class and fourteen stayed to the end. Ten of those entered university this Fall. Numbers may not be high, but the enthusiasm is infectious as students talk to friends and neighbours and a snowball effect is built. Not only is there a determination that the course should be repeated for those who were not courageous enough to take it the first time, but there is also a trickle-down effect: community women are asking for other forms of adult education from other institutions.

Perhaps the experiment is most useful in its suggestions for how a university can move beyond just educating the educated. It is a common complaint that the institutions of society do not meet the needs of the individuals they are set up to serve; both sides recognize the need for change if this is to occur. As the students put it, "We must work at lowering and erasing these barriers from both sides of the fence, community and university. We see this type of program as a very appropriate vehicle for beginning the demolition process." The components they listed as important were:

1. *location* – "having it taught in the community made more more accessible and less fearful for us;"
2. *class size* – "we felt less subject to ridicule because of the small class-size and the resulting opportunity for participation;"
3. *low cost* – the heavy subsidy was a strong factor for most women in this group;
4. *timing* – "with our personal workloads, one three-hour class a week was all we could cope with. Some of us are having to get up at 5:00 a.m. in order to get the reading accomplished;"
5. *participation* – the high participation of all students helped to foster confidence;
6. *self-counselling in the group* – this reduced the inhibitions of people who had been out of school for a long time and created a supportive and non-competitive atmosphere.

The methods of outreach used involved time and patience to develop trust on both sides. It was necessary to identify the target population and use the flexibility offered by the College to tailor the course to fit particular needs. Two factors needed to be kept in mind for this group of women. Most of them would never have thought themselves capable of going to university without this stepping-stone approach. For others who had gained entry in the past and could manage intellectually, but not emotionally or practically, this gave them the support they missed first time around.

If a university is serious about access for non-traditional groups, then supports have to be built in ahead of time. High schools have a battery of guidance counsellors who perform these tasks. Universities send out flocks of admission and liaison officers to assist the young in their university decisions. How much more is this needed for women in a lower income bracket who, in the long years between school and the decision to go to university, have frequently suffered both scorn and disrespect for their lack of schooling. These are the potential students who need support. The institution can indeed bend its rules and regulations to provide this.

There is no sense of failure for those who did not enroll in the university. For them it was an opportunity for informed choice. They decided it was not the right time in their lives or not the avenue they wanted. For those who went on, Atkinson College opened up space for them to enter a course *as a group* – and the course teacher recognized the value of a cohort group in this instance.

The students themselves recognize the value of the group and in the interval between the conclusion of the bridging course and the beginning of the university course, they set themselves another text to read and a time for discussion. They arranged downtown theatre expeditions together. Some women lent their older children to babysit for the younger children of others. There is no holding them back. Now they 'do battle' with the other students in their class – a group of policemen – on feminist issues! They told us there is *still* some surprised wonder in their joint chant as they go for coffee together and 'come down' after the class high each week: "WE ARE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS!"

PART TWO: GRANDDAUGHTER OF JANE-FINCH: THE SENECA PROGRAM

Leslie Sanders

The Jane-Finch program described by Elspeth and Shelagh continues, alive and well. More of the following group, however, decided university was not for them and it became evident that specific, concrete career counselling would be a useful component in the course. *Enter:* negotiations with the province for funding for a longer and more complex program and enter Seneca College. *Born:* a team-taught course, jointly sponsored by York and Seneca, which combines academic work and material related to career counselling.

Much in the new generation imitates its predecessor. The course is situated in what is called "the peanut," a densely populated,medium-to-low-income area about ten miles east on the same Finch Avenue as its ancestor. Ethnically, the area is the most diverse in Toronto. Tuition is low and financial support for anything from books to babysitting is available.

For various reasons, it was not possible to recruit the first group of students through the kind of community networks that were used at Jane-Finch, nor to build a curriculum in response to specific community needs. But the recruiting for this course taught us a different lesson: a short article in the *Toronto Star*, days before the course was to start, produced one hundred phone calls; sixty people showed up at the information session. Twenty-nine of these enrolled, four went to the Jane-Finch course already underway. Midway through the course, only two have dropped out.

The core of the curriculum is Women's Studies. The students are reading some short stories, *The Fire Dwellers* (this group liked it!) and Meg Luxton's *More Than a Labour of Love*. The students are required to write and write and write (the effects of all this writing is the real topic of this article, when I get to it). However, the academic sessions are interspersed with discussions of time-management, of skills and their transferability, with interest tests and role-playing job searches, with assertiveness training and preparing a resume. Students have full access to and use the counselling services at Seneca (the course is taught at a high school at Seneca's doorstep).

Students came for a variety of reasons. Most had a dream, if not a plan, related to university attendance, but almost none of these felt confident they could "make it." A few had definite plans to attend Seneca and some came seeking direction. In short, their goals were more general than those of the Jane-Finch pioneers,

although they turned out to be no less determined!

What puzzled many at the orientation session was the relation between the academic work they would undertake and the career counselling the course promised. Although we didn't let it faze us, it puzzled Nancy Lane Burghardt, the counsellor from Seneca and me, as well. At the information session, I blithely promised the students that they would be amazed about how essay writing and planning your life went together. As it turned out, I am as amazed as they.

I was prepared for the fact that learning to write is a process of wrestling with one's soul, that papers are written in blood more frequently than in ink, and that what stands in most people's way is that they have the firm conviction they have nothing to say worth putting on paper. I know that the last barrier is the one to which adult women cling, even when they put nouns and verbs in the correct order with relative ease. I wasn't surprised that the students loved the literature and that they soon wondered, as I do, whether life imitated art or art, life. Or that they are devouring Meg's exciting and compassionate analysis of housework, finding it raises more issues than we have time to discuss.

What is amazing and confirming of many things is this: the discipline of reading and writing and thinking and discussing seems to provide a focus for the larger changes that these women wish to make in their lives. The essays in particular represent the things they never thought they would be able to do: wrestle with expression, convince themselves they have something to say, put it on paper, submit it to the scrutiny of their classmates, as well as to my critical pencil. All of these processes they experience as agony and yet they do not falter. One of the most apparent changes in the group as a whole and in most of the individuals is that they are simply saying more. Their papers are longer (there is no set length), they talk more in class. About half of each class is spent working in groups of four or five and, in the small groups, everyone contributes. The confidence in the room grows week by week.

We spent one full Saturday together (pot-luck lunch) on career counselling material; the morning was devoted to discussing skills and their transferability to the job market. The students had just read the first three chapters of *More Than a Labour of Love*. It kept coming up. "What do you mean you haven't accomplished anything in the last year?" "How many skills are involved in moving a family of four from Alberta to Toronto?" Luxton's analysis helped concretize the complexity of their daily lives, helped provide a foundation for placing skills developed in the home on resumes and presenting them in interviews.

The difficulties we have writing often mirror the difficulties we have in other regards. Developing ideas on paper is less a matter of having something to say (most people have lots to say) than of having the conviction it is worth saying. "Putting it in writing" gives what we think a reality, a concreteness, that it does not have when it is more loosely defined in our minds – the very term acknowledges this feeling. To write a good paper, we must continually ask ourselves what we really do mean; we must seek precise language to reflect precise thought. We must continually question the significance of what we observe and then state it.

All the women observed that the materials stirred up in them a lot of things they had not reflected upon, and had even avoided thinking about. "Relevant" material is not necessarily the best material to teach writing from, for analytical writing, in particular, requires some objectivity. Tillie Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing" gave the most difficulty: we are all Emily, and if we are mothers, at least sometimes we are the mother, and if, as is true for one woman in the class, one has given up two children so that they would not suffer Emily's fate, analyzing the story takes more courage than anything else.

However, disturbance signals the presence of creativity as well as of tottering apple carts and memories too painful for words. An essay written is something accomplished: mentally and emotionally, it is something sorted out; physically, it is something one has found the time for, made the space for, applied one's energies to and completed. In the course of producing excellent papers, one woman realized that the time it took away from her children was not worth it to her and decided to delay attending university until her children are older. Others found that finding the time and place to do the work gave them the opportunity to create spaces of their own.

The women's comments reflect that their difficulties are just like their other difficulties, whether they be trusting their ideas and intuitions or looking past simple responses or "black and white" judgements of situations. Many comments also reflect this tapping of creativity: one woman entered the course wanting to be a writer, but others have found that writing fills their needs for reflection and expression.

The effect of the writing is paradoxical. We all have bad memories of school writing: it never pleased, it always came back decorated in red, we never really knew what *they* wanted. The women in this course feel the same way. "Is this one better?" they ask; and then, "I wasn't so pleased with this one because . . . " And finally, "I think this is a good one." Writing is empowering, and that is what the course is about.

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Don't cover your face

I hate shyness
this masquerading as mimosa
refusing to be
thighs and cloud
oktoberfest and tears,
and not acknowledge the existence
as a gift of grace from nowhere.

We are nothing but
an iconography of questions
without an answer.
Why then, use hands and words
to cover your face
even though it's really my face
and your blood is my blood?
Mimosas do not know how to ask
or to whom tenderly give.

Giovanna Peel
Toronto, Ontario