 342). Carlson (1988), Cunningham (1992) and Collins (1992) have all challenged those who advocate a formalized code for the field of adult education. Although Carlson notes that, few would question that adult education be practiced in an ethical way, there is no need to develop a professional code of ethics. His argument against the need for a code is based on a critical theory of professionalism; a belief that "codes or other norms of professional practice are political, not ethical" (p. 167). Carlson fears that "codes of ethics and their concomitant professionalization concentrates power in the hands of an elite of politically oriented professionals who control the majority of practitioners and increase dependency upon the 'profession' by the public" (p. 173). Rather than a code, Carlson suggests that what is needed is a recognition of the ethical choices facing us and a will to base these personal choices on commitment to humane values (p. 175).

Cunningham (1992) supports Carlson's position against formulating a code of ethics for adult educators and believes that "codes are developed to privilege those in power thus perpetuating the hegemony of the elite professional, tend to decontextualize normative behaviour and inhibit the ability of individuals or groups to reconstruct social reality" (p. 108). Rather than developing codes of ethics, Cunningham suggests that "all persons develop a critical reflective stance whereby the oughts for oneself or for a collective are continually and democratically negotiated" (p. 107). Collins (1992) dismisses the discourse about ethics and adult education as "arrant nonsense" believing rather that "ethical and political commitment resides at the core of adult education practice" (p. 41).

Other problems and difficulties in implementing a code of ethics for the field of adult education have been addressed. Singarella and Sork (1983) "doubt that the field of adult education is mature enough to reach agreement on a code of ethics which would apply to all

practitioners” (p. 250). Given the diversity of the practice of adult education, including the multiple roles assumed by practitioners, Brockett (1990) believes that a single code is problematic and could not effectively serve the entire field (p. 9). The problem of multiple roles has also been identified in continuing and higher education (Schurr, 1982; Sisco, 1988). Schurr states that “multispecialization insularity” is embedded in higher education and hence a single code is problematic (p. 328).

In noting the perceived barrier of role variability in the field, Welock (1989) suggests that this difficulty should not be offered as an excuse for not making the effort. Welock notes that many fields with specialty areas, for example engineering and medicine, have been able to develop general codes of ethics (p. 58). Connelly & Light (1991) have argued that it is this very pluralistic and diverse nature of adult education that provides practitioners with the challenge of developing a code of ethics with an interdisciplinary focus (p. 234). Sork and Welock (1992) suggest that, “adult education...can no longer avoid its ethical responsibilities by relying on arguments that it lacks the maturity needed or is too diverse to develop a code of ethics” (p. 120). More recently, Wood (1996) responded to the challenge of a single code for the entire field. He envisions this “code” or “framework for reflecting” could be used as a common reference throughout the field for dialogue among professional adult educators (p. 14). The framework or code developed by Wood includes nine ethical responsibilities pertaining to Western, democratic countries and are related to society, learners, stakeholders, the profession and ethical practice as follows:

- *with regard to society,*

- (1) a responsibility, through education, to promote the concepts of a just and equitable society and

- (2) a responsibility, through education, to assist in the empowerment of its members to participate effectively on their own behalf in society;
- *with regard to learners,*
- (3) a responsibility to each learner to respect his/her ethno-socio-cultural heritage and dignity as a human being,
- (4) a responsibility to respect the need of each learner for honesty, understanding, fairness, and confidentiality in all interactions between learner and adult educator,
- (5) a responsibility to use the best available professional knowledge and practices in serving all learners, and
- (6) a responsibility in all matters to resolve to do no harm to any person whose trust and welfare is accepted in adult education transactions and relationships;
- *with regard to the parent or sponsoring organization and other similar stakeholders,*
- (7) a responsibility to insure that they, their interests, and whatever support they provide are treated fairly and justly;
- *with regard to the profession,*
- (8) a responsibility to adult education colleagues and the adult education profession to practice adult education to the best of his/her ability and, in general, to do nothing that would bring disrepute on the profession; and
- *with regard to consistent ethical practice,*
- (9) a responsibility to reflect continuously upon the effectiveness and ethical nature of his/her day-to-day practice and to amend these guidelines whenever and in whatever ways specific circumstances of practice and insights from reflection dictate
- (pp. 13-14).

Using the experiences of the corporate sector, Weller (1988) suggests that simple manageability could be a factor applicable to code development in diverse enterprises. He writes, "the individual corporation is more likely to be the starting place for the development of codes of ethics in that the corporation is a more manageable unit than an entire industry" (p. 390).

Limitations of codes of ethics have also been addressed in the literature. Difficulties arise in dealing with the generality and specificity of code provisions (Callahan, 1982; Barnes, 1986; Molander, 1987). Barnes writes:

If a code's provisions are general, they do not speak to specific actions and decisions. On the other hand, if they are specific, they can address only a small fraction of the wide range of cases that professionals encounter. (p. 19)

Molander supports this concern, "it is on the twin horns of excessive generality and excessive specificity that the problem of code design is impaled" (p. 624). Molander also argues that a lack of thoroughness in code design, particularly in general codes, can have negative effects on ethical conduct. He suggests that "many employees will feel anything not covered by the code is acceptable behaviour" (p. 631). Maidment and Losito (1980) echo this problem with codes that provide general guidelines only. They note that "trainers cannot simplistically depend upon them for detailed guidance in moral concerns" (p. 6).

Lack of participation in the development of codes of ethics has also been identified as an issue (Mager & Cram, 1985; Weller, 1988; Lawler & Fielder, 1993). Drawing largely from theories and research in law, Weller, writes, "the greater the participation in the development of a code of ethics, by those affected by the code, the greater the effectiveness of a code" (p. 394). Mager & Cram, in summarizing the issues around code construction in the training and development area note that practitioner involvement and participation is essential. The authors write, "the development of a code is worth support, especially if it is derived from critical

incidents collected from practitioners" (p. 45). Lawler & Fielder argue that it is essential to include practitioners in the process, "ethical guidelines not firmly based on knowledge of the ethical problems practitioners actually face run the risk of being irrelevant to their real needs" (p. 26).

Conflicts between codes of ethics and the law have also been addressed as potentially problematic. Schurr (1982), suggests that "a code could be used as the basis for malpractice suits...a code is an implied contract, violation of which is judicable" (p. 333). However, Sork and Welock (1992) identify examples of unethical practice cases demonstrating that in the future, legal intervention can be expected if the field does not take on the task of self-regulation (p. 119).

Problems with enforcement comprise a further limitation of codes of ethics. In this area, perceptions about the need for code enforcement and sanctions for violations are varied (Schurr, 1982; Barnes, 1986; Molander, 1987; Weller, 1988; Wood, 1996). Schurr notes many codes do not make provisions for enforcement and argues that "a code is but a pious fraud if it is unenforceable" (p. 332). Molander indicates, "whatever the choice of enforcement agency, process, or penalty scheme, ethical code enforcement will not come easy...problems will occur if enforcement is not continuous and reliable" (p. 630). Wood, in opposing the idea of enforced compliance, suggests that "an ethics code is a tool for professionals, not a cage" (p. 14).

Addressing sanctions, Weller (1988) argues that "the greater the provision of sanctions for noncompliance the greater the effectiveness of the code" (p. 393). However, Barnes (1986) suggests that while codes without sanctions are not 100% effective, they do have some value. With their voluntary acceptance and through articulating expected behaviour, they clearly do have some regulative effect.

Summary

Historically, there is a paucity of empirical research related to practice ethics in the field of adult education. However, the literature is increasingly reflecting an awareness of and concerns about the ethical issues and dilemmas that permeate the everyday practice of adult education. Whether adult education practitioners should adopt a formal code of ethics also continues to be addressed from a variety of positions and perspectives. Until McDonald's 1991 study on the attitudes of adult education practitioners about codes of ethics, practitioner views had not been addressed in any formal way. This replication study was undertaken to continue the process of practitioner involvement in a field which Brockett notes "has grown out of a practice tradition" (1988, p. 201). The study examines the views of adult educators about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education and identifies the ethical issues, concerns and dilemmas they experience. The study further extends knowledge in the field regarding practice ethics from the perspective of the practitioner.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed survey methodology using a cross-sectional design to determine the views of adult education practitioners in British Columbia about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education. The study also examined the type and nature of ethical issues/dilemmas experienced by adult educators representing three practitioner groups.

Population and Sample

To most closely match the population in the original Indiana study, adult education practitioners from four organizations were represented in this study: adult basic education instructors and administrators listed with Literacy B.C.; members of the British Columbia Association of Continuing Education Administrators; and British Columbia members of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) and of the National Society for Performance and Instruction (NSPI). Each organization was contacted and permission was requested to use association mailing lists for completing the survey. Three of the four organizations included in the study were provincially based. (The NSPI, although nationally based, has a British Columbia chapter). Approval to use membership mailing lists was obtained from all three provincially based organizations. Since there is no local chapter of the ASTD in British Columbia, a request for a provincial membership list with subsequent permission to mail the survey to members in British Columbia was obtained from the international office in Alexandria, Virginia.

The current membership (population) of the four British Columbia adult education organizations was considerably smaller than the population from which McDonald's Indiana

sample was drawn. Hence in order to obtain a comparable sample, all members of the British Columbia organizations were included in the survey. Of the total 460 potential respondents identified, 122 represented continuing education administrators, 158 represented adult basic educators and 180 represented training and development practitioners.

In contrast to this current study, McDonald used a stratified random sampling technique to obtain 454 potential respondents. Of this total, 248 adult basic educators and 177 trainers were included in the sample. All 29 members of the Indiana Council for Continuing Education were included in the sample due to the small number of potential respondents.

Instrumentation

The survey questionnaire used in this study is adapted from the original questionnaire developed by McDonald in her 1991 study of the attitudes of adult education practitioners about codes of ethics. Permission to use and adapt the survey instrument was obtained from Kimberly McDonald. See Appendix A for a copy of letter requesting permission and Appendix B for a copy of letter granting permission.

Adaptations made to the questionnaire were based on (a) the identified limitations in the original survey, and (b) the need to modify language reflecting the Canadian context. Personal communication with McDonald assisted in clarifying the limitations of selected questions in yielding potentially different responses.

Both the original and adapted questionnaire were divided into three major sections: demographic characteristics, experiences and perceptions regarding codes of ethics and personal encounters. The majority of questions were closed-ended including yes/no, Likert Scale and multiple choice items. In addition, a limited number of open-ended questions were included. See

Appendix C for a copy of the original questionnaire developed by McDonald and Appendix D for a copy of the questionnaire adapted for use in this study.

The questionnaire used in the original study was reported as pre-tested for face validity with a convenience sample of adult educators from the sample frame. Revisions were then made and further field tested. The questionnaire was also subjected to critique for content validity by five adult education experts representing the areas of philosophy, adult literacy and continuing education.

Field Test of Questionnaire

Since the questionnaire used in this study had been modified from the original tool, field testing was carried out prior to mailing the final survey. In October 1995, a convenience sample of twelve adult educators were contacted and asked to participate in a field test of the survey instrument. The participants represented the sample frame and included four adult basic educators, four training and development practitioners and four continuing education administrators. Initial contact with the field test participants was followed by a subsequent mailing of the pilot questionnaire. A cover letter (Appendix E) and a survey feedback form (Appendix F) were included with the questionnaire. The cover letter outlined the purposes of a field test and included (a) the need to establish face validity of the instrument, (b) assessment of the clarity of directions and language, and (c) the potential for question and format improvement. The feedback form provided an opportunity for respondents to document any problems they experienced with the questions, address the clarity of the questions and instructions and comment generally on the overall survey. According to Fowler (1993), the essential purpose of a field test is "to find out how the data collection protocols and the survey instruments work under

realistic conditions” (p. 100). Participants were asked to return the questionnaire and feedback form by October 20.

Of the 12 adult educators who agreed to participate in the field test, 11 participants completed and returned the survey tool and feedback form by the due date. Generally, respondents indicated that they found the questions comprehensible and could be answered readily. No difficulties were experienced in understanding the instructions and most respondents indicated that 20 minutes was an accurate time to complete the questionnaire. Minor wording changes and format suggestions (spacing, word size) were identified. Based on the field test feedback, modifications to the questionnaire were made and the final draft prepared for distribution to the study population.

Data Collection Procedures

Data utilized in this study were collected through distribution of a mailed survey to adult education practitioners in British Columbia. A second mail-out to initial survey nonrespondents was subsequently distributed. This process replicated the procedure used in the original study by McDonald.

Distribution of the Survey

On November 6, 1995, 460 questionnaires were mailed (by first class postage) to the potential respondents. As in the original survey, colour coding of the questionnaires was incorporated thus mitigating the need to include an additional question on the survey about group affiliation. Included with the questionnaire was a cover letter (Appendix G) and a pre-addressed, postage-paid return envelope. Each pre-addressed return envelope was identified by number for

follow up mailing purposes. According to Dillman (1978), the inclusion of a stamped pre-addressed return envelope is critical, "without it response rates would suffer significantly." (p. 180).

The cover letter indicated the purpose and relevance of the study, and addressed ethical considerations related to the voluntary nature of respondent participation and confidentiality of data. Also included in the letter was the plan for feedback to respondents which included providing summaries to participating organizations/associations once the study has been completed. Participants were requested to return the questionnaires by November 24. As a result of the initial mailing of the survey tool, 167 usable questionnaires were returned.

Follow-Up of Survey Nonrespondents

Procedures for follow up mailing of survey questionnaires have been suggested in order to obtain higher response rates (Dillman, 1978; Fowler, 1988; Babbie, 1992; Altschuld et al., 1992; Creswell, 1994). As in the original study by McDonald, a second mailing of the survey tool was sent to all study participants who had not responded to the initial request. On November 29, a replacement questionnaire, cover letter appealing for return of the questionnaire (Appendix H) and an additional pre-addressed, postage-paid return envelope were sent by first class mail. Participants were requested to return their questionnaires by December 15.

As a result of the second mailing, an additional 94 usable questionnaires were returned. Although additional mailings or postcard reminders are often suggested as part of total design methods (Dillman, 1978; Creswell, 1994), no additional attempts to further increase response rates were undertaken due to cost and time restraints. As a result of both the initial and follow up mailing, 261 usable responses comprising an overall 60% return rate was realized. Of the 119

surveys sent to continuing education administrators, 71 usable responses were received (60%). Of the 170 sent to training and development practitioners, 93 usable responses were received (55%). Of the 148 surveys sent to adult basic educators, 97 usable responses were received (66%).

Coding Procedures

Following the data collection phase of the study, survey answers were transformed into categories for processing by computer. To ensure anonymity, each respondent's survey record was kept separate from the participant mailing lists to protect the identification of individual respondents. Only the researcher has access to these lists which will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

The data reduction process was applied to both open and closed-ended questions. Open-ended responses to survey questions were tabulated through coding the categories that emerged from respondent answers. Closed-ended questions were translated into numerical codes which were then entered directly from the questionnaires and stored in data files for analysis. Data cleaning provided the final check on the data file for accuracy, and completeness prior to data analysis.

Statistical Questions

Survey methodology typically takes the form of research questions and generally asks the question "what is" (Creswell, 1994). Research questions are not statistical questions (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). Hence, for the purposes of data analysis, this study's research questions, as stated in Chapter One, take the form, "is there a statistically significance relationship between variable A and variable B".

Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were carried out using the statistical program, SPSS (Statistical Program for the Social Sciences) version 6.1. As in the original study, three statistical tools were used to analyze and interpret the data collected in this study. These included: descriptive statistics, cross tabulations and chi-square tests for significance, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for demographic characteristics (primary role, years worked in the field of adult education, highest degree or diploma held, gender, age and group affiliation), were determined by calculating frequency distributions recorded as percentages. Descriptive statistics were also used to indicate the frequency distributions for all other questionnaire items with the exception of open-ended question content. These responses were subjected to content analysis and summarized as frequency counts.

Cross Tabulations and Chi-square Tests for Significance

Cross-tabulation is "one of the simplest and most frequently used ways of demonstrating the presence or absence of a relationship" (Bryman and Cramer, 1994, p. 153). Cross-tabulation looks at the relationship between two categorical variables to show whether the distributions of one variable differ significantly for each value of the other variable (Freedman, Pisani, & Purves, 1978, p. 40). As in the original study, the same cross-tabulations were carried out on the variables in this study. Table 1 summarizes these cross-tabulations.

Table 1

Cross-Tabulations of Categorical Variables

	Beliefs About Code for Adult Education	Group Affiliation	Ethical Issues
Primary Role	X		X
Years Worked in Adult Education	X		X
Highest Degree/Diploma	X		X
Gender	X		X
Age	X		X
Group Affiliation (CE, ABE, Training/Development)	X		X
Ethical Issues	X	X	
Existence of Code	X	X	
Operating Under Code	X	X	
Issues Code Should Address		X	
Creation and Dissemination of Code		X	
Regulating Function of Code		X	
Enforcement of Code		X	

The chi-square test was used to measure the statistical significance of the relationships between variables. This test compares the observed (or actual) frequencies with the expected (or hypothesized) frequencies of two variables presented in a cross-tabulation or contingency table. The larger the observed frequency is in comparison with the expected frequency, the larger the

chi-square statistic and the more likely the difference is statistically significant (Vogt, p. 34). An alpha level of 0.05 was used for all statistical tests and replicates the level used in the original study by McDonald.

Since the assumptions and approximations inherent in the chi-square test may break down if the expected values in a contingency table are too small, a few categories for selected variables were combined (collapsed) to have a sufficient number of responses in each cell. While it has been recommended that all expected frequencies be at least five, studies indicate that this is probably too stringent and can be relaxed (Everitt, 1977). Jekel (1996) argues that the investigator can usually compromise on the five or more counts in each cell "by allowing 20% of the expected counts to be less than five but at the same time making sure that none of the expected counts is less than one" (p. 147).

Included in the tabular presentation of chi-square tests results are adjusted residual values. These values indicate cells where the difference between the observed and expected frequencies "contributes" to the significance levels of the chi-square.

One-Way ANOVA Tests

Based on the original study, replication of a series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests was carried out to compare respondents level of agreement with the functions of existing codes of ethics (Likert Scale items) and their beliefs about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education. ANOVA is "a test of the statistical significance of the differences among the mean scores of two or more groups on one or more variables or factors...it is used for assessing the statistical significance of the relationship between categorical and continuous variables" (Vogt, p. 6). The ANOVA test is used instead of using multiple t-tests to compare all

possible pairs of means generated. The ANOVA test uses the variances of the groups to calculate the degree of difference in the means. Thus, all the means are compared simultaneously, decreasing the likelihood of making a type I error (finding a significant difference by chance when none exists).

The post hoc statistical procedure, Tukey's HSD ('honestly significant difference') was used subsequent to the ANOVA tests. This procedure is used when a significant difference is noted between a group of means. Using this multiple comparison procedure, the researcher is able to identify which means are significantly different from each other and to increase the confidence of finding true differences (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993).

Rationale for Using the One-Way ANOVA Tests

Strictly speaking, measures which derive from multiple-item scales, are ordinal variables. Parametric tests such as ANOVA, generally presume the employment of interval scales. However, a number of authors reflecting on current practice acknowledge the trend in the direction of treating multiple-item scales as interval variables (Rosenberg & Daly, 1993; Bryman & Cramer, 1994; Jekel, 1996). It has been suggested that "since tests apply to numbers and not to what those numbers signify that parametric tests can be used with ordinal variables" (Bryman & Cramer, p. 117). Labovitz (1970), goes further in suggesting that "all ordinal variables can and should be treated as interval variables...the amount of error that can occur is minimal in relation to the advantages of using powerful analysis techniques which are easy to interpret" (p. 516).

Procedure for Addressing Response Bias

The existence of response bias (the effect of nonresponses on survey estimates) must be assumed to some degree in all survey research (Sudman, 1976; Rosenberg and Daly, 1993). Various methods have been described to determine response bias and include respondent/nonrespondent analysis, proxy respondents, statistical adjustments and wave analysis (Fowler 1993; Creswell, 1994). The method used to address response bias in this study was wave analysis. For mail surveys, "bias attributable to nonresponse can be studied by comparing those who respond immediately with those who respond after follow-up steps are taken" (Fowler, p. 40). This procedure assumes that "those who return surveys in the final weeks of the response period are almost nonrespondents. If their responses are not different from those of other weeks, a strong case for absence of response bias can be established" (Creswell, p. 123).

The procedure for comparing responses to select items between "early and late" respondents, was established prior to distributing the survey. A comparison of selected study variables between first wave respondents (those returning surveys from the first mailing) and second wave respondents (those returning surveys only after a second follow-up appeal) was selected as a means of studying the issue of response bias. Items selected for comparison between early and late respondents included demographic variables and all closed-ended questionnaire items reflecting the research questions addressed in this study. Cross-tabulations and the chi-square test for significance were used to analyze and interpret the data. The results obtained in addressing response bias will be presented and discussed in Chapter Four.

Design and Procedure Changes from the Original Study

As noted earlier in this chapter, changes to the original questionnaire were made based on the need for contextual language changes, identified limitations in the original survey and further discussion with the original researcher. Following is a summary of these changes including changes to selected procedures:

- As suggested in the original study limitations, the question asking respondents about the need for a code of ethics for themselves as adult educators was revised to ask about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education. In her study, McDonald noted that the responses to a question about the field of adult education may yield different responses. In some instances, respondents in the original study indicated that they did not need a code of ethics, but others might.
- Based on the low response rate to the question on ethical dilemmas in the original study, this question was broadened to include issues, concerns or dilemmas. An operational definition was also included directly in the questionnaire in an attempt to provide participants with a broader scope of possible responses, rather than limiting responses to “ethical dilemmas”, the definition of which may be open to many interpretations.
- The placement of the open-ended question on ethical issues/concerns/dilemmas was also modified from the original study. By reordering the questionnaire items and placing the open-ended question about experiences with ethical dilemmas at the end rather than at the front of the survey, I felt that a higher response rate may be achieved. Participants in the original study may have felt uneasy with documenting personal encounters with ethical dilemmas so early in the questionnaire.

- Following discussion with McDonald, one of the original open-ended questions was removed from this survey. Given the generally accepted problem of response to open-ended questions in self administered surveys (Fowler, 1993), the reduction from three to two open-ended questions was viewed as helpful in reducing the amount of time required to complete the survey, thus potentially increasing the overall response rate. The deleted question related to respondent perception about the helpfulness of a code of ethics for those who were currently operating under such a code. It was determined that omitting this question would not have a major effect on the outcome of the study since minimal anecdotal responses were obtained in the original study (K. McDonald, personal communication, August, 1995).
- Timing of the distribution of the surveys was identified as a limitation of the original survey. The summer months of June and July were noted as factors affecting the response rate since many educators and training personnel often take vacation during this time period. By adjusting the mail-out of the questionnaire from a summer to a fall time period in this study, it was hoped that an increased rate of response would result, thereby leading to a decreased potential response bias.
- A procedure for addressing response bias was included in this study. As noted earlier, bias attributable to nonresponse was studied by comparing early and late responders to the questionnaire. Response bias was not addressed in the original study.

Limitations of the Design

The limitations of this study reflect similar limitations identified by McDonald in her 1991 study and are based on the limitations generally identified with survey research including sample

selection and data collection procedures. Thus, the generalizability of the results is a potential major limitation. Although a number of changes were made for this replication study as noted above, these changes were related primarily to instrumentation and mailing periods. In this section, six limitations are identified and discussed.

1. The study was confined to adult educators in British Columbia. Generalizability to adult educators in other provinces may be limited by the degree to which the British Columbia situation is typical of adult educators nationally.
2. The sample was confined to three categories of adult educators and although these categories generally reflect those who are typically considered to be adult educators (McDonald, 1991), some "other categories" (e.g. community development specialists, educational gerontology practitioners) were not included. Results of the study will therefore be limited to adult basic educators, continuing education administrators and training and development practitioners.
3. The achieved sample was based on those who voluntarily participated from the population of adult educators surveyed and is biased due to this volunteer nature. As such, the characteristics of the volunteers may be different from those who chose not to participate resulting in non-response bias of the data. According to Fowler (1993), "people who have a particular interest in the subject matter or the research itself are more likely to return mail questionnaires than those who are less interested" (p. 41). Hence, the response rate may be directly related to the respondent's interest in ethical issues in adult education and specifically codes of ethics. Determination of how the early responders to the survey differed from the late responders may help to decrease the effect of this limitation if significant differences are not found. (As noted earlier in the chapter, late responders are almost nonrespondents).

4. Professional association membership lists were used to survey continuing education and training and development practitioners. Adult basic educators were included in the survey based on a listing of practitioners associated with a provincial coordinating body. As noted in McDonald's original study, those affiliated with a professional association were perhaps more educated on ethics in general and codes of ethics in particular. As McDonald notes, "ASTD has a code of ethics and several publications devoted to articles on ways in which members can improve their practice" (1991, p. 47). Those not affiliated with a professional association may have responded differently to the survey items.
5. It is recognized that self-reported data collected using a survey questionnaire is a limitation. All of the findings are subject to the respondents providing truthful and accurate reports of their beliefs and experiences with codes of ethics and ethical issues. Respondents may answer survey items based upon what they think the researcher wants to hear and what they think is a socially acceptable response. Responses cannot be considered completely objective or valid.
6. A final limitation concerns the mail distribution of the questionnaires. Although the summer mailing of the survey in McDonald's original study was identified as a limitation and was adjusted for this study, the late November/early December follow-up mailing to nonrespondents is also a limitation. In public educational institutions December is a busy month with end of semester demands. For practitioners in the private arena, it is often a time when vacations are taken. For most citizens, the month of December is also a peak holiday season which places additional challenges to time and energy. The response rate could perhaps have been somewhat higher had the surveys been mailed earlier in the fall.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The findings from the data collected for this study on the views of adult education practitioners in British Columbia on ethical issues and codes of ethics are presented in this chapter. The first part of the chapter presents the findings associated with the procedures used to address response bias. The second part of the chapter examines the data collected through the survey questionnaire. The data presented is structured to coincide with the format of the questionnaire and addresses the research questions outlined in the first chapter. The chapter concludes with a comparison of key survey results with the Indiana study of 1991 by MacDonald.

Response Bias Procedure Results

As noted in Chapter Three, wave analysis was employed in an attempt to address response bias in this study. In this procedure, it is assumed that late respondents are considered almost nonrespondents. A lack of demonstrated differences between early and late respondents provides a strong case for absence of response bias. The six demographic variables and all closed-ended questionnaire items were used to compare early and later respondents to the questionnaire. Cross tabulations and chi-square tests were used to determine whether there were any differences between early (first mail out returns) and later (second mail out returns) respondents.

No significant differences were found between early and later respondents and how they answered all closed-ended questionnaire items. Of the six demographic variables (primary role, highest degree/diploma held, age, gender, years worked and practitioner group), only one significant difference was found between early and later respondents. Application of the

chi-square test demonstrated a significant difference between primary role and questionnaire return (refer to Table 2).

Table 2

Return of Questionnaire by Primary Role of Respondent

<u>Primary Role</u>	<u>Return of Questionnaire</u>		Row Total
	Early Return	Later Return	
Manager/Admin.	84 (73.9) [2.6]	31 (41.1) [-2.6]	115 44.2%
Teacher/Trainer	44 (46.2) [-.6]	28 (25.8) [.6]	72 27.7%
Consultant	18 (21.2) [-1.2]	15 (11.8) [1.2]	33 12.7%
Other	21 (25.7) [-1.7]	19 (14.3) [1.7]	40 15.4%
Column Total	167 64.2%	93 35.8%	260 100.0%

Missing Observations: 1

$$X^2 = 7.935, df = 3, p = .047$$

Note. In all contingency tables, expected frequencies are in parentheses, adjusted residual values are bracketed. Adjusted residuals with a value > 2 indicates that the cell contributes to the significance level of the chi-square.

As the above table indicates, manager/administrators were more likely to return their questionnaires earlier than the respondents in the other three role categories. The difference between the observed and expected frequency in the manager/administrator “early return cell” contributes to the overall statistical significance of the table.

Although a stronger case for absence of response bias could be assumed due to the general lack of demonstrated differences between variables, one variable was significantly different thus potentially demonstrating response bias. The findings associated with the procedure for dealing with response bias will be addressed further in Chapter Five.

Questionnaire Data and Returns

As with the McDonald study, all questions included in this survey are analyzed using three statistical tools: frequency distributions, one way analysis of variance and cross tabulations using the chi-square statistic to measure the statistical significance of the relationship between categorical variables. Demographic variables are analyzed first. Data reflecting experiences and beliefs about codes of ethics are then examined followed by analysis of ethical issues cited by respondents.

A total of 460 surveys were mailed to adult education practitioners in British Columbia. Sixteen questionnaires were returned from the post office as undeliverable and were labeled "return to sender". Six questionnaires were returned but not completed since the recipients no longer worked in an adult education role or setting. One questionnaire was returned because the recipient was deceased. A total of 261 of the potential 437 respondents completed and returned the survey questionnaire resulting in an overall 60% response rate.

Demographic Variables

In the first section of the survey questionnaire, a total of six demographic variables were examined: primary role of respondents current position, years worked in adult education, highest degree or diploma held, gender, age, and practitioner group with which respondents were

affiliated. Respondent age was an added demographic variable examined in this study. It was not included in the McDonald study.

The largest number of respondents (44%) indicated that their primary role was manager/administrator. Respondents who considered themselves as teachers or trainers comprised the next highest percentage (28%). A significantly fewer number of respondents (13%) indicated their primary role as consultant. Less than 3% of respondents indicated their primary role as counselor. None of the respondents perceived their primary role to be that of researcher. Of the 260 respondents who completed this question, 13% indicated that their primary role was other than the specific categories listed. Of the 33 respondents indicating "other", 12 used this category to identify the dual responsibility nature of their role (i.e. teacher/administrator, trainer/consultant). Of the remaining respondents marking the "other" category, four each indicated they were programmers or program coordinators. An additional four identified themselves as performance technologists. Other primary roles identified included: instructional designer, teaching assistant, volunteer, family support worker, home/school coordinator, project manager and human resource professional. Refer to Table 3 for a complete frequency distribution.

Table 3

Distribution of Respondents by 'Primary Role of Current Position'

<u>Primary Role</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Manager/Administrator	115	44.2
Teacher/Trainer	72	27.7
Consultant	33	12.7
Counselor	7	2.7
Other	33	12.7
Missing Cases	1	-
TOTAL	261	100.0

Note: Due to missing data, percents will be given as valid percents in all tables unless otherwise indicated.

Fifty-two percent of the study respondents indicated they had worked in the field of adult education for more than ten years. Table 4 provides the complete frequency distribution for the 258 respondents completing this question.

The largest number of respondents (39%) indicated the baccalaureate degree was their highest degree held. Thirty-eight percent indicated their highest degree held was a master's degree. Table 5 provides a complete listing of degrees/diplomas held by the 261 respondents.

Table 4

Distribution of Respondents By 'Number of Years Worked in the Field of Adult Education'

<u>Years Worked</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1 - 5 years	61	23.6
6 - 10 years	62	24.0
11 - 15 years	55	21.3
16 - 20 years	54	20.9
21 - 25 years	18	7.0
> 25 years	8	3.1
Missing Cases	3	-
TOTAL	258	100.0

Table 5

Distribution of Respondents by 'Highest Degree/Diploma Held'

<u>Highest Degree/Diploma</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
High School Diploma	14	5.4
Two Year College	31	11.9
Four Year Baccalaureate	102	39.1
Master's Degree	99	37.9
Doctoral Degree	15	5.7
TOTAL	261	100.0

The majority of individuals responding to this survey were females. Of the 255 respondents who indicated their gender, 58% were female and 42% were male.

The largest percentage of respondents were between the ages of 40-49. Respondents in this age group comprised 51%. The second largest percentage (24%) was the 50-59 age group. Twenty-three percent of respondents working in the field of adult education were under the age of 40 years, while 2% of respondents indicated their age to be greater than 59 years.

The sixth and final demographic variable addressed in this study was practitioner group affiliation. Of the 122 continuing education administrators included in the study population, 71 individuals (60%) responded to the survey. Of the 158 adult basic educators included in the study population, 97 individuals (65%) responded to the survey. Of the 180 training and development practitioners included in the study population, 93 individuals (55%) responded to the survey. Of the total 261 respondents to the survey, 37% represented adult basic educators, 36% represented training and development practitioners and 27% represented continuing education administrators.

Practitioner Views About Codes of Ethics

Experiences and Beliefs Regarding Codes of Ethics

The second section of the questionnaire provided respondents with an opportunity to report information about their experiences and beliefs regarding codes of ethics. The first two questions asked respondents if they knew of the existence of a code of ethics to guide their professional practice and whether they were presently operating under a code of ethics.

Less than 50% of respondents knew of the existence of a code to guide their practice. One hundred and five of the 260 respondents or 40% answered "yes" to this question.

This question was cross-tabulated with group affiliation to determine if there were differences between the three practitioner groups. Results indicated there were no significant differences in the knowledge about code existence between the three practitioner groups.

The second part of this question asked respondents who had answered “yes” to knowing of the existence of a code of ethics, to identify which organization had created and disseminated the code. Of the 105 who responded “yes” to knowing of the existence of a code of ethics to guide their professional practice, 96 completed this question. A few respondents identified more than one organization resulting in a total of 100 responses. Nine individuals did not complete the second part of the question. Thirty-nine of the 100 responses indicated specific professional associations were the organizations that had created and disseminated the code. The most frequently cited professional associations were, the British Columbia Principals and Vice-Principals Association (6 responses), the American Society for Training and Development and the National Society for Performance and Instruction (5 responses each), the Learning and Education Resource Network, Private Post Secondary Instructors Association and the Ontario Society for Training and Development (3 responses each). The remainder of the professional associations were cited by individual respondents and generally reflected a variety of specific practice disciplines (e.g. Association of Clinical Counselors, Human Resource Management Association).

The union or employee bargaining agent was the second most frequently identified type of organization cited by respondents that had created and disseminated a code of ethics ($n = 22$). Of these 22 responses, the British Columbia Teachers Federation was the specific union most frequently cited ($n = 19$). The remaining responses included the respondent’s college or specific college department (15 responses), company (12 responses), licensing body (8 responses), school board (4 responses).

Following the question on the creation and dissemination of a code of ethics, respondents were asked to identify whether they were currently operating under a code of ethics. Fifty percent of respondents indicated that they were currently operating under a code.

This question was also cross-tabulated with group affiliation to determine any differences between the three practitioner groups regarding operating under a code of ethics. No significant differences were found between the practitioner groups regarding working under a code of ethics.

Again, those answering “yes” to this question, were asked to identify under whose code of ethics they were operating. The “employing organization” was most frequently cited by respondents (refer to Table 6).

Table 6

Distribution of Respondents by ‘Whose Code of Ethics’

<u>Whose Code</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Professional Organization	36	14.0
Licensing Body	3	1.2
Employing Organization	66	25.7
Other	6	2.3
More than one identified	18	7.0
Not applicable	128	49.8
Missing Cases	4	-
TOTAL	257	100.0

Of the 129 respondents who answered this question, 147 responses were actually cited. A further breakdown of the categories - “more than one identified” and “other” was carried

out. In 18 cases, respondents identified more than one code of ethics. When these multiple responses were added to the existing categories a more accurate picture of which codes under which respondents were operating was obtained. Although the frequencies within all the categories increased with this more detailed breakdown, the overall rank among the categories remained the same. Of the 12 “other” responses, eight respondents indicated that they were operating under their own personal code of ethics (refer to Table 7).

Table 7

Distribution of Responses by Detailed Breakdown of ‘Whose Code’ Categories

<u>Whose Code</u> <u>(Detailed Breakdown)</u>	Frequency	Percent
Professional Association	49	33.3
Licensing Body	7	4.8
Employing Organization	79	53.7
Other	12	8.2
TOTAL	147	100.0

A third question focusing on respondents’ experiences and beliefs, asked how adult educators felt about codes of ethics. Eight statements about codes of ethics were used to obtain data related to this question. A Likert scale was employed to determine the strength of respondent's agreement with each statement. Following is a listing of the statements which comprised this question:

- a. A code of ethics gives the profession integrity or credibility.

- b. A code of ethics contributes to the identification of the occupation as a profession.
- c. A code of ethics influences people to restrain themselves from engaging in unethical practices.
- d. A code of ethics ensures clients that professional services are rendered with high standards.
- e. A code of ethics instructs the practitioner about what is good practice.
- f. A code of ethics deters government regulation of the profession.
- g. A code of ethics places power in the hands of an elite group of professionals who control the majority of practitioners.
- h. A code of ethics for adult education is as important as a code of ethics for practitioners in law, medicine, and other professions.

The mean (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the respondents agreement with the functions of a code of ethics are presented in Table 8. Respondents were asked to rate each statement on a five point scale where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree.

Table 8

Summary of Respondent Agreement with the Functions of a Code of Ethics

Functions of a Code of Ethics	<u>M</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>SD</u>
Gives the profession integrity or credibility	1.88	259	0.84
Contributes to the identification of the occupation as a profession	2.16	257	0.94
Restrains people from engaging in unethical practice	2.46	260	0.96
Ensures clients that services are rendered with high standards	2.61	259	1.07
Instructs the practitioner about what is good practice	1.93	260	0.74
Deters government regulation of profession	3.18	257	0.88
Places power in the hands of an elite group of professionals	3.69	259	0.85
Is as important as a code of ethics for other professions	2.13	257	1.04

Note: n = number of respondents; M = mean; SD = standard deviation; range of possible scores = 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Functions rated with the lowest mean scores were 'gives profession integrity or credibility' (M = 1.88, SD = 0.84) and 'instructs practitioner about what is good practice' (M = 1.93, SD = 0.74). This indicates these functions generated the strongest agreement about code functions by respondents. The function rated with the highest mean score was 'places power in the hands of an elite group of professionals who control the majority of practitioners' (M = 3.69, SD = 0.85). This indicates that this function generated the strongest disagreement of the eight code functions

by the study respondents. The function rated with the second highest mean score was 'deters government regulation of the profession' ($\underline{M} = 3.18$, $\underline{SD} = 0.88$). This indicates that this function also presented less agreement by respondents. The function 'ensures that services are rendered with high standards' ($\underline{M} = 2.61$, $\underline{SD} = 1.07$) reflects the greatest diversity of responses between categories. The mean scores for the remaining three functions of a code of ethics ('contributes to the identification of the occupation as a profession', 'restrains people from engaging in unethical practice' and 'is as important as a code of ethics for practitioners in law, medicine and other professions'), range from 2.13 to 2.46 and generally reflect agreement with these functions.

Frequency distributions for each of the statements about the functions of a code of ethics are in Appendix I. The majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements:

- A code of ethics instructs the practitioner about what is good practice (87%).
- A code of ethics gives the profession integrity or credibility (85%).
- A code of ethics contributes to the identification of the occupation as a profession (72%).
- A code of ethics for adult education as important as a code of ethics for practitioners in law, medicine, and other professions (71%).
- A code of ethics influences people to restrain themselves from engaging in unethical practices (61%).

At 50%, respondents failed to establish a clear majority of agreement with the statement 'a code of ethics ensures clients that professional services are rendered with high standards.'

More than three-quarters (83%) of the respondents were either undecided or disagreed with the statement regarding codes of ethics deterring government regulation of the profession

while 68% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that ‘a code places power in the hands of an elite group of professionals who control the majority of practitioners.’ Across all statements, respondents generally indicated an overall positive view about the functions of codes of ethics.

The next question addressed the major research question in this study and asked adult educators whether or not there should be a code of ethics for the field of adult education. Of the 261 respondents to this question, 73% felt that there should be a code of ethics for the field of adult education. Seven percent of respondents indicated a “no” response to the question, while 20% were “not sure” about the need for a code of ethics.

In order to examine how respondents felt about the functions of a code of ethics (question # 8) and whether they believed there should be a code of ethics for the field of adult education (question # 9), one-way analysis of variance was employed. This statistical test indicated there was a significant relationship between the responses to all eight statements about the functions of a code of ethics and whether there should be a code of ethics for the field of adult education. Tukey’s HSD post hoc comparison test was applied after conducting the analysis of variance on the differences in group means. This post hoc comparison test was used to determine which means were significantly different and therefore which groups contributed most to those differences. Subscripts for each ANOVA test have been used to identify those mean (M) values that differ significantly in the Tukey HSD comparison. The following eight tables (Tables 9 to 16) present the data generated that examines the relationship between the eight statements regarding the functions of a code of ethics and what practitioners believe about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education (Group 1 = yes, group 2 = no, group 3 = not sure).

As noted earlier, the functions of a code of ethics were rated on a five point scale where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree.

Table 9

'Need for a Code of Ethics' by Respondent Views About 'Code Giving Profession Integrity'

<u>Source</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p value</u>
Between Groups	2	39.5295	19.7648	35.1960	.0000
Within Groups	256	143.7601	.5616		
Total	258	183.0896			

<u>Group</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>MSE</u>
1. Yes	189	1.6508 _a	.6526	.0477
2. No	18	2.8333 _a	1.2485	.2943
3. Not Sure	52	2.3856 _a	.8438	.1170
Total	259	1.8803	.8438	.0525

Note. Means with the same subscripts differ significantly in the Tukey HSD comparison. The lower the mean score (M) the greater the agreement with the code function.

Table 10

'Need for a Code of Ethics' by Respondent Views About 'Code Contributing to Identification of Profession'

<u>Source</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p value</u>
Between Groups	2	35.9688	17.9844	23.8955	.0000
Within Groups	254	191.1674	.7526		
Total	256	227.1362			

<u>Group</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>MSE</u>
1. Yes	188	1.9468 _a	.8321	.0607
2. No	18	3.1111 _a	1.0226	.2410
3. Not Sure	51	2.6275 _a	.9372	.1312
Total	257	2.1634	.9419	.0588

Note. Means with the same subscripts differ significantly in the Tukey HSD comparison. The lower the mean score (M) the greater the agreement with the code function.

Table 11

'Need for a Code of Ethics' by Respondent Views About 'Code Restraining Unethical Practice'

<u>Source</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p value</u>
Between Groups	2	15.0450	7.5225	8.5678	.0002
Within Groups	257	225.6435	.8780		
Total	259	240.6885			

<u>Group</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>MSE</u>
1. Yes	190	2.3421 _a	.9449	.0686
2. No	18	3.2222 _a	1.1144	.2627
3. Not Sure	52	2.6538	.8375	.1161
Total	260	2.4654	.9640	.0598

Note. Means with the same subscripts differ significantly in the Tukey HSD comparison. The lower the mean score (M) the greater the agreement with the code function.

Table 12

'Need for a Code of Ethics' by Respondent Views About 'Code Ensuring High Standards of Service'

<u>Source</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p value</u>
Between Groups	2	27.4782	13.7391	13.1173	.0000
Within Groups	256	268.1357	1.0474		
Total	258	295.6139			

<u>Group</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>MSE</u>
1. Yes	189	2.4392 _a	1.0431	.0759
2. No	18	3.6111 _{a b}	1.0369	.2444
3. Not Sure	52	2.8846 _{a b}	.9425	.1307
Total	259	2.6100	1.0704	

Note. Means with the same subscripts differ significantly in the Tukey HSD comparison. The lower the mean score (M) the greater the agreement with the code function.

Table 13

'Need for a Code of Ethics' by Respondent Views About 'Code Instructing in Good Practice'

<u>Source</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p value</u>
Between Groups	2	12.1326	6.0663	11.8328	.0000
Within Groups	257	131.7559	.5127		
Total	259	143.8885			

<u>Group</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>MSE</u>
1. Yes	190	1.8105 _a	.6713	.0487
2. No	18	2.5000 _a	.9235	.2177
3. Not Sure	52	2.1923 _a	.7931	.1100
Total	260	1.9346	.7454	.0462

Note. Means with the same subscripts differ significantly in the Tukey HSD comparison. The lower the mean score (M) the greater the agreement with the code function.

Table 14

'Need for a Code of Ethics' by Respondent Views About 'Code Deterring Government Regulation'

<u>Source</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p value</u>
Between Groups	2	8.4243	4.2122	5.6316	.0040
Within Groups	254	189.9803	.7480		
Total	256	198.4247			

<u>Group</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>MSE</u>
1. Yes	188	3.0745 _a	.9103	.0664
2. No	18	3.3889	.7775	.1833
3. Not Sure	51	3.5098 _a	.7035	.0985
Total	257	3.1829	.8804	

Note: Means with the same subscripts differ significantly in the Tukey HSD comparison. All mean scores (M) indicate lack of agreement with the code function.

Table 15

'Need for a Code of Ethics' by Respondent Views About 'Code Placing Power in Hands of Elite Group of Professionals'

<u>Source</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p value</u>
Between Groups	2	8.7427	4.3714	6.2812	.0022
Within Groups	256	178.1607	.6959		
Total	258	186.9035			

<u>Group</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>MSE</u>
1. Yes	190	3.8053 _a	.7961	.0578
2. No	18	3.4444	.9218	.2173
3. Not Sure	51	3.3725 _a	.9372	.1312
Total	259	3.950	.854	.0529

Note. Means with the same subscripts differ significantly in the Tukey HSD comparison. All mean scores (M) indicate lack of agreement with the code function.

Table 16

'Need for a Code of Ethics' by Respondent Views About 'Code Being as Important for Adult Education as Other Professions'

<u>Source</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p value</u>
Between Groups	2	115.3357	57.6678	91.4527	.0000
Within Groups	254	160.1662	.6306		
Total	256	275.5019			

<u>Group</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>MSE</u>
1. Yes	188	1.7447 _a	.8069	.0588
2. No	18	3.8333 _{a-b}	.7852	.1852
3. Not Sure	51	2.9608 _{a-b}	.7473	.1046
Total	257	2.1323	1.0374	.0647

Note. Means with the same subscripts differ significantly in the Tukey HSD comparison. The lower the mean score (M) the greater the agreement with the code function.

As Tables 9 to 16 indicate those respondents who agreed with the following statements about a code of ethics,

'gives the profession integrity or credibility'

‘contributes to the identification of the profession’

‘instructs practitioner about what is good practice’

‘ensures clients that professional services are rendered with high standards’

‘is as important as a code of ethics for practitioners in law, medicine and other professions’

were more likely to respond “yes” to the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education. Those not agreeing with these statements were more likely to respond “no” or “not sure” to the need for a code. Additionally, those respondents not agreeing with two of the above statements (‘ensures clients that professional services are rendered with high standards’ and ‘is as important as a code of ethics for practitioners in law, medicine and other professions’) were more likely to respond “no” than “not sure”.

Those respondents who agreed with the statement ‘a code of ethics influences people to restrain themselves from engaging in unethical practices’ were more likely to agree with the need for a code. Those not agreeing with the statement were more likely to respond “no” to a code. Those respondents who disagreed with the statements, ‘a code of ethics deters government regulation of the profession’ and ‘a code of ethics places power in the hands of an elite group of professionals who control the majority of practitioners’ were more likely to respond “yes” to a code of ethics more often than those who were “unsure” about a code.

In addition to obtaining respondent beliefs about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education (Question #9), respondents were also asked to provide a brief explanation of their “yes”, “no” or “not sure” responses. A total of 188 of the 261 respondents chose to complete this question and provided various reasons for their belief about a code of ethics. Of the 188 respondents, 135 provided reasons in support of a code, thirteen respondents provided

reasons for not supporting a code and 40 respondents provided reasons for feeling unsure about the need for a code of ethics.

The most frequently cited reason (n = 29) for respondents answering “yes” to a code of ethics was that a code acts as a guideline or reference point for acceptable behaviour and ethical decision making. The following examples reflect this general theme across all practitioner groups:

- *I think it is important for any profession to have a code of ethics which states the principles and values to guide practitioners. A code sets boundaries for acceptable ethical and professional behavior.*
- *A code of ethics provides a guideline to follow and adds professionalism to the industry.*
- *Public declarations such as a code of ethics enhances the professionalization of the field and provides an important frame of reference for our behavior.*
- *Guidelines are helpful and can be used as a basis for decision making by both teachers and administrators.*
- *A set of guidelines is definitely needed in this field to assist practitioners in making decisions about what is right or wrong. Guidelines can also assist instructors in navigating the choppy waters of Human Rights, Freedom of Information, etc.*

Nineteen respondents answered this question by noting that the primary focus of any code of ethics for the field of adult education should be the learners/clients. This theme comprised the second most frequently cited reason in support of a code. The following examples, reflective of all practitioner groups demonstrate this common theme:

- *A code of ethics should assure that each student is treated equally and fairly.*
- *A code of ethics should be essential for all fields of work when dealing with peoples lives are involved.*
- *I believe we owe the learner a standard of conduct that allows them to learn in an atmosphere of honesty and integrity.*

Three additional themes, each with equal numbers of responses (n = 10) comprised the next most frequently cited reasons for a code. These themes included: a code deters unethical behaviour; a code enhances the credibility of the profession; and a code increases practitioner accountability and professionalism. Related to the above three themes, fifteen respondents generally referenced the statements in question # 8 (strength of agreement with the functions of a code of ethics) to support their beliefs about a code of ethics. Those comments included such statements as “for most of the reasons listed in question eight,” and “my ‘strongly agree’ ideas pretty much sum it up.”

Seven respondents highlighted the value of a published code of ethics in their response to this question. Several practitioners noted that such a code would be valuable for the education of new practitioners and the orientation of new employees. One adult basic educator wrote: “I think a published code of ethics arrived at through broad consensus in the field would be a real advantage for guiding existing adult educators as well as an educational for newer professionals”.

Six respondents addressed the value of the “process” of developing a code of ethics. One adult basic educator wrote:

- *The process of creating a code of ethics is probably more beneficial than the end result. A code of ethics is only useful if people engage in dialogue re: the relationship of ethics to practice. Codes and rules won't change people, critical thinking does.*

A continuing education administrator noted that “staff will take ownership of the code which they participate in developing. A code can also be a good consensus building tool”.

Seven respondents, although they answered “yes” to the question of the need for a code of ethics, qualified their response with comments. One continuing educator expressed “although I believe there should be a code of ethics, I'm not sure how it could be established and then communicated to all the various kinds of educators/trainers in the field”. A training design

practitioner wrote, "I believe there should be a code of ethics, however, if one does not have a personal code of ethics that is equal to or beyond the organizational code of ethics, it is meaningless".

A number of additional comments and reasons for a code of ethics were also noted by respondents. These included: general statements focusing on the desirability of a code, the benefits of a code for all involved and the belief that a code would provide a foundation for good practice.

The primary reasons for respondents answering "no" to a code of ethics for the field of adult education included beliefs that (a) regulation or legislation is already established that addresses many ethical issues, (b) the diversity of the field of adult education precludes applicability of a general code to all settings, and (c) the existence of a code of ethics does not ensure ethical practice. The following examples reflect those reasons:

- *I don't really see a pressing need for a code of ethics. Most of the issues would be controlled by institutions/unions/boards/better business bureaus.*
- *Enough already! Regulation abounds.*
- *The field of adult education is huge and varied. I doubt any general code of ethics could be devised that would apply to such diversity.*
- *I believe people who enter this field generally have a high degree of internalized moral values so they don't need a code. For those who don't have values no code will assure ethical professional practice.*

Respondents who indicated they were "not sure" about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education provided a variety of reasons for their hesitancy. The most frequently documented theme (n = 7) supporting this response was the concern for the content of a code and its intended use. One training consultant wrote:

- *I would like to see the content. It may or may not be useful depending on the wording, intended uses, enforcement policy etc. In general it would be helpful to increase practitioner's awareness of ethical behavior. The introduction of a code would have to be accompanied by lots of scenarios and discussion. Its primary benefit would be as an educational tool rather than a regulatory hammer.*

A continuing education administrator expressed the following belief:

- *The specific content of a code would determine a more specific answer. If a code protects the student/learner, I would say yes. If the code only protects the interests of the adult educator, I would give a definite no. Protection of an inept educator at the expense of students/learners absolutely angers one.*

More than 50% of the “not sure” responses ($n = 23$) also reflected similar reasons to those given for the “no” response and included the diversity of the field issue, the non-guarantee of ethical behavior and questioning the need for a code when codes, regulations and institutional policies currently exist in practice settings.

Other additional reasons given for “not sure” responses included: not having given the question much thought, acknowledging the existence of arguments in the literature both for and against a code for the field and feelings that a code of ethics is meaningless without enforcement.

The relationship between respondent beliefs about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education (“yes”, “no”, “not sure”) and how they responded to a number of other questions was also examined in this study. Cross-tabulations using the chi-square test for significance were carried out and included the following items: demographic variables (primary role, years worked in the field, highest degree/diploma held, gender, age and practitioner group affiliation), existence of a code of ethics to guide professional practice, and presently operating under a code of ethics. Only one demographic variable (primary role of current position), indicated a significance difference in how individuals responded to the question about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education ($p = .026$). Teacher/Trainers were more likely to

respond positively to the need for a code while Manager/Administrators were more likely to be unsure of the need (refer to Table 17).

Table 17

'Need for a Code of Ethics' by 'Primary Role' of Respondents

<u>Primary Role</u>	<u>Need for a Code</u>			Row Total
	Yes	No	Not Sure	
Manager/Admin.	76 (83.6) [-2.1]	8 (8.0) [.0]	31 (23.4) [2.3]	115 44.2%
Teacher/Trainer	60 (52.3) [2.4]	2 (5.0) [-1.6]	10 (14.7) [-1.6]	72 27.7%
Consultant	20 (24.0) [-1.7]	5 (2.3) [.2]	8 (6.7) [.6]	33 12.7%
Other	33 (29.1) [1.5]	3 (2.8) [.2]	4 (8.2) [-1.8]	40 15.4%
Column Total	189 72.7%	18 6.9%	53 20.4%	260 100.0%

Missing Observations: 1

$$X^2 = 14.322, df = 6, p = .026$$

In applying the chi-square test, the 'primary role' variable required the combining of categories. As noted in Chapter Three, there must be a sufficient number of responses in each cell otherwise the assumptions and approximations inherent in the chi-square test may breakdown.

When the chi-square test was applied to the remaining two items (knowing of the existence of a code and presently operating under a code of ethics), a significant difference was

noted among respondents in both cases. Table 18 indicates that those who knew of the existence of a code of ethics to guide their professional practice were more likely to believe that there should be a code of ethics for the field of adult education. Those who did not know of the existence of a code felt less positively about a code for adult education and were more likely to answer “not sure” to question # 9 on the need for a code of ethics for the field ($p = .000$). Table 19 indicates that those who are presently operating under a code of ethics believed that there should be a code for the field of adult education. Those respondents who were not currently operating under a code of ethics more often responded “no” or “not sure”.

Table 18

‘Need for a Code of Ethics’ by Respondents ‘Knowing of the Existence of a Code’

<u>Existence of a Code</u>	<u>Need for a Code</u>			Row Total
	Yes	No	Not Sure	
Yes	90 (76.3) [3.9]	5 (7.3) [-1.1]	10 (21.4) [-3.6]	105 40.4%
No	99 (112.7) [-3.9]	13 (10.7) [-1.1]	43 (31.6) [3.6]	155 59.6%
Column Total	189 72.7%	18 6.9%	53 20.4%	260 100.0%

Missing Observations: 1

$$X^2 = 15.488, df = 2, p = .000$$

Table 19

'Need for a Code of Ethics' by Respondents 'Presently Operating Under a Code'

<u>Operating Under a Code</u>	<u>Need for a Code</u>			Row Total
	Yes	No	Not Sure	
Yes	105 (93.9) [3.1]	5 (9.0) [-2]	19 (26.1) [-2.2]	129 50.2%
No	82 (93.1) [-3.1]	13 (9.0) [2.0]	33 (25.9) [2.2]	128 49.8%
Column Total	187 72.8%	18 7.0%	52 20.2%	257 100.0%

Missing Observations: 4

$$X^2 = 10.149, df = 2, p = .006$$

Issues a Code of Ethics Should Address

Another research question this study endeavored to answer was: What issues should a code of ethics address? This question was asked only of those respondents who answered "yes" or "not sure" to the question concerning their beliefs about a code of ethics for the field of adult education. A listing of twelve potential issues that a code might address in addition to an "other" category was provided. Instructions to respondents directed them to "check all that apply". Refer to Table 20 for a detailed summary of the frequency of issues identified.

Table 20

Frequency of Issues a Code of Ethics Should Include

Issue	Frequency
Client Confidentiality	212
Treatment of the Learner	198
Conflicts of Interest	181
Needs of the Learner	164
Honesty in Advertising	153
Relationship between Organization and Adult Educator	152
Credentials	129
Purpose of Education/Training	125
Copyright Infringements	121
Professional Development	120
Misuse of Funds	116
Program Fees	53
Other	17

Three of the four most frequently cited issues a code of ethics should address were directly related to “the learner”. Confidentiality, treatment of the learner and needs of the learner were identified most frequently. One issue not included in the list of potential issues a code might address was “relationship between the learner and adult educator”. This issue was inadvertently omitted by me from McDonald’s original questionnaire. Seventeen respondents also checked the “other” category and indicated that a variety of additional issues should also be included in a code of ethics. Grouped into categories, these were: professional behavior between colleagues, relationship between adult educator and funding agency, honesty/ integrity/ accountability of adult educator, relationship between adult educator and learner, learner responsibility, sexism/classism, “good practice” statements and program delivery guidelines.

Results of the application of the chi-square test to this data showed there were significant differences between how the three practitioner groups felt about four of the issues a code should address. These issues were: copyright infringements, credentials, needs of the learner and treatment of the learner. Refer to Tables 21 to 24 for a summary of cross-tabulations between issues a code should address and practitioner group.

Table 21

'Copyright Infringements' by 'Practitioner Group'

<u>Copyright Infringements</u>	<u>Practitioner Group</u>			Row Total
	CE	T&D	ABE	
Yes	29 (34.4) [-1.6]	55 (39.5) [4.3]	37 (7.1) [-2.7]	121 50.6%
No	39 (33.6) [1.6]	23 (38.5) [-4.3]	56 (45.9) [2.7]	118 49.4%
Column Total	68 28.5%	78 32.6%	93 38.9%	239 100.0%

Missing Observations: 22

$$X^2 = 18.445, df = 2, p = .000$$

Table 22

'Credentials' by 'Practitioner Group'

<u>Credentials</u>	<u>Practitioner Group</u>			Row Total
	CE	T&D	ABE	
Yes	33 (36.7) [-1.1]	51 (42.1) [2.5]	45 (50.2) [-1.4]	129 54.0%
No	35 (31.3) [1.1]	27 (35.9) [-2.5]	48 (42.8) [1.4]	110 46.0%
Column Total	68 28.5%	78 32.6%	93 38.9%	239 100.0%

Missing Observations: 22

$$X^2 = 6.068, df = 2, p = .048$$

Table 23

'Needs of the Learner' by 'Practitioner Group'

<u>Needs of Learner</u>	<u>Practitioner Group</u>			Row Total
	CE	T&D	ABE	
Yes	49 (46.7) [.7]	45 (53.5) [-2.5]	70 (63.8) [1.8]	164 68.6%
No	19 (21.3) [-.7]	33 (24.5) [2.5]	23 (29.2) [-1.8]	75 31.4%
Column Total	68 28.5%	78 32.6%	93 38.9%	239 100.0%

Missing Observations: 22

$$X^2 = 6.608, df = 2, p = .037$$

Table 24

'Treatment of the Learner' by 'Practitioner Group'

<u>Treatment of Learner</u>	<u>Practitioner Group</u>			Row Total
	CE	T&D	ABE	
Yes	56 (56.3) [-.1]	57 (64.6) [-2.8]	85 (77.0) [2.8]	198 82.8%
No	12 (11.7) [.1]	21 (13.4) [2.8]	8 (16.0) [-2.8]	41 17.2%
Column Total	68 28.5%	78 32.6%	93 38.9%	239 100.0%

Missing Observations: 22

$$X^2 = 10.035, df = 2, p = .006$$

Copyright infringements and credentials were two issues the training and development practitioners particularly felt should be addressed in a code of ethics. This group also felt that the needs of the learner were not as important an issue to address as did the other groups. Treatment of the learner was an issue that adult basic educators felt should be addressed more than did the other practitioner groups.

Creation, Dissemination, Regulation and Enforcement of a Code

The remaining two questions in the second section of the questionnaire concerning respondents experiences and beliefs about codes of ethics addressed the following research questions:

- Who should be involved in the creation and dissemination of a code of ethics in adult education ?

- What are adult educators beliefs about the regulating function of code of ethics?
- Who should be responsible for enforcing a code of ethics in adult education ?

In order to examine practitioner views about who should create and disseminate a code of ethics, respondents were asked to select one choice from a list of five provided. Only respondents who answered “yes” or “not sure” to question # 9 about whether there should be a code of ethics for the field of adult education were to answer this question. The professional association was the most frequently indicated organization that practitioners believed should create and disseminate a code of ethics. Refer to Table 25 for a detailed listing of frequencies and percentages.

Table 25

Distribution of Respondents by ‘What Body Should Create and Disseminate the Code’

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Professional Association	150	63.6
Accrediting Agency	12	5.1
Employing Organization	30	12.7
Provincial Government	11	4.7
Other	33	13.9
Missing Cases	7	-
N/A	18	-
TOTAL	261	100.0

The second most frequently cited response to who should create and disseminate a code of ethics was the “other” category. These responses were further grouped into sub categories. Of the 33 “other” responses, 16 indicated that two specific organizations should work in

collaboration. The most frequent combinations identified were the professional association and the employing organization. Seven respondents indicated that all of the organizations identified in the question should be involved in creating and disseminating a code. Six respondents indicated that a cross section of all adult educators should be involved due to the diversity of the field. Two respondents felt that organizations representing learner interests should create the code while a further two respondents indicated that a code should be created by individual practitioners.

This question was cross-tabulated with practitioner group affiliation to determine if there were any differences between the three groups in who they felt should create and disseminate a code. In applying the chi-square test, no significant differences were found between the three practitioner groups and who they felt should create and disseminate a code of ethics.

The final question on the second section of the questionnaire examined practitioner's views about code regulation and enforcement. Again, this question was asked only of those respondents who had answered "yes" or "not sure" to question # 9 about whether there should be a code of ethics for the field of adult education. Thirty-nine percent of respondents answering this question indicated that a code of ethics should have a regulating function, while thirty-seven percent were "unsure" about enforcement provisions of a code of ethics (refer to Table 26).

This question was also cross-tabulated with practitioner group affiliation to determine if there were any differences between the three groups in their views about the regulating function of a code (refer to Table 27).

Table 26

Distribution of Respondents by Belief About the 'Regulating Function of a Code of Ethics'

<u>Regulating Function</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	95	39.3
No	57	23.6
Not Sure	90	37.1
Missing Case	1	-
N/A	18	-
TOTAL	261	100.0

Table 27

'Regulating Function of Code of Ethics' by 'Practitioner Group'

<u>Code Regulation</u>	<u>Practitioner Group</u>			<u>Row Total</u>
	<u>CE</u>	<u>T&D</u>	<u>ABE</u>	
Yes	23 (26.7) [-1.1]	25 (31.4) [-1.8]	47 (36.9) [2.7]	95 39.3%
No	21 (16.0) [1.7]	23 (18.8) [1.3]	13 (22.1) [-2.8]	57 23.6%
Not Sure	24 (25.3) [-.4]	32 (29.8) [.6]	34 (35.0) [-.3]	90 37.2%
Column Total	68 28.1%	80 33.1%	94 38.8%	242 100.0%

Missing Observations: 19

$$X^2 = 11.084, df = 4, p = .025$$

A statistically significant difference was found between the practitioner groups and their views about the regulating function of a code. Adult basic educators felt more positively about the regulating function than did the other two practitioner groups.

The second part of this question was asked only of those respondents who had answered “yes” to the first part of the question and requested that respondents indicate who should have primary responsibility for code enforcement. The professional association was the most frequently cited response with more than one half of the respondents indicating this choice (refer to Table 28).

Table 28

Distribution of Respondents by 'Who Should Have Primary Responsibility for Enforcing Code'

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Professional Association	55	55.5
Accrediting Agency	9	9.1
Employing Organization	20	20.2
Provincial Government	6	6.1
Other	9	9.1
Missing Cases	2	-
N/A	160	-
TOTAL	261	100.0

This item was also cross-tabulated with practitioner group affiliation to determine differences between groups in their views about who should enforce a code. No statistically significant differences were found between the three practitioner groups.

Ethical Issues/ Concerns/Dilemmas

The final section of the questionnaire focused on professional practice situations involving ethical issues, concerns or dilemmas. Respondents were asked to share an example of an issue, concern or dilemma from their practice setting that raised questions for them about the proper, right, fair or responsible thing to do within the context of decisions or actions that affected other people. The data gathered through this question was analyzed using simple frequency counts of those respondents providing an example and those who did not. The chi-square test was then used to measure the statistical significance of the relationship between demographic information and those providing or not providing an example. The chi-square test was also used to measure the statistical significance of the relationship between respondent beliefs about the need for a code of ethics and respondent citing of ethical issues. Finally, the ethical issues were categorized into major domains.

Forty-five percent of respondents to the questionnaire did not provide an example of an ethical issue/concern/dilemma. Included in this group were those where the respondent had written NA, had left the question blank, or had indicated with a written statement that they could not think of an example. Fifty-five percent of adult education practitioners responding to the questionnaire cited examples (experienced or observed) of situations that were of ethical concern. Of the 143 respondents, 13 provided more than one example. Ten of these respondents provided two examples while three respondents provided three examples each.

The six demographic variables were cross tabulated with respondent citing of ethical issues. Using the chi-square test to measure the statistical significance of the relationships, no significant differences were found between the demographic information and whether or not respondents cited examples of ethical issues. Further, no significant differences were found

between respondents beliefs about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education and the citing of ethical issues.

Content analysis was employed on respondent examples of ethical issues in order to identify categories or domains. The organizing scheme used by McDonald in the original study was applied to the data as a beginning system. As content areas emerged from the analysis, it was clear that the original domains used by McDonald generally fit the data. Additional categories were established to reflect differences in the amount and type of data obtained. This process is consistent with the need to “establish categories that arise from and make sense of specific data” (Ely, 1991, p. 145).

The number of responses to this question allowed the creation of enough categories that grouped analytically similar examples without masking differences by using too large or gross ones. Thirteen domains resulted from this categorization of ethical issues. Table 29 lists these domains and presents the frequency of ethical issues by practitioner group.

Table 29

Major Domains of Ethical Issues/Concerns/Dilemmas

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Practitioner Groups</u>			Total
	Continuing Education	Training and Development	Adult Basic Education	
Confidentiality	11	13	20	44
Learner/Adult Educator Relationship Issues	6	0	15	21
Financial Issues	6	5	5	16
Professionalism/Competence Issues	2	4	8	14
Conflicts of Interest	7	6	1	14
Evaluating Student Performance	3	3	4	10
Ownership of Instructional Material	1	7	1	9
Intra-organizational Issues	3	1	5	9
Credential Issues	2	3	2	7
Unsound Training Design	2	3	0	5
Employment Practices	1	1	2	4
Enrollment/Attendance Issues	2	0	2	4
Other	2	0	0	2
TOTAL	48	46	65	159

The most frequently cited ethical issue across all three groups of adult educators was confidentiality. Adult basic educators were primarily concerned with issues around the provision of student information to "others" (family members, funding agencies, other students/teachers) and the dilemmas that arise from students having personal difficulties (spousal abuse, criminal activity).

Training and development practitioners concerns about confidentiality also focused on the dilemma of providing student progress information to funding agencies or employers. For example, one trainer wrote:

- *I have continuous concerns for creating a "safe place" during my training programs. Dilemmas arise when, for example, the adult learner's manager or supervisor wants to know details re: the learner's comments, participation, etc. during a training program vs the learner's need to give feedback and participate fully without fear of backlash.*

Disseminating confidential information to sponsoring agencies about students was also clearly a concern for continuing educators. Similarly, continuing educators also faced dilemmas when confronted with students personal difficulties. One continuing educator wrote:

- *Occasionally adult students take you into confidence and disclose very confidential information about him/herself. Some of this information often borders on criminal liability. This privileged information can become a "hot potato" if not handled with great sensitivity and insight.*

The second most frequently cited ethical issue included those around student/adult educator relationships. This domain focused on examples where respondents experienced , were aware of, or had witnessed, student complaints about faculty, power imbalances, role conflicts (educator vs counselor) and socially intimate instructor/student relationships. Adult basic educators were particularly concerned with these issues. One respondent noted--"I have a lot of

power--I decide what time the class goes to, I have the ability to convince with words, etc. Do I discuss in class only reading material with which I agree?"

Another adult basic educator expressed concerns about supporting student complaints and provided this scenario:

- *It is important to debrief someone who is upset and validate them as a person. Yet the first step in our agency is to refer them back to the person they have difficulty with. Students are often reluctant to discuss their concerns with the instructor for fear of reprisal and therefore may choose to avoid issues or drop out.*

Another asked these questions: "Does a colleague listen to, sympathize with, a student who complains about the conduct and professional behavior of an instructor? Does the colleague talk to the teacher as an ambassador for the student?"

Both continuing educators and adult basic educators expressed specific concerns about socially intimate student/teacher relationships. The nature of these concerns centered on such factors as "how friendly should teachers behave with students", "to date or not to date", "how much extracurricular socialization is acceptable" and finally the dilemma of being aware of student/teacher sexual relationships. Detailed scenarios spoke eloquently to the dilemmas of respondents in this particular domain.

Financial issues were the next most frequently cited category and included examples involving program fees, allocation of resources and billing clients. Continuing educators and adult basic educators were particularly concerned with program prioritization. One continuing education administrator provided the following example:

- *In budget cutting exercises, the programs which are least cost efficient, service the smallest number of students etc., are usually those which support students with disabilities and first nations students. What are the ethical considerations when making decisions which affect equity, given the high demand and outcomes for other parts of the population??*

Billing and pricing issues were of particular concern to trainers/developers. One trainer noted "in our business, ethical issues are generally around client billing--what is fair to bill, what is not--is it fair to bill clients for travel time--do we bill clients full price or at some discount".

Another trainer provided the following example:

- *Certain corporations put a lot of pressure on to have you reduce prices. In my view, I find it difficult to do that unless I make the same price concession to all other clients. I have been able to resist this pressure, but it has meant forsaking business in some instances.*

Professionalism/competence issues comprised the fourth most frequently cited category. This domain focused on examples of professional behavior observed by respondents, situations involving one's professional integrity and questions regarding competence to practice. Adult basic educators were particularly concerned with situations involving instructors commenting negatively about students--"referring to students as stupid" and instructors commenting negatively about colleagues to their students. Adult basic educators were also concerned about instructor competence. One respondent asked the following questions: "What do you do if a fellow teacher doesn't seem to care about students? How do you deal with someone who doesn't seem too committed to doing a good job?"

Issues around professional integrity were of particular concern to training and development practitioners. One consultant gave the following example:

- *I was asked to do an organizational review. The underlying intent was that I would recommend firing an individual. I made it clear that as a professional I would not cater to their demands but would maintain objectivity. Only by doing this was I able to assure the review participants of my objectivity and the general professionalism of my review.*

Another practitioner identified a situation involving maintaining one's professional integrity:

- *Taking on assignment that others could do easily, but I would have to spend more development time on because it is not in an area of current expertise - should I take it? - should I bid for the time it takes for me to get up to speed? - should I recommend a specialist, if so, should I charge a commission - how can I improve my own capability without taking on projects I am currently only partially able to do?*

Conflict of interest was the fifth most frequently cited ethical issue for respondents. Across all three groups, conflicts of interest most often involved individuals who have a training or consulting business as a second income. One respondent was aware of “public system employees profiting from tutoring students in their class privately”. Another commented “colleges have to compete with their own faculty who are moonlighting as consultants and trainers”. Yet another wrote: “a colleague received training paid for by the employer and then contracted their services on a private basis to external clients ... a case of an employer training competitors!”

Examples of the perception of conflict of interest were also included in this domain. Most often these issues centered on the difficulties experienced by educators and trainers when their personal relationships with practitioners in contracting agencies (i.e. spouses) were perceived to be in conflict.

Also included in this domain were examples of “perks” for business or services provided. Training and development practitioners were primarily concerned with this issue. One respondent wrote: “who do you buy training procedures from: the company that buys you the best lunch, gives the better kick-back or supplies the best product?”

Evaluating student performance was the next most frequently cited ethical issue. Examples in this domain focused primarily on dilemmas associated with equitable standards, “bending rules” or waiving academic requirements. One continuing educator asked “whose interests will best be served?” An adult basic educator wrote: “while I believe in flexibility, I am also concerned that the students that make noises get the accommodation and the quiet ones are stuck following the

rules". Another adult basic educator posed this dilemma: "do you move someone to the next level even if they are not quite ready because if you don't they will likely quit". In contrast to these examples, one trainer provided the following situation:

- *To what extent should I penalize otherwise competent second language students whose only scholastic failing is linguistic? Am I being ethical or unethical if I fail them all but exclusively because--though they demonstrate mastery of the ideas--they cannot yet function adequately in English? ... particularly, given the family/social/economic/educational pressures they cite regarding their success in the academic area.*

The seventh most often cited category was ownership of instructional materials. Copyright permission and ownership of intellectual property issues particularly concerned the training and development practitioners. One respondent noted that "A major issue for educators at all levels is copyright infringement. Because as educators we believe in the free and open dissemination of information, we tend to justify unauthorized use of copyrighted materials!" Another respondent wrote, "Just recently I found an announcement for a professional meeting. The man who is to deliver the lecture has used my research and ideas. What do I do now? To whom do I report this act?" Yet another respondent gave the following example:

- *The hiring of subcontractors who assist in the design of programs which when finished are the property of the organization. Is it ethical for the subcontractor to take this design re-work it to some extent and sell it to another company without providing some form of compensation to original owner?*

Across the three groups of adult educators, dilemmas associated with requests by an employer to re-write or distribute course materials without copyright permission were acknowledged.

Intra-organizational issues were the next most frequently cited category and primarily involved, those practitioners employed in public institutions. Seven of the ten examples cited

relate to dilemmas; "to report or not report a colleague", How to deal with an inconsistent teaching partner when "all talks have resulted in nothing", "how to be effective and ethical at the same time when marginal instructors are protected". Within this domain, examples of compromising a personal code of ethics due to administrative decisions that may be required were also identified as ethical dilemmas.

Credentialing issues were the ninth most frequently cited category of ethical concern to respondents. Responses in this domain reflected both individual and institutional examples. Individual credentialing concerns related generally to "teachers" misrepresenting their qualifications or being awarded contracts based on reasons other than their credentials. Both continuing education and training and development practitioners documented similar feelings about the proliferation of adult education programs. One continuing education practitioner wrote:

- *There are an increasing number of people providing adult programs. Many are unaware of the dynamics of adult education and are primarily motivated by bottom line profit. There have been a number of "schools" who have been cited for poor quality of programs, misleading advertising, under or unqualified instructors as well as unethical practices.*

An instructional designer echoed similar concerns:

- *Because of high unemployment in traditional education situations and the country in general, the field of adult education has been flooded with individuals masquerading as professional adult educators, trainers, designers etc, they crank out shoddy work, cut corners and generally tarnish the image of all legitimate adult educators.*

Unsound training design was cited by five practitioners. This domain did not concern adult basic educators. Issues in this domain primarily focused on appropriateness of training. One continuing educator wrote: "I have declined to deliver training that did not clearly benefit the recipient or is clearly not the solution to a problem". A training and development practitioner gave the following example:

- *I feel that some salespeople push their products even when realizing that it won't meet the clients needs. For example, salespeople push their training courses when training won't solve the issue at hand. Often, it's not a case of needing more training, but of being told what is expected of the employee. Often employees can perform if they are aware of organizational expectations.*

In a similar example another trainer shared the following:

- *Following a request for training development--analysis showed a management/ environmental interaction was more appropriate. Training was not appropriate and would aggravate existing problems. The client requested the report and insists on training. Do you/ do you not develop? As an external consultant, I refused ... have witnessed identical situation when this training was done to the satisfaction of the client but to the detriment of the client's corporation.*

Employment practices was the next category providing ethical issues for practitioners.

This domain focused on questionable hiring practices (personal favoritism) and concerns about layoffs. One practitioner experienced the dilemma of "being asked by one's institution to engage in budget planning which inevitably limited the job security and opportunities of colleagues".

Another shared the following dilemma: "I have a dilemma in determining when to inform an employee of an impending layoff. While the collective agreement stipulates the required notification period, is it advantageous or disadvantageous for the individual to be told sooner?"

Enrollment and attendance issues were of concern to four practitioners. One practitioner wrote of "being torn between mandatory attendance for students in a certain program and their concern for the adult student who has responsibilities that often prevent full attendance". Another wrote of enrolling a student who had no hope of success in a basic literacy program. "... should she be enrolled and charged tuition knowing that the program can't help her?" Two continuing educators wrote of their dilemmas in advising students regarding "enrolling in courses to boost lagging enrollment or boost budget numbers".

The final domain, "other", included two situations that were mentioned by individual respondents and clearly did not belong in the other domains. One example (expelling a student), caused a dilemma for an educator in terms of the correctness of the action taken. The other example related to issues around offering programs that were not recognized or endorsed by a particular professional body.

Additional Comments Regarding Ethics and Codes of Ethics in Adult Education

A final question posed on the questionnaire asked adult education practitioners to feel free in making any additional comments regarding ethics and codes of ethics in adult education. Fifteen percent of respondents added additional comments. Of the 38 comments received, seven represented continuing education administration, 16 were provided by training and development practitioners and 15 were received from adult basic educators. A summary of these comments are included in this section.

The protection and needs of the learner were common themes in respondents comments.

One adult basic educator wrote:

- *I believe adult education should be a safe environment for students. No instructor should ever be allowed to contribute to a student's discomfort. There should be a fairly easy mechanism to remove incompetent or uncaring instructors.*

Another adult basic educator expressed learner centeredness with the following statement:

- *I believe codes of ethics do not regulate behavior but only describe what is deemed acceptable. In most cases they are "motherhood" statements that do not help when faced with ethical dilemma. I prefer statements of value - what is valued above all else. For example, "the needs of the learner are higher than my desire as an employee". How many would be willing to work under that?*

Diversity of the adult education field provided issues for some respondents. An adult basic educator felt “as things stand there is no clear vision of an adult education practitioner”. A private trainer experienced this issue as follows:

- *There are many people who train/educate adults (like myself) yet who do not define ourselves as "adult educators". I support that most people who do are employed in some type of public institution. I am sure that they may have very different concerns and interests than I do.*

A continuing education administrator commented as follows:

- *I believe it is important to have a code of ethics but it has to be done by the various adult education associations e.g. CAUCE, CADE, CAAE etc. Our problem is, "adult education" is very dispersed and often overlaps with other groups, associations or professions.*

Issues around code enforcement were noted by other respondents. A continuing education administrator provided the following comment, “A code of ethics has value as a set of guiding principles, however, I am concerned that enforcement by a professional body will lead to unnecessary bureaucracy and limitations on credentialing”.

A training consultant stated, “I do not believe in an enforcement body because they tend to become political and self-serving. I believe the medical and legal associations are prime examples”. Another trainer expressed that “it may be very hard to enforce more subtle ethical issues that are firstly, very hard to define”. Yet another training and development practitioner stated “too many people in power use a ‘code of ethics’ only when it suits their needs. It’s a ‘red herring’”. One adult basic educator felt that “enforcement by any group of professionals in ABE is a pipe dream--generally codes of ethics are vague and mostly not used”. Another adult basic educator wrote the following:

- *Codes of ethics tend to be like mission statements. They hang on a wall, but nobody reads them. If a code of ethics has any meaning ... it needs to become part of an organizational culture - a list of enforced rules is meaningless.*

Government legislated codes of ethics are a joke. A code of ethics must rise from the values of the people in an organization.

Two practitioners felt that some of the issues presented in the survey have already been addressed by law (copyright infringement) while another wrote, "few decisions remain outside the plethora of policies, regulations, statutes, union contracts etc".

Across all three groups of practitioners, support for a code of ethics and standards were common themes. Examples reflecting these themes follow:

- *I would like to see a code of ethics published (e.g. in a brochure) to let people know and could serve to put peer pressure on those who don't maintain high ethical standards.*
- *A code of ethics is mandatory - both those of us in the industry and our clients deserve a set of standards against which to measure quality.*
- *A code of ethics more than anything else is a gentle reminder to do the right thing as you conduct business. That is always helpful.*
- *A code of ethics for ABE in BC is absolutely essential. It instills a sense of professionalism, provides guidelines and sets a forum for the discussion of ethical issues and resolution of conflicts between professionals.*
- *We can't just take it for granted that people in the field will behave ethically. It has to be spelled out in concrete terms. All members of an organization must be involved in defining ethical conduct so that everyone agrees and owns the principles.*

A number of respondents commented that the study was interesting and a significant area of research.

Comparison of Study Results with Original Indiana Survey

In this section, responses to a number of key survey questions will be presented with the comparable data from the original study by McDonald. Demographic comparisons will be presented first followed by other selected key findings. For clarity and ease of reading, results

from the McDonald study will be presented as Indiana data while results which were obtained in this study in British Columbia will be presented as B.C. data.

Table 30 summarizes the proportion of respondents who were members of each type of organization included in the samples. The relative proportions of respondents from the three types of organizations were more evenly distributed in the B.C. sample than in the Indiana sample. Continuing education administration was better represented among respondents to the B.C. survey than in the Indiana survey.

Table 30

Respondents by Organizational Membership

Type of Organization	<u>Indiana Survey</u>		<u>B.C. Survey</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%
Adult basic education/literacy	113	45.4	97	37.2
Continuing education administration	23	9.2	71	27.2
Training and development	113	45.4	93	35.6
TOTALS	249	100.0	261	100.0

Of the 255 respondents in B.C. who reported their gender, 58% were female and 42% were male. Of the 229 respondents in Indiana who reported their gender, 59% were female and 41% were male. Of the 260 respondents in B.C. who reported the primary role of their current position, 44% considered their primary role as being a manager/administrator. Of the 246 respondents in Indiana who reported the primary responsibility of their job, 43% considered their primary responsibility as being an instructor or trainer. Of the 261 respondents in B.C. who

reported their highest degree/diploma held, the majority (39%) held a Baccalaureate Degree. Of the 248 respondents in Indiana who reported their highest degree/diploma held, the majority (45%) held a Master's Degree. In both studies, the largest percentage of respondents (53% in B.C., 37% in Indiana) indicated they had worked in the field of adult education for over ten years.

In the B.C. study, 55% of respondents cited examples of situations that created ethical issues concerns or dilemmas for them. The most frequently cited issues were confidentiality concerns, and learner/adult educator relationship issues. In the Indiana study, 30% of respondents cited an example of a situation that had created an ethical dilemma in their practice. The most frequently cited dilemmas were confidentiality concerns and ownership of instructional materials. Another noteworthy finding from the Indiana study was that 52% of the individuals surveyed answered "yes" to the question, "Do you believe there should be a code of ethics for you as an adult educator?" In the B.C. study, 73% of respondents answered "yes" to a similar question, "Do you believe there should be a code of ethics for the field of adult education?" Although the wording of the B.C. question was somewhat broader than the Indiana question, the magnitude of the "yes" responses is noted with interest. A further noteworthy finding is the response to the question, "Should a code of ethics for adult education practitioners have a regulating function?" In both the B.C. and Indiana studies, it was not clear to adult educators whether a code of ethics should have a regulating function. Of the 242 respondents in B.C. answering this question, 39% responded "yes" while 37% responded "not sure". Of the 199 respondents in Indiana answering this question, 36% responded "yes" while 43% responded "not sure". A further question of interest asked: "Are you presently operating under a code of ethics?" Of the 257 respondents in B.C. answering this question, 50% reported they were currently operating under a code. Of the

229 respondents in Indiana answering this question, 37% reported they were currently operating under a code.

Practitioner beliefs about the functions of a code of ethics obtained through using a Likert Scale provided very similar results in both the Indiana and B.C. studies. Other than variations in percentages, respondents in both studies generally indicated an overall positive view about the functions of codes of ethics.

Chi-square tests applied to cross-tabulated items in both studies provide both similarities and differences in statistical significance. When demographic variables were cross-tabulated with respondent beliefs about the need for a code of ethics and the chi-square test was applied, the only variable that indicated a significant difference in the Indiana study was respondent education ($p = .045$). Individuals with less than a baccalaureate degree were more likely to respond positively to the need for a code of ethics. The only demographic variable that indicated a significant difference in the B.C. study was the primary role of respondents current position ($p = .026$).

Teacher/Trainers were more likely to respond positively to the need for a code of ethics.

Manager/Administrators were more likely to be unsure of the need for a code.

When the chi-square tests were applied to respondents knowing of the existence of a code and whether they were currently operating under a code of ethics and how they answered the question on their beliefs about the need for a code of ethics, both the Indiana and B.C. studies indicated similar results. Those respondents who knew of the existence of a code of ethics to guide their professional practice were more likely to believe that there should be a code of ethics (Indiana results, $p = .004$; B.C. results, $p = .000$). Similarly, those respondents who were presently operating under a code believed there should be a code of ethics for adult educators (Indiana results, $p = .000$; B.C. results, $p = .006$).

When the chi-square tests were applied to respondents citing of issues that a code should address and their practitioner group affiliation, both studies indicated similarities and differences. In both studies, adult basic educators felt that treatment of the learner and the needs of the learner should be addressed more than did the other practitioner groups. In both studies, copyright infringement was an issue that the training and development practitioners felt should be addressed more than did the other groups. In the B.C. study, training and development practitioners felt that the issue of credentials should be addressed more than did the other practitioner groups. In the Indiana study, honesty in advertising and conflicts of interest were issues that the training and development practitioners felt should be addressed more than did the other groups. Table 31 provides a summary comparison of significant values for issues a code of ethics should address by practitioner group.

Table 31

Summary of Significant Values: Issues a Code Should Address by Practitioner Group

Issue / Practitioner Group	<u>Significant Values</u>	
	Indiana	B.C.
Needs of learner (ABE)	p = .002	p = .037
Treatment of learner (ABE)	p = .025	p = .006
Copyright infringement (T&D)	p = .000	p = .000
Credentials (T&D)	NS	p = .048
Honesty in advertising (T&D)	p = .011	NS
Conflicts of interest (T&D)	p = .001	NS

Note. NS = not significant

In response to the questions related to the creation, regulation and enforcement of a code of ethics, differences were evident in the study results. However, although differences in selected results were noted, it was the adult basic educator group that was consistently responsible for the statistically significant differences in both studies. In the Indiana study, when the chi-square tests were applied to responses on who should create and disseminate a code by group affiliation, adult basic educators believed that a code should be developed by one's employing organization more than did the other two groups ($p = .014$). No significant difference was noted in the B.C. study.

In the B.C. study, when statistical testing was applied to responses on the need for a regulating function for a code of ethics and practitioner group affiliation, a statistically significant difference was found. Adult basic educators felt more positively about the regulating function than did the other two practitioner groups ($p = .025$). No significant difference was noted in the Indiana study.

In the Indiana study, statistical testing applied to responses on code enforcement and group affiliation indicate a statistically significant difference. Adult basic educators believed that the employing organization should be responsible for code enforcement more than did the other groups ($p = .003$). No significant differences were noted in the B.C. study.

When the demographic variables were cross tabulated with the citing of ethical issues and the chi-square tests applied, no significant differences were found in the B.C. study between the demographic information and whether or not respondents cited examples of ethical issues. In the Indiana study, statistically significant differences were found related to two of the variables. Related to job responsibility, consultants were more likely and instructors were less likely to cite an ethical dilemma ($p = .049$). Related to group affiliation, training and development practitioners and continuing education administrators cited more ethical dilemmas than expected while adult

basic educators were less likely than statistically expected to cite situations that involved ethical dilemmas ($p = .008$).

Analysis of variance, employed to examine how respondents felt about the function of codes of ethics and whether they believed there should be a code of ethics for the field of adult education indicated similar results in both the Indiana and B.C. studies. Seven of the eight statements regarding the function of codes of ethics were statistically significant in both study's data sets. Probability values are essentially comparable in all seven statements. In the Indiana study, no significant relationship was found between the statement related to codes placing power in the hands of elite professionals who control the majority of professionals and how participants responded to the need for a code of ethics. In the B.C. study, a significant relationship was found ($p = .002$). Those individuals who disagreed with the statement were likely to respond "yes" or "not sure" to the notion of a code of ethics for the field of adult education.

The comparative results addressed in this section will be further explored in Chapter Five. Relevant similarities and differences will be included within the context of each study finding and related discussion.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of this study on practice ethics in adult education. The findings are presented in two sections. The first section addresses response bias and representation of the sample. The second section presents the findings regarding the research questions asked in this study. Since the study is an approximate replication of McDonald's 1991 study, relevant similarities and differences in study results will also be included in the discussion of each finding.

Response Bias and Representation of the Study Sample

Response bias in this study was addressed using a wave analysis procedure. Cross tabulations and chi-square tests of significance were used to determine differences between early and later respondents. Although a difference was found in one of the six demographic variables examined, thus potentially demonstrating response bias, these results must be viewed in light of a number of considerations. First, given the general lack of demonstrated differences between early and later respondents (one significant finding from the numerous variables examined), a stronger case for absence of response bias could be considered. Secondly, perhaps a more inclusive list of variables rather than solely using the demographic variables and closed-ended questionnaire items may have demonstrated different results. Thirdly, the application of the wave analysis procedure based on the potential differences between a first (early return) and second (later return) mail out may be considered too premature to be viewed as a "late responding". A further mail out (representing a "third wave") to survey non-respondents, may have identified a more typical "late

responder” as a basis for addressing response bias. Due to cost and time constraints, a third follow up mailing of the questionnaire was not included in the study. Lastly, although procedures such as wave analysis may assist the researcher to make a strong case for the presence or absence of response bias, there is no guarantee that non-respondents would have been comparable on the variables that were measured in the study (Norman & Streiner, 1997, p. ix). The fact that nonrespondents did not complete and return the survey questionnaire implies that they were different on at least one dimension, namely the inclination to participate in the study. Hence it is recognized that some response bias may exist.

Research Questions and Discussion

For comparative purposes, the format used to present the eight major findings produced in this study is replicated from McDonald’s original 1991 study. Each major finding, including any related or associated findings will be reviewed and discussed with relevant comparative comments from the McDonald study as appropriate. As noted in Chapter Four, findings from McDonald’s study will be discussed as Indiana results while findings from the current study will be discussed as B.C. results.

The major research question asked in this study focused on adult education practitioners’ views about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education. This finding, including five related findings, is addressed first.

1. The majority of adult educators surveyed believe there should be a code of ethics for the field of adult education. Seventy-three percent of respondents surveyed believed there should be a code of ethics, while only seven percent did not feel there should be a code and twenty percent were not sure about the need.

Related findings:

(a) Respondents offered a number of reasons for their beliefs about the need for a code of ethics. The two most common themes included: a code acts as a guideline or reference point for acceptable behaviour and ethical decision making; and a code could help to ensure that students and clients are treated equally and fairly. Three additional themes comprised the next most frequently cited reasons in support of a code of ethics. These themes included: a code helps to deter unethical behavior; a code enhances the credibility of the profession; and a code increases professionalism and accountability.

(b) The primary reasons for respondents believing there should not be a code included: regulation or legislation is already established that addresses many ethical issues; the diversity of the field of adult education precludes applicability to all settings; and the existence of a code of ethics does not ensure ethical practice.

(c) Reasons for respondents feeling unsure about the need for a code included: concerns about content and construction; issues related to the diversity of the adult education field; the concern that codes of ethics do not guarantee ethical behaviour; and issues with code enforcement. Most of the reasons given by respondents, both in support of a code or questioning the need for a code, clearly reflect the perspectives documented in the literature regarding the purposes, functions and issues related to codes of ethics.

(d) A significant relationship was noted among respondents who knew of the existence of a code of ethics to guide their practice and their belief that there should be a code of ethics. Those who did not know of the existence of a code were more likely to feel unsure about the need for a code of ethics for the field.

(e) Those respondents who were presently operating under a code of ethics believed that

there should be a code of ethics. Those who were not currently operating under a code more often believed that there should not be a code of ethics for the field or were unsure. These findings were statistically significant.

Discussion: The results of the B.C. study clearly confirm positive practitioner attitudes toward codes of ethics and support the findings reported in the Indiana study. Although this is not surprising, since the respondents in both studies were from roughly equivalent practitioner groups, the magnitude of the B.C. response was surprising (an increase from 52% in the Indiana study). Certainly in the five years since the Indiana study the visibility of "ethics and ethical issues" has increased in society generally. As Leskinen (1993) has noted, "hardly a day goes by without news about unethical behaviour by our elected officials, our fellow educators, business leaders and ordinary citizens" (p. 6). This increased general awareness may stimulate adult educators to reflect on the issues and dilemmas that confront them in their everyday practice. Within this context of practice, the potential benefits of codes of ethics may be reinforced. The strength of the B.C. response may also be the result of greater experience with codes of ethics. While 34% of the Indiana respondents indicated that they currently operate under a code of ethics, 50% of the B.C. respondents indicated this status. (See also finding number four).

While the majority of adult educators in both studies believed in the need for a code of ethics, the higher percentage of "not sure" responses in the Indiana study (28%) prompted McDonald to question whether there was a clear mandate from practitioners for a code of ethics. Given the strong positive response to the need for a code of ethics in the B.C. study, a clearer mandate may be implied.

Similar findings in both studies were evident in the reasons given for beliefs about the need for a code of ethics. Additionally, as in the B.C. study, the Indiana study demonstrated similar

significant differences regarding respondents knowing of the existence of a code and currently operating under a code and their beliefs about the need for a code of ethics. As McDonald (1991) notes "this research data suggests that those individuals responding "no" or "not sure" to a code of ethics may be more inclined to feel positive about a code if they gain knowledge and experience with codes" (p. 114).

2. The majority of adult educators surveyed cited examples of ethical issues/dilemmas from their practice settings. Fifty-five percent of respondents recorded situations involving ethical practice issues or dilemmas. No statistically significant differences were found between the three practitioner groups and the citing of ethical issues/dilemmas.

Discussion: The response to this question was particularly noteworthy considering the 30% response rate obtained in the Indiana study. There may be several reasons for the B.C. response. Instrumentation changes made to McDonald's original questionnaire may have contributed to the increased response. Broadening the open ended question to include "issues/concerns/dilemmas" and including a functional definition may have provided more clarity and less ambiguity. As McDonald notes in her discussion of this finding, the Indiana respondents may have interpreted the single term "dilemma" more narrowly than was anticipated, thus providing fewer examples than they may have, given a more broadly based question. The placement of the open-ended question as the final question on the B.C. survey may have influenced the greater response rate. Perhaps the Indiana participants felt uneasy with an open-ended question requiring documentation of personal encounters with ethical dilemmas being placed at the front of the questionnaire. Simply reducing the number of open-ended questions from McDonald's original questionnaire may have encouraged the B.C. respondents to complete the question. This reduction resulted in less time being required to complete the survey perhaps resulting in greater participation.

The higher response rate in the B.C. survey may also be attributed to the increasing awareness of practice ethics over the past five years as noted in the earlier discussion of the first finding. With the existence of various professional codes of ethics, and considering that 50% of the respondents in the survey are currently operating under a code of ethics, then the increased B.C. response rate may not be so surprising. Given this context, adult educators may reflect on their day to day practice in such a way that ethical issues are uncovered.

Although the B.C. response rate was considerably greater than the Indiana rate, 55% is not a overwhelming majority. Open-ended questions are generally not completed as consistently as closed-ended questions particularly in mail surveys (Fowler, 1993). Nonresponse could be due to respondents not having enough time to reflect upon and then document an example of an ethical issue, concern or dilemma. A further potential reason for nonresponse could relate to the topic itself. Describing practice situations involving ethical issues may be viewed as potentially too sensitive and personal to document even with the research standard of confidentiality as a protective mechanism.

3. The most frequently cited ethical issues/dilemmas relate to confidentiality concerns and learner/adult educator relationship issues. From a total of 159 examples, 44 involving confidentiality were identified by adult educators as the primary ethical issue/dilemma faced in their practice. The second most frequently cited issue related to the learner/adult educator relationship with 21 examples identified. The third most frequently cited domain, with 16 examples, was financial issues.

Discussion: The domains of ethical issues/dilemmas cited in this study reflect many of those categories noted in previous research and scholarly literature in the field of adult education. The same categories used in the Indiana study were applied as an initial organizing framework in the

B.C. study. The categories defined by McDonald in her study clearly reflected categories that were relevant to the ethical issues/dilemmas described by B.C. respondents. Three additional themes emerged from the B.C. data which were not identified by respondents in the Indiana study. The additional themes included: learner/adult educator relationship issues, intra-organizational issues and credential issues. The additional themes identified in the B.C. study are also reflected in the current literature across the multiple practice contexts of the field.

Confidentiality was the most frequently cited issue/dilemma in both the B.C. and Indiana studies. This finding is perhaps not surprising since issues around confidentiality may be viewed as less ambiguous than other issues and therefore more easily recalled by practitioners when they are asked to reflect on and document an ethical practice issue or dilemma. Another reason for confidentiality issues being cited most frequently in the B.C. study may reflect an increasing general concern with the legal aspects of human rights legislation, including such rights as informed consent and protection of privacy. This awareness likely heightens many professionals' sensitivity to potential ethical issues/dilemmas in this area. The high ranking of the frequency of issues around the learner/adult educator relationship in the B.C. study, suggests some support for the concerns expressed by Robertson (1996) about the need for guidelines to deal with issues concerning the educational helping relationship. The high ranking of these issues also likely reflects practitioner beliefs about the central importance of the learner in the ethical practice of adult education.

The second most frequently cited ethical dilemma in the Indiana study differed from the B.C. study and reflected practitioner concerns with ownership of instructional materials. This particular issue was cited seventh overall in the B.C. study with a total of nine examples provided.

Further discussion of ethical issues/dilemmas as they relate to issues a code of ethics should address, will be included in finding number six.

4. Less than a majority of B.C. adult educators surveyed acknowledged any experience with codes of ethics. While 40% of respondents knew of the existence of a code to guide their practice, 50% indicated they were currently operating under a code of ethics.

Discussion: That a greater number of respondents indicated they were operating under a code than the number knowing the existence of a code is problematic. The order and interpretation of the questions may explain the results. The question related to knowledge of code existence was the first question in the section to require a response. Perhaps an initial "no" response was then reconsidered when the question about "presently operating under a code" was subsequently asked. Question interpretation may have also been a factor. Even though respondents indicated they were currently operating under a code of ethics, they may have believed it was not a code that guided their specific area of practice and hence had indicated a negative response to the question on knowledge of the existence of a code. Some explanation of the difference in percentages between 'knowing of the existence of a code' and 'currently operating under a code' can be attributed to the respondents who indicated they were currently operating under "their own code".

Although both studies reflected limited respondent experiences with codes of ethics, the Indiana respondents indicated even less experience than the B.C. respondents. In the Indiana study, 28% of respondents knew of the existence of a code of ethics to guide their professional practice, while only 37% indicated they were operating under a code.

In both studies, respondents were asked to identify under whose code of ethics they were currently operating. In the Indiana study, professional associations were cited most frequently while the employing organization was most frequently mentioned in the B.C. study.

A related finding in the Indiana study found that ASTD members were more likely to know of the existence of a code and to be operating under one than adult basic educators. No significant differences were noted between practitioner groups in the B.C. study.

5. The majority of B.C. adult educators surveyed indicated an overall positive view about the general functions of codes of ethics. Respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following functions of a code:

- instructs the practitioner about what is good practice (87%).
- gives the profession integrity or credibility (85%).
- contributes to the identification of the profession (72%)
- influences people to restrain themselves from engaging in unethical practices (61%).

Related finding:

A significant relationship was demonstrated between those respondents who felt positively about the functions of codes of ethics and those who believe in the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education.

Discussion: Other than variations in respondent percentages related to the functions of codes of ethics, the B.C. study confirms the generally positive views about these functions found in the Indiana study. The related significant B.C. finding regarding the relationship between respondents who felt positively about the functions of codes and those who believe in the need for a code also confirmed the Indiana finding. As McDonald also noted, this finding is not surprising. Agreeing with the general functions of codes and believing in the need for a code is somewhat axiomatic.

As in the Indiana study, no statistical test was applied to the relationship between respondent experiences with codes and how they responded to the question on code functions. However, as McDonald suggests, based on responses to other questions including support of a code and comments on beliefs about a code, "one could conclude that experiences with codes created positive feelings about the functions of codes" (1991, p. 118).

6. Issues related to the learner are most frequently cited as issues needing to be addressed in a code of ethics for the field of adult education. Confidentiality, treatment of the learner and needs of the learner were identified as three of the four most frequently cited issues by B.C. adult educators surveyed.

Related findings:

Copyright infringements and credentials were two issues that concerned the training and development practitioners more than adult basic educators and continuing education administrators. The training and development group were less concerned about the needs of the learner than the other two groups. Treatment of the learner was an issue of concern for adult basic educators more than the other two practitioner groups. These findings were statistically significant.

Discussion: In both the Indiana and B.C. studies, the two most frequently cited issues that respondents indicated should be addressed in a code of ethics were the same, confidentiality and treatment of the learner. Confidentiality was also the most frequently cited ethical issue/dilemma by adult educators in both the B.C. and Indiana studies and as McDonald notes, "this is not surprising since this issue also created the most ethical dilemmas cited by respondents" (1991, p. 119). Treatment of the learner was the second most frequently cited issue that B.C. adult educators felt should be addressed in a code of ethics. Again perhaps this is also not surprising

since this issue created the second most frequently cited ethical issue/dilemma by B.C. respondents (the category, "learner/adult educator relationship issues", includes situations that reflect how learners are treated by adult educators and hence is viewed as a learner focused category). Clearly, in the B.C. survey, respondents views about primary issues a code should address are reflected in the examples of ethical issues/dilemmas from their practice settings. The B.C. study confirmed the Indiana findings related to treatment of the learner and copyright infringements. As suggested by McDonald, the differences between practitioners could be due to the context of practice factor. Adult basic educators working primarily in educational institutions focus their skills and energy on facilitating learner success. For many of the clients, success has often been elusive goal due to various personal, social and economic barriers. Within this educational context, adult basic educators as advocates for student success, would likely focus on the treatment of the learner as an important issue. On the other hand, the training and development practitioner, is likely more often employed in private enterprises and the corporate sector, settings where instructional resources may involve significant costs. With a greater "business" focus in this setting, copyright infringements and ownership of instructional material would likely be more important issues for training and development practitioners than for adult basic educators.

7. The professional association was the most frequently identified organization that adult educators believe should create and disseminate a code of ethics. While 150 of 236 respondents (64%) identified the professional association, 33 respondents (14%) selected the "other" category. The employing organization with 30 responses represented 13% of the total.

Discussion: Across all practitioner groups, the overwhelming choice of B.C. respondents for the professional association is noteworthy. Although the Indiana study also demonstrated this finding,

the percentage of respondents was somewhat less at 49%. That the professional association was most frequently identified as the organization that should create and disseminate a code of ethics is somewhat surprising. Of the adult educators in B.C. who indicated they were presently operating under a code, the majority (54%) identified the employing organization most frequently. Thirty-three percent identified the professional association.

Possible reasons for this finding are at best speculative. Perhaps, even though practitioners are operating under an employing organizations's code, they may not feel it is helpful or effective. The code may be considered too general in providing guidance about ethical dilemmas, or may lack areas of focus that particularly concern adult educators. For example, treatment and needs of the learner would be important issues to include in a code for adult basic educators while credential and copyright issues would be particularly important to the training and development practitioners. A professional organization in contrast may have a more focused approach, one that would likely view code development from the perspective of educational and training and development issues.

That the "other" category was the second most frequently cited organization selected by respondents to best create and disseminate a code of ethics was noted with interest. Most respondents indicated that various combinations of organizations should work in collaboration. This "other" suggestion perhaps reflects the diverse practice of the field of adult education and the recognition that a cross-section of practitioners is an important factor in any code construction process.

8. The majority of adult educators either disagree or are unsure about the regulating function of a code of ethics. Although 39% of respondents believe there should be a regulating

function, 37% indicate they are unsure of the need and 24% believe that a code should not have a regulating function.

Related findings:

(a) A statistically significant difference was found between practitioner groups and their views about the regulating function of a code. Adult basic educators believe in the need for a regulating function more than did the other two groups.

(b) Of the 99 respondents to the question about who should enforce a code of ethics, 55 identified the professional association while 20 respondents felt the employing organization should have primary responsibility. No significant differences were found between the three practitioner groups.

Discussion: The data suggest that adult educators are not clear about the regulating function of a code. This is not surprising since code enforcement is a problematic issue, one that has been identified as a major limitation in the literature. Except for variations in percentages, the study results confirm the findings of the Indiana study.

Reasons for B.C. adult basic educators believing in the regulating function of a code more than other practitioner groups can at best be viewed as conjectured opinion. Perhaps ABE practitioners feel that code enforcement is necessary to protect learners from unethical practitioners; without sanctions for code violations, a code may have no impact. Unlike the B.C. study, no significant differences were found between practitioner groups and the regulating function of a code of ethics in the Indiana study.

That adult educators indicate the professional association should have the responsibility of code enforcement is again not surprising. The professional association has been identified as the

organization that should create and disseminate a code of ethics. It would seem to follow that the same organization would also function in an enforcement role.

The findings related to code regulation and enforcement from the B.C. study are particularly noteworthy. Essentially unchanged from McDonald's 1991 results, the data continues to suggest that code regulation and enforcement issues remain unclear and potentially problematic for adult education practitioners.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of this study. The implications of the most salient findings to the practice of adult education will then be discussed. Lastly, future directions for this area of study will be recommended.

Summary of Major Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the views of adult educators in British Columbia about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education and to identify the ethical issues, concerns and dilemmas experienced by them. This study, with some minor changes, replicated an original study by McDonald completed in 1991 in the state of Indiana. The study was undertaken to (a) validate the findings of the original study; (b) generate new information from a different population; and (c) broaden the empirical data base regarding codes of ethics and ethical issues/concerns/dilemmas.

The results of this study generally confirm positive practitioner attitudes toward codes of ethics and with one exception support the major findings reported in McDonald's study. Unlike the Indiana study, the majority of B.C. adult educators (55%) did cite examples of ethical issues/dilemmas from their practice settings. Only 30% of respondents in McDonald's study cited situations involving ethical dilemmas.

The major research question in this study asked respondents about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education. With 73% responding "yes" to the question, clear support for a code of ethics was demonstrated by B.C. adult educators. The remaining findings generated

by this study that address the research questions identified in Chapter One are summarized as follows:

- Less than a majority of adult educators surveyed knew of the existence of, or were currently operating under a code of ethics.
- The majority of adult educators surveyed indicated an overall positive view about the general functions of a code of ethics.
- Issues related to the learner are most frequently cited as needing to be addressed in a code of ethics for the field of adult education.
- The professional association was the most frequently identified organization that adult educators believe should create and disseminate a code of ethics.
- The majority of adult educators either disagree or are unsure about the regulating function of a code of ethics. If enforcement provisions were to be included in a code, the professional association was identified as the organization to assume this responsibility.
- The majority of adult educators surveyed cited examples of ethical issues/dilemmas from their practice settings.
- The most frequently cited ethical issues/dilemmas relate to confidentiality concerns and learner/adult educator relationship issues.

Implications of the Study Findings

The findings of this replication study have a number of implications for the field of adult education. A substantial majority of respondents in this study believe in the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education. This finding is consistent with the views of a number of authors who have called for the development of a code of ethics (Connelly & Light, 1991; Sork & Welock, 1992; Lawler, 1996; Robertson, 1996; Wood, 1996) and presents a strong message from adult education practitioners. This finding also supports the view held by Sork & Welock that those who oppose developing a code of ethics may base their arguments on unwarranted assumptions. The authors note that one of these assumptions is "that adult educators neither want

nor need a code of ethics, that they are quite content with the status quo and feel that other forces will protect adult learners from harm" (p. 116).

If practitioner beliefs are viewed as important and valuable, then serious consideration should be given to the continuing dialogue around issues of code development in adult education. As Mager & Cram (1985) have noted, code development is worthy of consideration particularly if it is based on experiences encountered by practitioners.

A significant implication arising from this study relates to the debate about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education. Historically, this debate has been focused within the scholarly academic community. This study contributes a practice perspective to the ongoing debate. Positive practitioner beliefs about the need for a code are consistent with the growing trend towards the development of ethical codes and guidelines in professional associations and organizations in Canada and the United States. Indeed, as previously noted, several codes have been developed in specific areas of adult education practice. Approximately 50% of respondents to this study are presently operating under a code of ethics and although the majority operate under a code developed by their employing organization, it was clearly the professional association that respondents believed should create and disseminate the code. Professional associations and organizations related to adult education may wish to continue providing opportunities for articulating the issues around code development within their membership. Additionally, through this process of discussion, support for practitioners in dealing with ethical practice issues and dilemmas could be a positive outcome.

In noting the examples of ethical issues/dilemmas in this study, the length and detail of the narrative descriptions clearly convey the very difficult and complex decisions that confront adult educators in diverse practice settings. The willingness of practitioners to share their experiences

and give voice to their ethical dilemmas speaks to the need for continuing dialogue within the field about the ethics of practice. As McDonald & Wood (1993) have questioned, "where are practitioners to find support and insight for recognizing and addressing such dilemmas? If not with the professional leadership, then with whom?" (p. 256).

A second implication arising from this study is that the diversity or pluralism of the field as a basis for the argument against a code of ethics is challenged. Although some respondents were against or unsure about the need for a code of ethics due to the diversity of practice issue, the overwhelming majority did not present diversity as an issue of concern. Some respondents who affirmed the need for a code also added comments addressing the complexity of the development and communication about such a code based on diversity. However, the issue was framed as a difficulty and not necessarily prohibitive to the process. Continuing the discussion about how to best reflect the pluralism and interdisciplinary nature of the field would be essential to the development of a code of ethics.

Issues around the generality and specificity of any code would also need to be included in any on-going dialogue on code construction. Currently existing documents such as the CAEO "Guidelines for Developing and Implementing a Code of Ethics for Adult Educators" or, the more recent "framework for reflecting" developed by Wood (1996, p. 14) may be helpful to the process of addressing the type of code that best reflects the diversity of the field.

The findings of this study also give some direction to code content concerns. Across all practitioner groups, issues related to the learner were most frequently cited as needing to be addressed by a code of ethics. In addition, after confidentiality, study respondents cited learner/adult educator relationship issues as the most frequently occurring issue/dilemma in their practice. These findings provide strong support for the view espoused by Brockett (1990) that

"the centrality of ethics in adult education lies in the reality that our actions impact upon the lives of the learners whom we serve" (p. 5). Of those respondents answering "not sure" to the question on the need for a code of ethics, code content was the most frequently cited reason for their uncertainty. Respondents noted they would support a code only if it protected the learner. This theme of learner focused content is also reflected in the codes and ethical guidelines that have been developed by adult education organizations over the last few years (e.g. The CAEO guidelines for developing a code of ethics, the Michigan Adult and Community Education Professional Code of Ethics). If the scholarly debate about the need for a code is put to rest, perhaps greater collaboration between practitioners and the academic community can address the issue of content and code construction with greater efficacy. This collaboration could also address the need for practitioner participation in code development as noted by study respondents and reflected in the literature (Mager & Cram, 1985; Lawler, 1996).

A further implication arising from the findings in this study relates to the issue of increasing professionalism. Even though some would decry the increasing professionalization of the field (Carlson, 1988; Collins, 1992), others (Cervero, 1992; Sork & Welock, 1992) support this evolution. Clearly the study respondents beliefs reflect a professional view of adult education. In supporting the professional association as the preferred organization to create and disseminate a code of ethics, respondents acknowledge the professional dimension of the field. Additionally, respondents generally positive feelings about the functions of a code of ethics also reflect a view consistent with professionalism. As Tyndale (1987) notes, a code of ethics is one of the key characteristics of a profession. Perhaps it is through an increasing focus on professional interdisciplinary practice that the continuing evolution of a code of ethics that is applicable across all program areas and practice contexts in adult education will be achieved.

Although there is no doubt about positive practitioner support for a code of ethics, the respondents in this study and the Indiana study were not clear whether a code of ethics should have a regulating function. This is not surprising since code enforcement has been a consistent issue in other professions with established codes of ethics. The many procedural issues that code enforcement raises (who should regulate?, what practitioner actions are considered unethical?, what disciplinary measures or sanctions would be developed?) may be factors in the response to the enforcement issue. Although some authors argue that an effective code requires enforcement and sanctions (Schurr, 1982; Weller, 1988), others argue that voluntary acceptance of a code that acts as a guideline for professional practice is self regulatory (Barnes, 1986; Wood, 1996). Clearly issues around code regulation continue to exist for adult educators as evidenced by this study. Perhaps the notion of regulation or enforcement is a premature component in the process of code development. As Connelly & Light (1991) have argued "the development of enforcement procedures is a later stage in the process of building a code of ethics" (p. 239). Perhaps to continue invoking the enforcement issue as a major limitation to the development of a code of ethics has interfered with the dialogue around the benefits of a code of ethics for adult educators?

A final implication generated from this study relates to the educational efforts that are required to address the issues arising from this study. Following the lead of a number of professional organizations (as cited in Chapter Two), providing formal support for members should be considered by those associations and organizations who have yet to invest in this dimension of adult education practice. Respondents to this study have articulately recorded a wide range of ethical issues concerns and dilemmas arising from their practice and have clearly indicated their support for a code of ethics for adult education. By providing leadership in such activities as sponsoring workshops, encouraging discussion in professional and scholarly journals

and conferences, professional associations, adult education related organizations and academic institutions can provide forums for continuing dialogue among practitioners on ethical problems and code development. In addition, exploring the arguments against, and benefits of code development could assist practitioners in making fully informed and critically reflective decisions about the structure and processes that would best serve the field.

To those who teach in adult education graduate programs, these findings provide important themes that should be considered for inclusion into course content or program curricula. Whether graduates are employed as teachers, trainers, administrators, or program planners, their practice will involve dealing with ethical issues and problems. As Brockett (1990) notes "adult educators make daily decisions that impact upon the lives of others. Nearly every decision a professional makes has an ethical component to it" (p. 5). Without knowledge about, and sensitivity to, the ethical dimension of professional practice, problem solving and decision making may, at best, be less effective and may, at worst, be potentially destructive.

Future Directions

Although the findings of the B.C. study strongly confirm positive practitioner attitudes about the need for a code of ethics for the field of adult education, further research should be carried out to build on these findings. Widening the lens through which analysis and understanding can occur is essential to maintaining the centrality of ethics in the practice of adult education. Adult educators face complex, varied and challenging ethical issues daily. These realities must be addressed.

Repeating similar studies with other groups of adult educators than those represented in this study may be valuable in gaining broader perspectives on the issues addressed in both this

study and the original Indiana survey. Including practitioners who are not formally affiliated with professional associations or other formal adult education organizations may generate different findings. Studies focusing on code content and construction also warrant exploration and could contribute to the evolution of effective, supportive mechanisms that would be relevant to all practice contexts. Research into exploring workable regulatory mechanisms could provide clearer direction around the issue of code enforcement. Qualitative research studies that explore the lived experience of practitioners may provide new insights into ethical practice issues and are suggested to further extend the findings of this study.

If practitioner views are seen as important and valuable, and if the centrality of ethics to the practice of adult education is a priority, then maintaining the focus on ethics and codes of ethics within the practice, education and research areas of the field is essential. To do any less is to avoid ethical responsibility.

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APPENDIX A

Letter Requesting Permission to Use and Adapt Original Questionnaire

APPENDIX B

Letter Granting Permission to Use and Adapt Original Questionnaire

APPENDIX C

Original Questionnaire Used in Indiana Study

CODE OF ETHICS SURVEY FOR ADULT EDUCATION

DEMOGRAPHICS -- The following questions ask for demographic information. Please check the appropriate response in each case.

Please describe the primary responsibility of your job:

- ☐ Administrator/Manager
☐ Instructor/Trainer
☐ Internal Consultant ☐ External Consultant
☐ Other (indicate) _____

Sex of responder: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Please check the highest degree or diploma held:

- ☐ High school diploma
☐ Two year associate degree
☐ Four year baccalaureate degree
☐ Masters degree
☐ Specialist degree
☐ Doctoral degree

Please indicate how many years you have worked in adult education:

- ☐ 0-1 years ☐ 7-10 years
☐ 2-3 years ☐ over 10 years
☐ 4-6 years

PERSONAL ENCOUNTER -- The following question focuses on situations which you have experienced involving ethical dilemmas.

Please share one or two examples of situations you have encountered that have created ethical dilemmas for you. (If more space is needed, please feel free to use the back of the survey)
If you cannot think of any ethical dilemmas you have encountered, please write NA.

EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS REGARDING CODES OF ETHICS -- The following questions call for you to share information about your experiences, perceptions, and beliefs regarding codes of ethics. For the purposes of this survey, a code of ethics is defined as a formalized statement of principles and values to guide one in determining the rightness or wrongness of present and future behavior.

1. Do you know of the existence of a code of ethics to guide your professional practice? ☐ yes ☐ no
If yes, what organization has created and disseminated the code? _____

2. Are you presently operating under a code of ethics (as defined above)? ☐ yes ☐ no
If yes, whose code of ethics? _____
Is the code helpful? ☐ yes ☐ no
Please briefly explain your response.

3. Please circle the letter(s) on the right indicating how you feel about each statement regarding the function of codes of ethics. (SA strongly agree, A agree, U undecided, D disagree, SD strongly disagree)
 - a. A code of ethics gives the profession integrity or credibility. SA A U D SD
 - b. A code of ethics contributes to the identification of the occupation as a profession. SA A U D SD
 - c. A code of ethics influences people to restrain themselves from engaging in unethical practices. SA A U D SD
 - d. A code of ethics ensures clients that professional services are rendered with high standards. SA A U D SD
 - e. A code of ethics instructs the practitioner about what is good practice. SA A U D SD
 - f. A code of ethics deters government regulation of the profession. SA A U D SD
 - g. A code of ethics places power in the hands of an elite group of professionals who control the majority of practitioners. SA A U D SD
 - h. A code of ethics for adult education is as important as a code of ethics for practitioners in law, medicine, and other professions. SA A U D SD

4. Do you believe there should be a code of ethics for you as an adult educator? ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ not sure
Please briefly explain whatever response you made. Then, if you answered yes or not sure, please respond to the rest of the questions. If your answer was no, skip items 5-7 and answer question 8.
5. If you believe there should be a code of ethics, what issues should a code address? (Check all that apply)
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty in advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> Credentials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Client confidentiality | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of funds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Copyright infringements | <input type="checkbox"/> Conflicts of interest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Determining fees for programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Needs of the learner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional development | <input type="checkbox"/> Treatment of learner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship between organization/adult educator | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship between learner/adult educator | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Purpose of training/education | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (indicate) _____ | |
6. If there is a code of ethics, who should create and disseminate the code? (Check one)
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Association | <input type="checkbox"/> State Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accrediting Agency | <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organization for which you work | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please indicate who) _____ | |
7. Some codes of ethics make provisions for enforcement. They serve a regulating function. Should a code of ethics for adult education practitioners have a regulating function?
- ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ not sure
- If you believe a code should have a regulating function, who should be responsible for enforcing the code? (Check one)
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Association | <input type="checkbox"/> State Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accrediting Agency | <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organization for which you work | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please indicate who) _____ | |
8. Please feel free to make any additional comments regarding ethics and codes of ethics in adult education.

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX D

**Adapted Questionnaire Used
in this Study**

CODE OF ETHICS SURVEY
FOR
ADULT EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS

— INSTRUCTIONS —

- *Most of the questions in the survey require you to either check (✓) or circle a response from a list of available choices.*
- *A few questions request a further response to the initial question.*
- *The last question asks you to describe an example of an ethical issue arising from your practice.*

Please answer all questions as completely as possible. Your views are invaluable to this project and to increasing our knowledge about professional ethics.

PLEASE ENCLOSE THE COMPLETED SURVEY IN THE STAMPED
PRE-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE PROVIDED AND RETURN BY **NOVEMBER 24, 1995** TO:

Wanda Gordon
Adult Education Research Centre
University of British Columbia
5760 Toronto Road
Vancouver, BC V6T 1L2

CODE OF ETHICS SURVEY

Section A: This section asks questions about educational and demographic information. This information allows comparisons to be made between categories of data. Check the appropriate response in each case.

1. Please indicate the primary role of your current position:

Manager/Administrator <input type="checkbox"/>	Counsellor <input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher/Trainer <input type="checkbox"/>	Researcher <input type="checkbox"/>
Consultant <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify) _____

2. How many years have you worked in the field of adult education?

_____ years

3. Please check your highest degree or diploma held:

High School Diploma <input type="checkbox"/>	Master's Degree <input type="checkbox"/>
Two Year College/Technical Diploma <input type="checkbox"/>	Doctoral Degree <input type="checkbox"/>
Four Year Baccalaureate Degree <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (indicate) _____

4. Your gender:

Male ☐ Female ☐

5. Your age category:

20 - 24 <input type="checkbox"/>	45 - 49 <input type="checkbox"/>
25 - 29 <input type="checkbox"/>	50 - 54 <input type="checkbox"/>
30 - 34 <input type="checkbox"/>	55 - 59 <input type="checkbox"/>
35 - 39 <input type="checkbox"/>	60 and over <input type="checkbox"/>
40 - 44 <input type="checkbox"/>	

Section B: This section asks you to share information about your experiences and beliefs regarding codes of ethics. For the purposes of this survey, a code of ethics is defined as a formalized statement of principles and values to guide one in determining the rightness or wrongness of one's behaviour.

6. Do you know of the existence of a code of ethics to guide your professional practice?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what organization has created and disseminated the code? _____

7. Are you presently operating under a code of ethics as defined in this survey?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please check whose code of ethics.

Professional Association <input type="checkbox"/>	Organization for which you work <input type="checkbox"/>
Accrediting/Licensing Body <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify) _____

8. For each of the following statements, please circle the number on the right indicating how you feel about each statement regarding the function of codes of ethics.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. A code of ethics gives the profession integrity or credibility.	1	2	3	4	5
b. A code of ethics contributes to the identification of the occupation as a profession.	1	2	3	4	5
c. A code of ethics influences people to restrain themselves from engaging in unethical practices.	1	2	3	4	5
d. A code of ethics ensures clients that professional services are rendered with high standards.	1	2	3	4	5
e. A code of ethics instructs the practitioner about what is good practice.	1	2	3	4	5
f. A code of ethics deters government regulation of the profession.	1	2	3	4	5
g. A code of ethics places power in the hands of an elite group of professionals who control the majority of practitioners.	1	2	3	4	5
h. A code of ethics for adult education is as important as a code of ethics for practitioners in law, medicine, and other professions.	1	2	3	4	5

9. Do you believe there should be a code of ethics for the field of adult education?
Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐

Please briefly explain your response.

If you answered YES or NOT SURE to question 9 above, please **respond to the remaining questions in this section** (10,11,12). If you responded NO, skip items 10,11,12 and go directly to Section C.

10. If you believe there should be a code of ethics, what issues should a code address? (Please check all that apply.)

Honesty in advertising	<input type="checkbox"/>	Misuse of funds	<input type="checkbox"/>
Client confidentiality	<input type="checkbox"/>	Conflicts of interest	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copyright infringements	<input type="checkbox"/>	Needs of the learner	<input type="checkbox"/>
Determining fees for programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Treatment of the learner	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Relationship between	
Purpose of training/education	<input type="checkbox"/>	organization/adult educator	<input type="checkbox"/>
Credentials	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify) _____	

11. If there is a code of ethics for the field of adult education, what body should create and disseminate the code? (Please check one.)

Professional Association	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provincial Government	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accrediting Agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify) _____	
Organization for which you work	<input type="checkbox"/>		

continued ...

12. Some codes of ethics make provisions for enforcement; they serve a regulating function. Should a code of ethics for adult education practitioners have a regulating function?
Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐

If yes, who should have primary responsibility for enforcing the code? (Please check one.)

Professional Association ☐
Accrediting Agency ☐
Organization for which you work ☐

Provincial Government ☐
Other (specify) _____

Section C: This section focuses on professional practice situations involving ethical issues, concerns or dilemmas.

13. Please share an example of an ethical issue, concern or dilemma from your practice setting. This example raised questions for you about what was the proper, right, fair or responsible thing to do within the context of decisions or actions that affected other people.

Please feel free to make any additional comments regarding ethics and codes of ethics in adult education.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY.

APPENDIX E

**Letter Sent to
Field Test Participants**

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Department of Educational Studies**

Mailing address:
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

October 6, 1995

Dear

Thank you for helping me to field test this survey on ethical issues and codes of ethics for the field of adult education. As we discussed, the purpose of such pretests is to find out how data collection instruments work under realistic conditions. The field test should indicate if the survey questionnaire collects the data it is intended to collect and whether the directions and language are clear.

Enclosed you will find a copy of the survey with a cover letter, a return envelope and a form titled "Survey Feedback for Field Test Respondents". Following completion of the survey, use the "Feedback Form" to comment on the clarity of the directions and/or language and whether you experienced any difficulty in understanding the questions as posed.

Please return the completed survey and comments in the stamped pre-addressed envelope by October 20. Once again, thank you for your help with this survey.

Sincerely,

Wanda Gordon

Adult Education Research Centre (AERC)
5760 Toronto Rd.
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1L2
Tel: (604) 822-5881
Fax: (604) 822-6679

**Educational Administration and
Higher Education (S.S.O.B.)**
6298 Biological Sciences Rd.
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: (604) 822-6349
Fax: (604) 822-9297

Educational Studies
2044 Lower Mall, Pond. Annex 'G'
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-5374
Fax: (604) 822-4244

APPENDIX F

Survey Feedback Form for Field Test Participants

SURVEY FEEDBACK FOR FIELD TEST RESPONDENTS *

1. How long did it take you to complete this survey?
2. Were the instructions/directions clear?
3. Were the questions clear? Please indicate which questions (if any) were problematic. Please explain the nature of the lack of clarity.
4. Did you experience any problems in understanding what kind of answers were expected, or in providing answers to the questions as posed? Please indicate which questions (if any), presented problems for you.

Please include any additional thoughts and comments on the overall survey questionnaire that may be helpful as I refine and "fine tune" it prior to commencing the data collection process with my study population.

* If you require additional space for any of the questions please feel free to use the back of the form.

APPENDIX G
Cover Letter Included with
Study Questionnaire

APPENDIX H

Cover Letter Included with Second Mailing of Questionnaire

APPENDIX I

Frequency Distributions of Respondent Agreement with the Functions of a Code of Ethics

Table I₁A Code of Ethics Give the Profession Integrity or Credibility

Value	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	8	34.4
Agree	130	50.2
Undecided	24	9.3
Disagree	24	5.4
Strongly Disagree	14	0.8
Missing Cases	2	-
TOTAL	261	100.0

Table I₂A Code of Ethics Contribute to the Identification of the Occupation as a Profession

Value	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	62	24.1
Agree	123	47.9
Undecided	42	6.3
Disagree	28	10.9
Strongly Disagree	2	0.8
Missing Cases	4	-
TOTAL	261	100.0

Table I₃A Code of Ethics Influences People to Restrain Themselves From Engaging in Unethical Practices

Value	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	32	12.3
Agree	126	48.5
Undecided	56	21.5
Disagree	41	15.8
Strongly Disagree	5	1.9
Missing Cases	1	-
TOTAL	261	100.0

Table I₄A Code of Ethics Ensures Clients That Professional Services Are Rendered With High Standards.

Value	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	42	16.2
Agree	87	33.6
Undecided	65	25.1
Disagree	60	23.2
Strongly Disagree	5	1.9
Missing Cases	2	-
TOTAL	261	100.0

Table I₅A Code of Ethics Instructs the Practitioner About What is Good Practice

Value	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	66	25.4
Agree	160	61.5
Undecided	19	7.3
Disagree	15	5.8
Strongly Disagree	0	-
Missing Cases	1	-
TOTAL	261	100.0

Table I₆A Code of Ethics Deters Government Regulation of the Profession

Value	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	11	4.3
Agree	34	13.2
Undecided	122	47.5
Disagree	77	30.0
Strongly Disagree	13	5.1
Missing Cases	4	-
TOTAL	261	100.0

Table I₇A Code of Ethics Places Power in the Hands of an Elite Group of Professionals Who Control the Majority of Practitioners.

Value	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	3	1.2
Agree	23	8.9
Undecided	58	22.4
Disagree	141	54.4
Strongly Disagree	34	13.1
Missing Cases	2	-
TOTAL	261	100.0

Table I₈A Code of Ethics for Adult Education is as Important as a Code of Ethics for Practitioners

Value	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	81	31.5
Agree	101	39.3
Undecided	37	14.4
Disagree	36	14.0
Strongly Disagree	2	0.8
Missing Cases	4	-
TOTAL	261	100.0