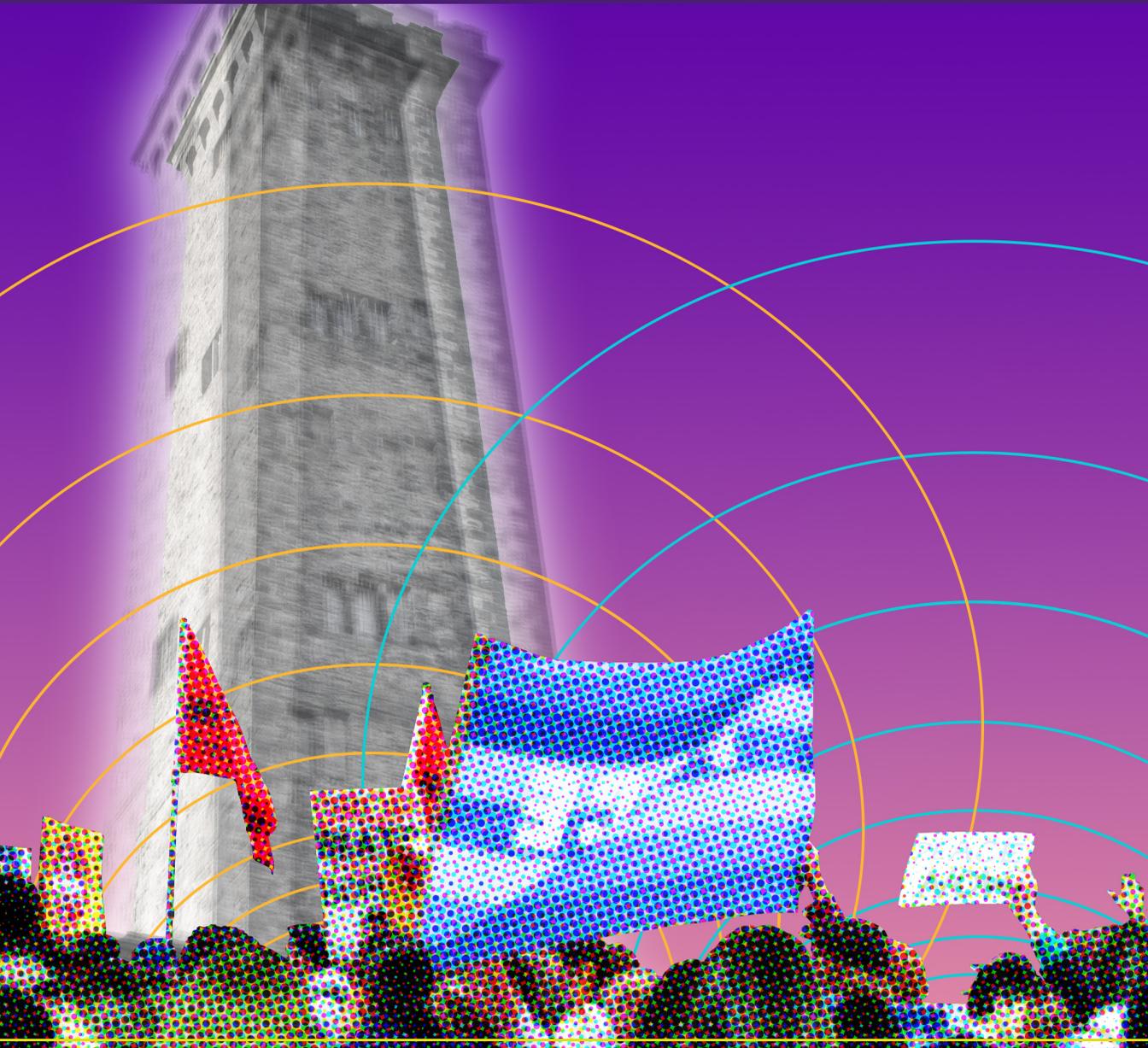




# Engaged Scholar Journal

community-engaged research, teaching, and learning

Volume 4 | Issue 1



**COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING IN CANADA:  
EMERGING CONVERSATIONS**

Spring 2018

# Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning

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**"Community Service-Learning in Canada: Emerging Conversations"**

Volume 4, Issue 1, Spring 2018

Guest Editors: Nancy Van Styvendale, Sarah Buhler, and Jessica McDonald

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## From the Guest Editors

### Community Service-Learning in Canada: Emerging Conversations

Nancy Van Styvendale, Jessica McDonald, and Sarah Buhler

In February 2004, *University Affairs* announced that community service-learning (CSL) “may be the biggest thing to hit undergraduate education in the last decade” (qtd. in Cawley, 2007, p. 2). Now, over two decades after CSL first took root in Canada, under the name of Service Learning at St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, this special issue invites engaged learning practitioners and scholars, both established and emerging, to take stock of the history of CSL, assess current practices, and consider how to move forward in the future. Is CSL the biggest thing to hit Canadian campuses since the late 1990s? With approximately fifty CSL programs or units across the country (Dorow et al., 2013), annual gatherings of scholars and practitioners, and a network of individuals who remain devoted to CSL despite challenges in funding and logistics, CSL in Canada has certainly made its mark, embedded in the context of a larger movement of engaged scholarship on campuses across the country—a movement exemplified in this very *Engaged Scholar Journal*, the first of its kind in Canada to focus on publishing community-engaged work.

Community service-learning is a form of experiential education—or “learning through doing”<sup>1</sup>—that mobilizes relationships between the university and the larger community, and between academic study and community-based knowledge and experience. “The standard argument,” one of CSL’s most esteemed scholars, Dan Butin, explains, “is that service-learning pedagogy rejects the ‘banking’ model of education where the downward transference



Nancy Van Styvendale



Jessica McDonald



Sarah Buhler

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<sup>1</sup> As T. Chambers (2009) summarizes, “Experiential education is predicated on the conscious and intentional integration of students’ experiences into the formal curriculum. John Dewey, who is often credited with being the father of experiential education, stressed that *how* students learn is inseparable from *what* students learn” (p. 80).

of information from knowledgeable teachers to passive students is conducted in fifty-minute increments” (2010, p. 3). In CSL courses or co-curricular activities, students are placed with community partners—for example, non-profit organizations, community-based groups, or, more recently, social enterprises, especially ones that are connected to not-for-profits. At these placements, students engage in a range of activities, from everyday operational tasks to collaborative, community-based projects or research. These activities, as Dorow and her co-authors (2013) assert, must “address social and community needs” (p. 69), as defined by community partners themselves. According to the Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning (CACSL), Canada’s national service-learning organization,<sup>2</sup> CSL is an “educational approach that integrates service in the community with intentional learning activities. Within effective CSL efforts, members of both educational institutions and community organizations work together toward outcomes that are mutually beneficial” (CACSL, n.d.). This philosophy of mutual benefit is crucial to the CSL approach, which is grounded in what Butin (2010) calls the four Rs: respect, reciprocity, relevance, and reflection (p. 5).

In “What is Service-Learning?” M. Clevenger-Bright et al. (2012) explain that community service-learning is known by a number of different terms, including “academic service-learning, community-based learning, community learning, and experiential learning” (n.p.). While a proliferation of terms exists, and no one definition has been uniformly adopted (Butin, 2010), scholars and practitioners agree that CSL is distinct from volunteerism, which certainly involves all kinds of learning, but most of which is implicit or unintentional (Duguid, Mündel, & Schugurensky, 2013). In CSL, students use their experiences in the community to reflect critically on academic concepts and theories, and vice versa, using classroom content to process and analyze their learning in the community. CSL brings “the potential for transformative learning” (Levkoe, Brail, & Daniere, 2014, p. 71) to the forefront, asking students to interrogate what they are learning, who they are, and how knowledge and identity co-exist in and as a mutually informing process. As Bringle and Hatcher (1996) claim in their now standard definition, CSL asks students to “reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility” (p. 222).

In its ideal form, CSL reveals and destabilizes inequitable distributions of power, privilege, and knowledge. Students—and faculty—who have “absorbed the ethos of the university as the well-spring of expertise” come to realize, through CSL, that they are in fact “privileged to learn from practitioners and the ‘clients,’ their fellow citizens” (Cawley, 2007, p. 3). When done effectively, CSL thus contributes to the “democratization of knowledge—in which

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. David Peacock, Director of CSL at the University of Alberta (personal communication, March 7, 2018) noted that CACSL is currently inactive, with no formal director, funding, or active steering committee. A call for a new volunteer director was issued at the 2016 CACSL conference, but no one was available to fulfill this coordinating role. The future of the alliance remains to be seen, but CSL practitioners and scholars seem to be redirecting their energies toward the broader project of CCE (community-campus engagement) in Canada, energized by the CFICE (Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement) project, a seven-year (2012-2019) SSHRC-funded action research project whose goal is to address the following question: “How can community-campus partnerships be designed and implemented to maximize the value created for non-profit, community-based organizations?”

many stakeholders with diverse backgrounds collaboratively engage in a process of sharing information and creating knowledge for use by communities” (p. 3). John Cawley of the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, the major financial catalyst of CSL in Canada, proposes that such collaborative knowledge creation “raises fundamental questions about the relevancy of universities as we know them” (p. 3). Cawley may sidestep, here, the ways in which universities continue to be integral to society at large, but his statement expresses a necessary call to recalibrate the notion that universities are the *central* site of relevant knowledge production. In their study of the larger field of community-engaged scholarship (or CES, which includes not only community-engaged teaching and learning practices like CSL, but also a range of community-based research methodologies), Barreno, Elliott, Madueke, and Sarny (2013) agree with Cawley’s statement, writing that CES is “focused on rebalancing the relationship between university and community to ensure fulsome knowledge generation for the public good. . . . Well-practiced CES,” they conclude, “is part of a larger journey toward social equality and justice” (p. 75).

Service-learning first arose in the United States in the 1960s, although its philosophical foundations are commonly located in the community needs-driven programs established by land grant universities of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Aujla and Hamm, this issue). In the intervening years, service-learning has become well-established and institutionalized in colleges and universities across the United States, with a period of exceptional growth and support by governments and institutions in the 1990s and 2000s. The late 1990s are generally recognized as the origin point of community service-learning in Canada, but its roots also “trace back to the late-nineteenth century, are as old as similar U.S. initiatives, and link to the intensification of social problems associated with the rise of urban-industrial society,” as Keshen, Holland, and Moely (2010) observe (p. ix). Significant historical moments in the story of CSL in Canada include the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation’s funding of CSL programs at ten universities, beginning in 1999; as well as CSL symposia at St. Francis Xavier University in 2001, the University of Guelph in 2002, the University of British Columbia in 2003, and the University of Ottawa in 2004. At the Ottawa gathering, the Canadian Association of Community Service-Learning (CACSL) was established, and in 2007, became the Canadian *Alliance* for Community Service-Learning—a terminological change that reflects what Smith (2010) has called the emphasis of Canadian practice on relationality, the organization’s decentralized structure (Keshen, Holland, and Moely, 2010), and the inherent politicization of the field.

In 2012, in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan, CACSL held the first peer-reviewed CSL conference in Canada. Entitled “Impacts of Community Engagement,” this conference was funded in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and brought together close to 150 faculty, students, staff, and community partner representatives to discuss CSL programs, practices, and research in Canada. Compared to the initial national meeting at St. FX in 2001, at which there were approximately ten people (Fryer et al., 2007), the number of delegates at the 2012 meeting revealed that there was a critical mass of CSL practitioners and scholars in Canada. During conference sessions, delegates reiterated the need for CSL research by Canadian scholars and about the Canadian

context, observing that most of the scholarship available at the time was from the United States (Carr, 2012, n.p.). In response to this call to support Canadian research and practices, editors Sarah Buhler and Nancy Van Styvendale invited conference participants and others to contribute to the current issue.<sup>3</sup> Many of the contributors here took part in the 2012 gathering or were delegates at a subsequent CACSL conference in 2014.

It is true that while CSL has become a prominent feature of the postsecondary landscape in Canada over the last twenty years, Canadian research on the field is just gaining ground. In their annotated bibliography of Canadian CSL research, Raykov, Taylor, and Yochim (2015) note that more than 60% of the existing research by Canadian researchers and/or about Canadian CSL has been published since 2010. This work has been published in relevant discipline-specific journals or in (primarily U.S.) journals focused on community-engaged teaching—notably, the *Michigan Journal for Community Service-Learning*. There is a robust international body of CSL literature,<sup>4</sup> but the majority of this scholarship is focused on the United States, where the history and tradition of service-learning is comparatively longer (Raykov, Taylor, and Yochim, 2015). Certainly, the shape of Canadian CSL has been influenced by developments in the U.S. and internationally, but there are important differences as well, particularly in terms of funding structure, government support, philosophy, and implementation, as Aujla and Hamm observe in this issue. Research from one national context is not necessarily or easily transposable to another.

There has been little scholarship that focuses on the distinct shape of the field in this country. Some important exceptions to this rule include the work of Alison Taylor et al. (2015), Tony Chambers (2009), and Tania Smith (2010) on the history, theory, and rhetoric of CSL in Canada, as well as comparative analyses of CSL in this country and others by Margo Fryer et al. (2007) and Sherril Gelmon et al. (2004). A number of reports and overviews of CSL in Canada also exist, funded and published by foundations such as the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation or Imagine Canada.<sup>5</sup> Gathering a variety of perspectives on CSL practice and research in this country, our issue incorporates and builds on this growing body of literature, as well as offering further comparative analyses of CSL in Canada, the United States (Aujla and Hamm), and Mexico (Calvert and Valladares Montemayor). Here, we bring together faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and community practitioners from across the country (with contributors from the West Coast, the Prairie Provinces, Ontario, and the East Coast) and from a representative variety of disciplines (from Health and Medicine to Women's and Gender Studies). Informed by the philosophy of mutual benefit that undergirds CSL itself, we hope that the research and reflections featured here will be of interest and use to a diverse audience, including scholars, instructors, staff, students, and community partners. In its

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<sup>3</sup> Both Buhler and Van Styvendale were participants in the 2012 CACSL Conference. Buhler gave an invited workshop on evaluation strategies for community service-learning (with M. D'Eon and K. Trinder), and Van Styvendale was the Academic Director of the conference. The conference was supported by a SSHRC Public Outreach Workshops and Conferences grant, and this issue is one of a number of post-conference knowledge dissemination activities.

<sup>4</sup> Information Age Publishing, for example, has a series of ten collections focused on service-learning research.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Brown, 2007; Cawley, 2007; Gemmel and Clayton, 2009; Hayes, 2006.

dedication to examining community service-learning in the Canadian context, this issue seeks to feature aspects of the history, theory, practice, and future of CSL in this country.

The shape of community service-learning in Canada, as contributors to this issue observe (Aujla and Hamm; Kahlke and Taylor), is locally specific, based in particular regional and community needs, and quite variable across the nation—in part because of the country's geographic scope and dispersed population. Because there is no federal infrastructure or mandate for service-learning, engaged learning practices in Canada are open to great variability and cross-pollination. In addition to pieces that focus specifically on community service-learning, this special issue thus includes essays that turn to other models of community-engaged learning (CEL)—in particular, community-based learning (CBL) models such as Humanities for Humanity (Duncan), Walls to Bridges (Harris, Davis, and Sferrazza), and Wahkohtowin (LeBlanc), where university students take classes in off-campus settings (including community centres or prisons) with community members who might not otherwise be able to access postsecondary classes. Other forms of community-engaged learning include internships, co-op placements, and community-based research.<sup>6</sup> While we start with and focus primarily on CSL, we recognize that CSL exists as one of a range of interconnected community-engaged learning practices,<sup>7</sup> and as part of the larger movement of community-campus engagement or community-engaged scholarship in Canada—and in North America more broadly.

This approach was also a strategic component of the 2012 CACSL conference, where the keynote (Lloyd Axworthy) and two of three additional invited speakers (Keith Carlson and Simone Davis) were not CSL scholars or practitioners per se, but rather, engaged in other types of community-campus engagement and at varying levels, including largescale institutional change (Axworthy), community-based research (Carlson), and community-based education in prisons (Davis). In the follow-up conference survey, all of the delegates who responded thought that it was very useful (75%) or somewhat useful (25%) to have had speakers who situated CSL in the context of community-campus engagement and community-engaged scholarship more generally. Respondents commented on the complexity of the field, noting not only that it was the “spirit of CSL . . . to be inclusive” of a variety of approaches, but also that their own institutional or community roles necessitated an appreciation of engaged scholarship more broadly.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> As CACSL details, “CSL and community based research are close kin with very similar principles. The main difference is that in community service-learning the focus is on providing whatever service the community needs, which can include research, but may also include other types of contribution to the work of the community agency.”

<sup>7</sup> Terminology in the field of engaged scholarship and community-engaged learning is notoriously slippery and porous. While there is sometimes a conflation of terms—for example, Taylor et al. (2015) assert that CSL is also known as community-based learning or community-engaged learning (p. 5)—in other instances, CSL and CBL exist as distinct approaches under the CEL umbrella category. The editors of this issue abide by the latter categorization, while also recognizing the interconnectedness of these pedagogical approaches. See Furco (1996) and Mooney and Edwards (2001) for further discussion of experiential learning and the categorization of service-learning.

<sup>8</sup> See Butin (2006a) for a discussion of why “disciplining” service-learning—i.e. by developing discrete community studies programs that would serve as CSL’s “academic home” (p. 57)—might be seen as a viable and desirable alternative to the broader approach remarked upon by conference attendees.

Butin (2006b) observes that the proliferation of service-learning since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century “mirrors a larger development in the academy—namely, higher education has begun to embrace a ‘scholarship of engagement’ (Boyer, 1990; Shulman, 2004), be it manifested as experiential education, service-learning, undergraduate research, community-based research, the scholarship of teaching and learning, or stronger relationships with local communities” (p. 473). While Butin is referring specifically to the United States, trends are similar in Canada. In the introduction to the inaugural issue of this very journal, Editor Natalia Friesen proposes that Canada’s commitment to engaged scholarship followed the “lively debate in the United States on the nature and purpose of a university in general and of the ‘scholarship of engagement’ in particular” (p. 5), while also emerging from sociocultural conditions specific to our country. She draws on the work of Budd Hall (2013), who outlines three periods of engaged scholarship in Canada: first, from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to 1998, during which engaged scholarship generally took place outside the academy, but had ties to university extension programs and organizations like Frontier College; second, from 1998 through the first decade of the new millennium, during which new community-university partnerships and research were catalyzed by the SSHRC CURA (Community-University Research Alliance) grant program;<sup>9</sup> and finally, the current period, during which engaged scholarship has been widely adopted by postsecondary institutions. As of 2013, Hall (2013) notes, between 50 to 60 universities had included engaged scholarship in their strategic plans and/or had infrastructure to support engagement.<sup>10</sup>

In 2017, at the annual C<sup>2</sup>U Expo conference, CSL scholars and practitioners from across the country joined with others involved in community-campus engagement (CCE) more broadly and gave support to draft a national vision statement that “commit[s] to working together to strengthen Canada’s community-campus engagement (CCE) movement in service of the common good,” calling on governments, universities and colleges, community-based organizations, private sector participants, professors, and students to engage in the process.<sup>11</sup>

In this context of increasing engagement, 2018 provides an opportune moment to assess the field of community service-learning and other engaged learning practices in Canada. Not coincidentally, this period of engagement is also a period of neoliberalism within higher education, characterized by the increasing privatization and corporatization of the university, the instrumentalization of knowledge, and the atomization of students-turned-consumers,

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<sup>9</sup> SSHRC is a publicly-funded granting agency. The SSHRC CURA program no longer exists. The impact of this funding shift on the practice of engaged scholarship in Canada remains to be seen.

<sup>10</sup> See Kajner and Shultz (2013) for more on engaged scholarship in Canada.

<sup>11</sup> See *C<sup>2</sup>U Expo 2017 Collaborative Vision Statement on Community-Campus Engagement (CCE) in Canada* (<https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/cross-sector-work/aligning-institutions/vision-for-cce-in-canada/>). The statement was prepared by community and academic leaders from Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE), Research Impact Canada, the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning, Community-Based Research Canada, and others.

as articles by Davis and Sferrazza make clear.<sup>12</sup> CSL, of course, is not always practiced in opposition to these changes, nor is it always compliant with them; it can be either, both, or occupy positions in between. As Raddon and Harrison (2015) argue, some scholars and practitioners see service-learning as a form of resistance to the ever-increasing socioeconomic disparities of the neoliberal era, while others see it as the “kind face” of neoliberalism, particularly when it is leveraged for university branding or used to inculcate values that are typically deployed in neoliberal politics, like individual “responsibility” over the welfare state.

This skepticism toward the field is not new, and it is, in fact, a productive expression of the self-reflexive approach for which CSL is known. In earlier scholarship, echoed in some of the essays here, theorists express hesitation about the very term and practice of “service-learning,” pointing to how social hierarchies and the attendant inequities can be reified through the server/served binary of CSL’s “charity model,” in which the university is figured as provider of knowledge, expertise, and labour, and the community as beneficiary (Himley, 2004). CSL practices in Canada operate on what Chambers (2009) has termed a continuum of approaches, from “philanthropic” or charity-focused to “social justice” and “social transformative” approaches. Community and university partners both may invite or require contributions that fall more in line with the charity model of CSL, and ideas about what social justice-based CSL looks like can differ between practitioners, organizations, and institutions. Similarly, CSL has long struggled with a fundamental tension between its cultivation of “good citizenship” and its questioning of the social order on which such citizenship depends, a tension which Kahne and Westheimer (1996) famously describe in terms of the continuum of personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented citizenship that CSL encourages.

Along with other critical scholars of community service-learning, we posit that those of us who practice and theorize CSL must be vigilant and attentive to the transformative possibilities of the pedagogy, as well as its limitations or risks. Contributors to this issue do both, elucidating the potential of service-learning and other engaged learning pedagogies to encourage active citizenship, critical self-reflection, reciprocal relationships, and social justice, while also probing the assumptions and weaknesses of the field, pointing to its Eurocentric bias, its tendency to overlook community voice, its demands on community time and resources, and its elision of settler colonialism. In this milieu, we follow Davis (this issue) in wondering, “[W]hat would the consequences be, should faculty, students, university coordinators, community group staff and members aspire to genuine presence with one another, to listening receptively, connecting head and heart, and exploring what it means to acknowledge the ways that we are connected?” We hope that this issue provides an opportunity for just such practices of listening, exploration, and connection. We hope it is a gathering place, a conversation, and a springboard for the exciting work in which we are engaged across the country.

This issue brings together a diverse and dynamic collection of essays, “reports from

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<sup>12</sup> Raddon and Harrison (2015) urge further research into the relationship between engaged learning and the sociopolitical context out of which it arises, arguing that service-learning can be seen as both a form of resistance to and an expression of neoliberal ideologies and governance.

the field,” and conversations with community organizers. The first part of the “Essays” section includes three pieces that chart aspects of the history and context of CSL in Canada: Renate Kahlke and Alison Taylor undertake a systematic analysis of the CSL programs in nine McConnell-funded universities in Canada, while Wendy Aujla and Zane Hamm, and then Victoria Calvert and Halia Valladares Montemayor, examine the development of CSL in Canada by comparing it to the field in the United States and Mexico, respectively. Turning from the macro to the micro, the next two essays consider research that evaluates CSL in particular contexts. First, instructor Jana Grekul, along with graduate students Aujla, Eklics, Manca, York, and Aylsworth, considers the challenges and possibilities of teaching CSL in large group settings (specifically, in an introductory sociology class) and provides details about the pedagogical training of graduate student instructors. Next, Cathy Kline and co-authors Asadian, Godolphin, Graham, Hewitt, and Towle present the results of a community-based participatory research project, offering community perspectives on health professional education and presenting best practices for “authentic community engagement.”

In the five essays that follow, authors consider key ethical issues surrounding CSL and create and extend novel theoretical approaches to the field: Brad Wuetherick argues for the potential of critical community service-learning to provide leadership training for students, and Jordan Sifeldeen proposes that CSL could deepen its theoretical foundations and methodologies by turning to the lexicon and archiving practices of queer pedagogy. Then, in contributions that together begin to address the gap in research about CSL and Indigenous peoples (Taylor et al., 2015), Mali Bain, Swapna Padmanabha, and Lori Hanson and Jethro Cheng examine CSL through the lens of decolonial and Indigenous research methodologies and pedagogical approaches. These three papers interrogate the colonial contexts in which CSL in Canada and abroad take place, proposing decolonial approaches to partnership development, CSL practices, and research in the field. In this context, decolonization refers to the need to centre Indigenous perspectives, acknowledge the effects of ongoing settler and neo-colonialism, and build respectful partnerships that honour Indigenous land and rights.

The final three pieces in the Essays section turn to community-based educational initiatives that bring together university students and community members who might not otherwise have access to postsecondary education. The papers look at initiatives that are distinct from CSL in that they do not invoke “service” by either university or community partners as a primary activity or aim. As Davis explains, the model used in these endeavors is often one of co-learning rather than service-learning, although the insights put forward about such initiatives can be translated to other community-based learning (CBL) contexts, including service-learning.<sup>13</sup> In John Duncan’s piece, the focus is on examining the philosophy behind *Humanities for Humanity*, a free, community-based, university-style course run by Trinity

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<sup>13</sup> While CBL has been variously parsed, we use the definition provided by Lori Pompa, Founder of the Inside-Out program: “Community-based learning—quite distinct from charity or the ‘helping’ modality—involves what Freire calls ‘conscientization’ and a critique of social systems, motivating participants to analyze what they experience and then act. The pedagogy of community-based learning, when done with great care and integrity, has the power to turn things inside-out and upside down for those engaged in it” (p. 24). Clearly, this definition resonates with understandings of critical service-learning adopted by many contributors to this issue.

College (but with incarnations across the country); Duncan reflects on his experience linking faculty, university students, and community members to discuss literary and philosophical texts. Invoking John Dewey's classic theory of educative experience, Judith Harris's essay then examines a different community-based educational initiative, Walls to Bridges, as a means of introducing the Circles of Safety model, which unites multiple constituencies within and beyond the university to support the education and reintegration of Indigenous women who have experiences with the criminal justice system. Simone Davis furthers the discussion of Walls to Bridges in the piece that concludes the Essays section, arguing that the "how of being together" needs to be centralized in joint community-university learning projects, and situating community-based learning as the site of collective imagination-building for social transformation.

The next section of the issue, "Reports from the Field," highlights the voices of community partners and students.<sup>14</sup> In her piece, Geri Briggs draws on her experience as Director of the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL) to propose key principles for improving community-campus engagement (CCE). Then, informed by her role as Executive Director of the Volunteer Action Centre of Kitchener Waterloo & Area, Jane Hennig discusses some common issues around community-campus partnerships, including the undervaluing of community perspectives in research, on steering committees, and at symposia, and she highlights how community-campus relations can be improved through new funding models and more dedicated efforts to include community voices. The final two essays in this section provide critical meditations on the transformative potential of community-based co-learning endeavours: Anna Sferrazza analyzes her experience as a non-incarcerated student in a Walls to Bridges class, arguing that the model offers a radical intervention in the current neoliberal climate by prompting students to work collaboratively rather than competitively, and to consider course content through embodied connections; and Dan LeBlanc discusses the Paideia—or "deep learning"—of *wahkohtowin*, a Cree word that means "interrelatedness" or "kinship," as he provides a Law student perspective on the *Wahkohtowin* model, a community-based learning initiative influenced by Indigenous pedagogy which brings together former gang members, Indigenous high school students, and university students to theorize justice and enact social change.

Our "Exchanges" section includes two lively conversations between the editors and community organizers. The first exchange puts veteran community activist Joan Kuyek in conversation with Nancy Van Styvendale to discuss CSL from a social justice perspective. Within the context of community-campus partnerships, Kuyek evaluates some of the challenges around funding protocols, pressures to publish, student placements, and project timelines, stressing that the guiding question of "*why* are we doing this?" needs to be

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<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that the perspectives of community partners have until recently been lacking in the literature on CSL and engagement more generally (Steiner, Warkentin, & Smith, 2011; Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009). Even in the existing literature, the focus has primarily been on student outcomes and benefits, rather than on community partner perspectives (Carr, 2012), a phenomenon that Cruz and Giles (2000) see as linked to the marginalization of community service-learning in the academy and a need to showcase the effectiveness of this approach to skeptics and funders.

foregrounded in all community-campus work. The second exchange brings together three community representatives from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Chantelle Johnson, Executive Director at CLASSIC (Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City); Phaedra Hitchings, former Regional Coordinator for Frontier College in Saskatchewan; and Stan Tu'Inukuafe, social worker at Oskayak, Saskatoon's Indigenous High School. Their conversation highlights the benefits of their work with CSL while it also discloses the pressures on community partners to provide resources and labour, both material and emotional.

As a gathering of essays that attends to the diverse ways in which CSL is practiced and understood in Canada, much ground is covered in this issue. But much work has yet to be done. What we offer is a snapshot of some of the many approaches to and theories about community service-learning in this country, in conversation with a number of community-based co-learning projects. There are, of course, many other forms and iterations of community-engaged learning in Canada. In particular, this issue does not engage deeply with CSL in Québec or Francophone contexts more broadly.<sup>15</sup> This gap highlights one of the difficulties that exists with building a CSL movement in Canada, particularly across linguistic differences (Fryer et al., 2007). And while we have included community voices, there exists the need for more of these voices, both on their own and in collaboration with university partners, in addition to the voices of university staff, who we acknowledge have instigated much of the work of building CSL partnerships and programs in Canada.

Since the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been an increased focus in the Canadian academy on community engagement, engaged scholarship, and community-university partnerships. The time is now ripe to reflect on the theories, practices, and effects of community service-learning as one of the major forms of engagement and partnership embraced by postsecondary institutions across the country. Where have we come from, and where are we going? The papers in this special issue of the *Engaged Scholar Journal* begin to answer these questions by providing an overview of the field and outlining some of its key practices and theories. They further present promising practices in terms of community-university partnership development and community-campus engagement. Meaningful relations between universities and communities is crucial as we consider and confront the innumerable social, economic, environmental, and political challenges that we face. It is our hope that this issue makes a contribution to this work.

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<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting the work of Remi Tremblay from Université du Québec à Trois Rivières, who served as a member of the CACSL steering committee in the late 2000s and brought innovative CSL programs to the Université du Québec à Trois Rivières (Charbonneau, 2009).

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# Essays



# Community Service-Learning in Canada: One Size Does Not Fit All

Renate Kahlke and Alison Taylor

**ABSTRACT** Community service-learning (CSL) is increasingly seen as an educational approach that can enhance student engagement and serve community needs. However, CSL programs are highly variable in their structures and goals, leading to variability in the outcomes sought and attained. In this paper, we map out the structures and priorities of CSL programs in Canada following a major influx of funding from the McConnell Family Foundation grant competition in 2004. We also contrast key features of these programs, including their institutional location, unit organization, and educational delivery approach, in order to demonstrate the potential implications of different program models. Our aim is to offer new and developing programs some guidance on the program structures that have been employed as well as their implications.

**KEYWORDS** CSL programs, institutional differences, Canada

## Introduction

According to the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL), “Community Service-Learning (CSL) is an educational approach that integrates service in the community with intentional learning activities” (“What is CSL?” n.d). With reciprocity as one of its key principles, CSL is most effective when members of educational institutions and community organizations work together toward outcomes that are mutually beneficial. CSL is increasingly recognized as a priority for post-secondary institutions interested in student engagement (Kuh et al., 2010; Lenton et al., 2014; Longo & Gibson, 2011). At least fifty campuses in Canada had service-learning programs in 2010 (Keshen, Holland, & Moely, 2010), and this has continued to grow as universities seek to expand their engagement with community. However, these programs are highly variable in terms of how they are structured and the work that they prioritize, often leading to very different outcomes.

Moreover, Canadian service-learning lacks the coordination evident in the United States, where it has been supported by various levels of government, receives institutional and foundation funding, and has dedicated conferences and academic journals (Aujla & Hamm, this issue; Raddon & Harrison, 2015). Instead, CSL growth in Canada has been spurred partly by non-governmental players and has taken different forms. Following a Call for Proposals in 2004, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation (hereafter referred to as McConnell) granted

\$9,400,000 to ten Canadian Universities to support the development and expansion of CSL (almost \$1,000,000 each over five years) under its National University-Based Community Service-Learning Initiative (“CSL Awards,” n.d.).

In an effort to support CSL programs still under development today, in this paper we offer a snapshot of the diverse Canadian CSL programs that were stimulated by McConnell funding. These programs differ in terms of their institutional location, unit organization (including staffing model and funding sources), and educational approach. We hope that this discussion will encourage CSL advocates to design or further develop programs that support their intentions and fit their unique contexts. We begin by briefly describing key characteristics of each of the nine CSL programs in this study, as they were at the time of data collection. We then discuss programs that exemplify some of the differences across the country and consider implications of differences in local contexts (including regional and cultural differences) for a national movement around CSL in Canada.

## Methods

This essay adopts a descriptive qualitative approach (Sandelowski, 2000, 2010) by providing a brief description of CSL programs that successfully applied for and received McConnell funding to develop or expand their CSL programs and making comparisons between these descriptions.<sup>1</sup> Since programs change over time, this paper provides a snapshot during the period immediately following the completion of McConnell funding. This was an important milestone in the development of programs at these universities because it involved the transition from McConnell funding to other sources and discussions about institutionalizing these programs (Taylor & Kahlke, 2017).

We used three main sources of data to develop these descriptions: first, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted between 2012 and 2013 with fifteen key program administrators from nine of the ten McConnell-funded programs and two national-level representatives (one from the McConnell foundation, the other from the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning). Initially, we identified program leads from each program’s website. Following initial interviews, a snowball sampling approach (Atkinson & Flint, 2001) was used to identify additional informants, such as former directors, for their ability to comment on the development and structure of each program. The original study for which these data were collected examined how CSL administrators, instructors, and community partners understand their work. Institutional ethics approval for this study was obtained through the University of Alberta. The second data source was content provided in public websites for each program. Third, we examined available publications and reports published by administrators of each program and by the McConnell Foundation. Details about programs in different universities were returned to participants to confirm accuracy, but only three of the fifteen responded with changes, which were incorporated. Since programs change over time, this paper provides a snapshot during the period immediately following the completion of McConnell funding.

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<sup>1</sup> The CACSL website includes the successful proposals from universities.

## Results

In this section, we begin by providing information about the McConnell granting program and the CSL programs it funded. The overview of CSL programs reveals notable differences in the structures, goals, and educational delivery approaches between McConnell-funded programs. Following the overview, we focus on pairs of universities to address some key areas of difference, including institutional structures such as staffing, funding, and institutional location; the organization of CSL units within universities; and CSL delivery models, such as course-based CSL or co-curricular CSL.<sup>2</sup> We then consider the implications of these local distinctions for the larger CSL movement in Canada.

### The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

McConnell's CSL program was initiated with the belief that positive benefits would result if universities and communities combined "knowledge, experience, and commitment to tackle local issues" (Cameron, 2010, p. 5). Through its funding program, the McConnell Foundation played an important role in shaping the aims of programs in Canadian universities:

[A]s it was framed in the original letter from the Foundation, there were clearly three parts to it. One was, of course, enriching the experience of students through a hands-on experiential process. Two was having positive impact on the ability of community organizations to achieve their goals. The third one, which in a way was the sleeper, was to what extent could the lessons of CSL actually come back to the mother ship and in some cases challenge or influence both the content and pedagogy of the university? (Interview 7)

A letter to universities from the McConnell program officer reflecting on the activities of funded universities suggested some frustration with the pressure placed by university administrators on expanding "CSL programs as quickly as possible" (Cawley, 2007). The perceived emphasis on quantity over quality was seen as impeding the achievement of aims set out by McConnell for the program. Of course, not all university programs followed the same path, and the diversity of programs is presented below; McConnell's message was interpreted differently in different local university and community contexts.

### Overview of institutions

This section offers a brief description of each of the nine programs in this study. We then relate notable characteristics of each at the time of interviews in 2012 to 2013,<sup>3</sup> including funding sources, staffing, type(s) of CSL programming offered, and location within the University. As discussed in a later section, location within the University impacts how others perceive units and how units perceive themselves. Generally, CSL units fall under a Vice-President

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<sup>2</sup> Curricular programs integrate CSL activities within existing academic curricula while co-curricular programs offer volunteer experiences that are not recognized through academic credits.

<sup>3</sup> We use the present tense to discuss programs, recognizing that changes have no doubt occurred since the time of interviews. As noted, this essay is intended to provide a snapshot at a point in time.

(VP) Research, Academic, or Student Affairs portfolio. These portfolios do vary somewhat between institutions;<sup>4</sup> however, most institutions have a senior administrator, usually reporting to the president, in charge of each of the institution's three main areas: research, teaching (also referred to as "academic"), and student services (student life and academic support services), respectively.

### ***St. Francis Xavier University***

St. Francis Xavier University (St. FX) is one of the earliest CSL programs in Canada; it received funding from the McConnell Foundation prior to the Foundation's formal call for proposals for CSL (Cameron, 2010). St. FX has a long social justice tradition and is home to the Coady International Institute, named for Moses Coady, an adult educator and social justice activist (Welton, 2006). Not surprisingly, CSL administrators at St. FX also claim a social justice focus for their work.

CSL at St. FX was modelled after a program at a small U.S. college and takes two distinct forms, curricular (integrated within courses) and immersive, mostly international experiences. The CSL unit falls under the VP Academic (i.e. teaching) portfolio and is supported primarily through core funding from the University as well as some private donations. CSL at St. FX is deeply embedded in the small rural community of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, but also participates in international CSL, connecting students to communities all over the world.

### ***Lakehead University***

Lakehead University, located in Thunder Bay, Ontario, provides a unique CSL model in the form of the Food Security Research Network. This model focuses all CSL activities on issues of food security, an area of specialization for Lakehead and an issue of importance in the geographically isolated communities of northern Ontario. The food security focus is also important to the Indigenous communities in the region, who face issues related to food security stemming from changes to traditional lands and food sources.

Lakehead is also unique in viewing research, teaching, and service as integrated activities. Founded by Lakehead's former Vice-President of Research and initially funded by McConnell, the Food Security Research Network fell under the VP Research portfolio. It received some core funding from the University, but was also funded through various research, government, and private grants. Lakehead decided to employ only a very small contingent of permanent staff, instead hiring graduate students to assist in its research and teaching initiatives. Faculty members engaging in CSL are encouraged to integrate their teaching, research, and community partnerships; as a result, CSL at Lakehead engages proportionately more senior faculty members and fewer students (but proportionately more graduate students) than most other McConnell-funded programs. CSL delivery often focuses on interdisciplinary collaborations around food security and is project-based, as opposed to CSL that involves placement activities (including day-to-day operating tasks) within the community organization. At Lakehead, project-based

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<sup>4</sup> For example, the University of Alberta has a Dean of Students, rather than a VP Students or a VP Student Affairs.

CSL is curricular and engages students in completing a project intended to be useful both to the community partner and to the students' learning.

### ***Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (University of Quebec at Trois Rivières)***

In an area of the country that has suffered from deindustrialization, high unemployment, and the out-migration of youth (Cameron, 2010), Trois-Rivières Projet d'Intervention dans la Communauté (Picom) focuses on several main themes called "Carrefour" or, in English, "intersections," which are geared toward the needs of the community. Examples include the Écol'Hôtel, a boutique hotel designed, managed, and marketed by students in the post-secondary institutions in the region; Santé Global, a community health clinic; and Plein Air de Joie, a camp for people with disabilities. All of these projects are designed to contribute to the social economy by reinvesting in the region in some way (Cameron, 2010).

CSL is deeply embedded in the Trois-Rivières community and many of the above social enterprises are collaborations with government and other post-secondary institutions in the region. Since McConnell funding ended, funding comes from a blend of university, government (including research grants), and private foundations. Like the Lakehead University model, CSL delivery is project-based, and students can engage in it as part of a large interdisciplinary project or within a disciplinary course.

### ***Nipissing University***

Nipissing University's Biidaaban<sup>5</sup> Community Service-Learning (BCSL) program is distinctive in its Indigenous focus. Like the program at Lakehead, this program reflects its northern Ontario context. It is housed within Aboriginal Initiatives and grew out of the Director's efforts "to develop or expand existing support services for Aboriginal students, trying to expand their participation in undergraduate studies." This has meant a significant focus on developing programming to support Indigenous youth in the area.

Aboriginal Initiatives falls under the unique combined portfolio of the Vice-President Academic and Research. It receives some core funding for staff salaries from the university, but also seeks funding from a variety of sources, including smaller foundations and provincial funding initiatives. CSL delivery occurs through community placements that can be incorporated as an assignment in existing courses and are mandatory for students enrolled in the Consecutive Education and Bachelor of Physical Health and Education degree program. Most placements take place in schools or after-school programs.

### ***University of British Columbia (UBC)***

UBC's CSL programming began as a co-curricular program led by the Learning Exchange that engaged UBC students with Vancouver's economically troubled downtown eastside community. Over time, UBC developed two separate units that provide off-campus opportunities for students: the Learning Exchange (located in and focused on issues related to the downtown

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<sup>5</sup> Biidaaban (Ojibwe word) refers to the point at which the light touches the earth at the break of dawn.

eastside) and the Community Learning Initiative (located on the UBC campus and focused on the broader community). The latter, later called the Centre for Community Engaged Learning, offers both co-curricular (Trek program, Reading Week placements) and curricular service-learning.

At the time of our interview, the Learning Exchange fell under the VP External portfolio, while the Centre fell under Student Services and reported to the VP Students. UBC was one of the few institutions to have increased its funding since the end of the McConnell grant through combined university funding and large donations from corporations such as HSBC and Telus. The Learning Exchange also actively seeks funding from private donations. Reflecting these resources, the Centre for Community Engaged Learning has had a relatively large staff, including a director and three managers focussed on the university side of CSL, the community side, and research/program evaluation, respectively. The team also included eight staff coordinators and administrators, three graduate research assistants, and four part-time staff coordinators housed in different faculties at the time of interviews. However, corporate funding was for a fixed term, raising questions about sustainable growth in programs.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Trent University***

The CSL program in Peterborough is particularly unique in its institutional location. Like UBC's Learning Exchange, the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education (TCCBE), which was founded in 1996 and renamed the Trent Community Research Centre in 2015, is physically separated from the Trent University campus, located in downtown Peterborough. Further, TCCBE holds registered charity status and works with other post-secondary institutions in the area beside Trent University, primarily Fleming College. In the director's words, "we're place-based as opposed to institution-based, which I think is to everyone's advantage." The Trent Centre also works closely with and administers funding for the U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research in Haliburton County. The current website suggests the Trent Community Research Centre facilitates the matching of students and faculty with community research projects that may be part of a course or co-curricular.

At the time of interviews, the Trent Centre fell under various VP portfolios at Trent University, working with the VP Advancement and External Relations, the VP Research, the VP Students, and directly with the Provost. Also, despite its separation from Trent University, much of the Trent Centre funding came from there. However, the Trent Centre has been partially funded through diverse external sources, too, including federal and provincial government sources, private and public foundations, individual donors, and fee-for-service approaches. The Trent Centre offers three types of curricular project-based CSL: 1) community-based education projects that are four to eight months in length, generally structured around the academic term, and generally involve capstone undergraduate experiences, 2) community service-learning, involving ten to twenty hour projects linked to courses, and 3) strategic

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<sup>6</sup> In fact, some of the corporate funding recently ended and there have been staffing reductions, which indicates the uncertainty for programs that comes along with reliance on this kind of funding.

research initiatives, which are paid community research assistantships within existing faculty research programs.

### ***University of Alberta (U of A)***

CSL began in the Faculty of Arts at the initiative of a faculty member before the application for McConnell funding was made. As a result, CSL at the U of A has been predominantly taken up by instructors in this faculty and is grounded in social justice issues that provide a focal point for the work of this faculty. The U of A program provides an embedded certificate (a certificate in Community Engagement and Service Learning, which can be part of undergraduate programs offered across the university); as part of this certificate, a small number of CSL-designated courses focused on community-engaged learning are offered. One of these courses took the oil economy as its theme for several years, reflecting issues resulting from the “boom and bust” Alberta economy.

Over time, CSL has expanded to more faculties, but remains housed in the Faculty of Arts, reporting to the Dean’s office at the main campus and in the Learning, Advising and Beyond Office at Augustana campus. The Faculty of Arts funds the program with some support from central administration, as well as from private donations. The CSL office at this university is also unique in that it includes Humanities 101, an outreach program designed to provide university-style education to learners in the community who are living with poverty, homelessness, violence, and health issues. The U of A is primarily engaged in curricular service-learning and its Augustana campus program provides some international CSL opportunities.

### ***Wilfred Laurier University (WLU)***

Wilfred Laurier University’s (WLU) CSL work, like the U of A, developed out of its inception in a particular faculty; at WLU, this was a large, long-running field placement program in Developmental Psychology, Faculty of Science. This field placement program was re-imagined using the CSL goal of providing mutual benefit to the community and university. WLU’s program continues to have a strong focus in Psychology but, like the U of A, has branched out to other faculties and departments since its inception. Sign-up for the Psychology program takes place through a large database of community placements developed through McConnell funding.

Unlike the U of A, however, CSL at WLU did not remain in its home faculty, but moved to Student Services. Recently, it relocated under the Centre for Teaching Innovation and Excellence, within the VP Academic portfolio. WLU’s program has a relatively small staff supported by paid teaching assistants (TAs). Core funding is provided by the central administration. The program runs primarily undergraduate curricular CSL and can be either placement-based, as it is for the large Developmental Psychology cohort, or project-based. Perhaps because of its roots in student services, WLU’s CSL program also runs a co-curricular volunteer program.

### ***University of Ottawa (U of O)***

The University of Ottawa (U of O) CSL program was initiated through a partnership between professors in History and Law interested in applying for McConnell funding. Although the Environmental Law Clinic built into the original proposal still exists, the CSL Program at U of O is implemented across eight faculties and is housed within the Centre for Global and Community Engagement, now called the Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement. The Centre was created in 2010 as part of the University's Destination 2020 strategic plan. Initially, CSL was housed under the Student Academic Success Services, but later moved into the Centre for Global and Community Engagement. Its mandate is to promote community engagement and social responsibility among its students. The Centre organizes or facilitates curricular, co-curricular, multi-year, and international community service projects. The Centre mainly works with the non-profit sector, charities, and social enterprises.

The Centre reports to the Associate VP Students Affairs. The CGCE is funded through a combination of core funding from the University and various sources of external funding, including grants, individuals, and foundations. It was staffed by eight full-time employees at the time of interviews.

### **Comparing CSL Programs**

An analysis of the structure and foci of CSL units reveals similarities and differences across McConnell-funded programs. While some of this variability can be traced to the unique interests and skills of CSL founders and leaders, CSL units are also tied to the distinct contexts in which they function. The next section of this paper looks more closely at issues of institutional location, unit organization, and CSL delivery approach; in each section, we have selected two institutions which provide a comparison of factors that reflect the local contexts in which CSL units are embedded.

### ***Institutional location: Trent and Lakehead***

A "scan" of CSL programs in 39 universities and three colleges across Canada found that CSL units have different names and locations across institutions (Baloy, 2014), confirmed also in our study of McConnell-funded programs. Kezar and Rhoads (2001) suggest service-learning programs challenge existing divisions within universities, for example, between formal and informal learning, and between research, teaching, and service. CSL does not fit neatly into a single portfolio. The institutional location has far-reaching implications for the work of CSL administrators, though was not always a result of strategic planning. For example, a few of our participants confirm Kezar and Rhoads's (2001) observation that CSL may lack perceived legitimacy when it is housed in Student Affairs. Reporting to central administration may provide greater access to resources while a location within a faculty may enhance legitimacy within the university. Besides legitimacy, a lack of direct connection to faculties, including input into decisions about programs and discussions about the scholarship of teaching, is likely to limit the effectiveness of CSL programs. This section looks at two cases where CSL has been intentionally and uniquely located: the Trent Centre for Community-Based Research

and Lakehead's Food Security Network.

As noted above, the Trent Centre for Community-Based Research is supported by Trent University but operates as a separate entity brokering relationships between community and post-secondary institutions. The Centre focuses heavily on collaboration and maintaining a focus on community needs. In the words of a representative:

I think one of our strengths is that we think of community from that perspective. We think about it in terms of issues . . . it's coming at it from a community perspective and also from a collaboration point of view, from a win-win point of view. (Interview 4)

In this sense, the institutional location of the Centre has broader philosophical underpinnings based on a focus on community needs and mutual benefit that is embedded in the institutional location.

An additional, related advantage of the Centre's non-profit status is its freedom to partner with multiple institutions, in keeping with its mission of serving the community. According to the Executive Director:

Because we're a non-profit we're not tied to one institution, which is one of the advantages of the model. We're place-based as opposed to institution-based, which I think is to everyone's advantage. That's the way I frame it for everyone. (Interview 4)

The Trent Centre is thus able to focus primarily on the needs of community, drawing on learners from multiple post-secondary institutions whose knowledge, skills, and availability match those needs.

Like Trent, Lakehead University has shaped its institutional location with intention and with the needs of the community in mind. Lakehead's unique institutional location, reporting directly to the VP Research, and lacking affiliation with a specific faculty, allows the unit to bring together individuals across disciplines around common research interests. According to the Director:

I purposely did that and was able to negotiate that through the system because that gives me as the Director the most flexibility. I didn't want to get engaged in the quagmire of deciding who owns CSL and getting into all these arguments with the deans. (Interview 13)

This freedom led to a deliberate focus on the community issue of food security. This focus was identified by the founder as a timely and relevant issue for the northern communities in and around Thunder Bay, which are concerned about changes to the traditional harvesting practices of Indigenous groups, as well as the cost of food transportation to and from these communities and other regions:

This thematic focus was intended to build rich partnerships based on a common interest:

Reading the literature, one of the things I didn't want to happen is I think it's so easy for CSL to potentially perpetuate the "us" and "them" mentality that we are university students and we are going to go out and work with these poor community groups and we're going to give them something that they don't have because they're not in university. I didn't want that to happen; I wanted it to be equal. (Interview 13)

In the partnership, the community offers particular knowledge and expertise, with community partners acting as co-educators and co-researchers, rather than as subjects for the application of the knowledge that students obtain in the university or for the extraction of data to meet a researcher's needs. Like Trent, Lakehead seeks to build partnerships based on mutual benefit. The integration of community-based research (CBR) and community service-learning (CSL) is relatively unique among the institutions in our study since CBR does not necessarily involve students and CSL does not necessarily involve research. In the case of Lakehead's network, there is deliberate overlap in these practices.

The focus on food security, combined with the integration of community-based research and teaching, has several advantages. First, the integration of teaching and research might be seen as better meeting community needs, which are complex and often require both human resources and research expertise:

Because we're in the research end . . . we don't see it as siloed. One thing leads to the other, where we feel very free. We feel that we are in community too, that we're part of this community. (Interview 13)

Additionally, Lakehead's marriage of CBR and CSL interests around the issue of food security seeks to address a common problem experienced by other CSL programs: community groups feel bombarded by too many requests for partnership from too many different sectors of the university. Lakehead's focus on projects rather than placements is an attempt to reduce community partner fatigue by emphasizing project products that will be of use to community partners. According to the Director:

I was looking at something that would counter this comment that had begun to surface in 2005 that CSL can exhaust the community. . . . It's certainly pro for the community, as we don't exhaust the community. They are engaged in CSL because they've got something to genuinely contribute and they're really interested in the results. (Interview 13)

Likewise, the combination of teaching and research interests has engaged more senior faculty in CSL work. In other sites, sessional or teaching-stream faculty tend to undertake CSL more often than senior faculty.

The examples of Lakehead and Trent are unique because of their emphasis on community-

based research and project-based as opposed to placement-based service-learning. There are a few implications worth mentioning: first, these models attempt to prioritize community over university in the development of projects, and, perhaps as a result, seem to pay less attention to growth in student numbers as their main metric. Community impact is, in theory, more central to program decisions. Second, involving students in community-based research blurs the boundaries between teaching and research (cf. Kezar and Rhoads, 2001). Finally, legitimacy tends to be enhanced when CSL programs are associated with research, which is generally seen as the *raison d'être* of universities.

### ***The organization of units and work: UBC and Wilfrid Laurier***

Aside from Trent University, McConnell-funded universities had units centralized within the university that coordinated CSL.<sup>7</sup> While it would be interesting to compare programs in universities with a centralized unit to those without one, that is beyond the scope of this study. One might assume that institutions without a centralized unit would experience more internal variation in CSL because such a unit is likely to promote greater consistency if it provides support and guidelines to instructors as part of its mandate (e.g., defining CSL as a 20-hour placement, providing tips for effective CSL, etc.).

Looking at the McConnell universities with a central unit made it clear that the organization of these units varied. They had varying levels of core funding and different staffing arrangements. While some employed permanent full-time staff, other units relied more on part-time employees and temporary graduate student assistants, sometimes because of a lack of core funding. Clearly, the number and type of staff have implications for the type and range of possible activities and the legitimacy and sustainability of the program. This section examines two contrasting programs. UBC's Centre for Community Engaged Learning had received significant private and internal funding at the time of our interviews, allowing it to employ a relatively large full-time staff. Wilfrid Laurier University's program, on the other hand, had a much larger staff-to-student ratio.

Despite some variability from year to year, UBC's program was funded primarily through substantial ongoing commitments from the university's central administration and from HSBC bank.<sup>8</sup> As a result of this funding, UBC's Centre for Community-Engaged Learning was run on a hub and spoke model. The "hub" or central unit employed a large staff, divided into three functional units overseen by a director. The community-based experiential learning team was comprised of a manager and team of five staff, focusing on curricular CSL. The community-based partnership team included a manager and team of four staff, focussed on the community side of engagement. The research and evaluation team was led by a manager and staffed through several graduate research assistants. The "spokes" supported CSL development in the faculties through the work of four part-time staff members who served as CSL advocates in different faculties. Instructors were

<sup>7</sup> The U of A unit is "centralized" within the Faculty of Arts as opposed to the university as a whole.

<sup>8</sup> Note that HSBC funding has now ended at UBC and staffing has been adversely affected.

expected to play a key role in working with community partners while CSL staff helped match instructors with community partners and provided pedagogical support.

The program at Wilfrid Laurier University provides an interesting contrast: We're short on staff. If you compare our budget or our size of program to UBC's ...they've got a staff of 30 and they're working with 2,000 students. Our budget is \$300,000 and a staff of four with 2,000 students.<sup>9</sup> (Interview 8)

Although the full-time staff complement at UBC is smaller than suggested above (16 at the time of our interview), it was still more than four times the complement at WLU, while working with a similar number of students. More than one third of the students at WLU were in large psychology classes, which resulted in a different approach to CSL; for example, approximately 600 students a year in these classes signed up online for placements. Representatives from the WLU CSL unit discussed the unit's early focus on quantity of CSL placements as related to the initial focus on large psychology classes and the perception that accountability metrics for McConnell funding should focus primarily on student numbers. The lack of staff resources to accommodate the large numbers resulted in the need to use technology to efficiently match students to community placements. But, in this case, an online sign-up system used to manage these large student numbers with few staff resulted in student anonymity and potential mismatch with community partners, according to program representatives. The program leader at the time felt the focus on numbers promoted an approach to service-learning that was more transactional than transformational for all participants (students, instructors, and community partners).

In sum, the examples above suggest different approaches to determining the scope of CSL work and its organization, including the roles of different participants. The service-learning staff-to-student ratio, the degree to which student numbers were seen as the dominant metric, and the types of relationships between CSL staff, students, instructors, and community partners varied across universities. Although not discussed in the examples of UBC and WLU, program leadership (e.g., non-academic or academic staff) also has implications for how programs are conceived and structured. All of these program decisions, which are related to aims and resources, have clear implications for the ability of universities to develop programs rooted in knowledge about effective pedagogy and based on high-quality, mutually beneficial, and sustainable partnerships.

***Educational delivery: University of Ottawa and University of Quebec at Trois-Rivières***

The philosophical orientations of CSL across institutions—for example, along a continuum of critical to traditional approaches (cf. Mitchell, 2008; Chambers, 2009)—were not always evident at a program level. However, choices around how CSL is delivered on campuses were clearer. CSL programs across Canada utilize various delivery approaches including curricular

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<sup>9</sup> Two of the staff members at Wilfrid Laurier University were part time coordinators (26 hours/week) on 8- and 10-month contracts.

service-learning (CSL placements or projects embedded in existing courses or programs); co-curricular CSL (placements or projects done on a volunteer basis outside of a course); and international CSL (an experience in another country that can be either project or placement based, curricular or co-curricular). While curricular service-learning necessarily prioritizes the integration of community learning with students' formal coursework, co-curricular CSL may be less constrained by formal learning objectives and may allow for more sustained engagement. International service-learning (ISL) encourages the development of global citizenship while, in our data, CSL tends to be concerned with development of their local community. Program choices are, of course, related to previously discussed factors such as the number and type of staff and the location of CSL within the university as well as regional differences and aims.

The universities of Ottawa and Quebec at Trois-Rivières offer different approaches that partly reflect their distinct locations and aims; this discussion focuses on differences in the aims, scope, and delivery of programs. The program at University of Quebec at Trois-Rivières involves fewer students with a focus on a small number of large, long-term projects, while the program at the University of Ottawa offers a range of service-learning opportunities to over 2,000 students.

The program at University of Ottawa, originally modeled after programs in the United States, involves curricular CSL across the university in which students engage in 30-hour placements:

I think 2,000 will be the total number of volunteer placements in courses that we will facilitate each year unless we get more funding. We just signed up with the Faculty of Medicine and we're going to take on 165 students in first year to give a specific CSL course. The CSL program is for the most part voluntary. Very few professors make it mandatory. We're in seven faculties out of ten.

The aim of the CSL program at the University of Ottawa was to involve ten percent of the full-time student population annually, according to its proposal to McConnell ("Communities as Classrooms," 2005). In addition to curricular CSL, which involved 160 courses (mostly undergraduate) at the time of our interview, the Centre for Global and Community Engagement coordinates international student engagement opportunities. Most CSL placements involve not-for-profit and government organizations as community partners. Students' CSL experiences are tracked on a co-curricular record which indicates the number of volunteer hours, whether they were part of a course for credit or not, and the type of placement. The role of staff is to provide outreach to professors, answer questions from students and community partners, and build relationships. The University of Ottawa program balances more formal curricular CSL with co-curricular placements—a unique approach among universities within this study. This "full service" approach potentially allows for greater ability to meet the needs of community partners, which do not usually fit neatly into the university calendar and schedule.

Even more emphasis on community development is evident in the rural context of University of Quebec at Trois Rivières, where one full-time and two part-time staff work on

establishing university-community connections and large-scale projects that, at the time of our interview, involved approximately 300 students:

The [full-time] coordinator [who has experience in the community] makes the connection between community groups and faculty. But for the community-university intersections [i.e., the specific social enterprises mentioned earlier], we are three who are working on that. But like me, I work part-time on community university intersections.

The staff works towards facilitating a small number of long-term community-driven projects that allow students to engage for longer periods of time—for example, a camp for people with disabilities (Plein Air de Joie) and other examples listed above. Given that the region has suffered from de-industrialization and the out-migration of youth, it is not surprising that community development and social enterprise are priorities. According to one program representative,

[A longer project] gives the advantage for the students. It gives them more involvement, more experience, more knowledge from the community organizations. They have to understand what is the need of the community organization; it takes time. They have to understand the culture of the community organization; it takes time. After, when they understand, then they can build their project. It can be in one semester or two semesters. . . . we want always that the students are doing something for the community. They give something to the community organization—work or a tool that will be useful.

The “intersections” are also unique in that they are not strictly non-profit initiatives; many, such as the *École Hôtel*, are designed to turn a profit and to reinvest that profit in the community: “we work to help the organization to develop social economy enterprise, [which] means that we want [to] develop services for people who have money but with the profits it will be reinvested in the social mission. We call that the Robin Hood system.” Students engage with the *Projet d’Intervention dans la Communauté* either through a broad interdisciplinary course, called an “institutional course,” or through a smaller disciplinary experience, embedded in more traditional existing course infrastructure. The approach adopted in *Trois Rivières* is curricular, but also uniquely embedded in its community.

The University of Ottawa, on the other hand, is in an urban context in a city largely dominated by the public sector. Their proposal to the McConnell Foundation focused on developing CSL in particular faculties—Law and Health Sciences. The proposal makes it clear that plans for CSL are impacted by the academic areas of strength in the university as well as the type of community partners and issues in the city and region:

This proposal has outlined the University’s specific strategies for leveraging its strength as a knowledge producer to benefit community organizations, such as: . . . developing new intensive CSL programs aimed at high-need issues in the National Capital Region

in which the University has great strength (environment and health).

In sum, the differences in approach described above no doubt reflect characteristics unique to different parts of the country that impact the development of CSL programs in those locations, such as characteristics of local post-secondary institution(s), geographic location (including whether the PSE is more urban or rural), and other aspects of local culture.

### **Discussion**

The preceding overview and examples suggest that CSL programs at McConnell-funded universities have developed in ways that reflect their university and community contexts, individual leaders, resources, and institutional locations. For that reason, it is difficult to talk about a national approach or movement around CSL in Canada. It is evident that, particularly in more rural settings, CSL programs seem to take up community issues in a more directed and targeted way—for example, Lakehead University’s focus on food security and Nipissing’s focus on Indigenous student attainment. At the same time, the backgrounds of leaders also play a key role; leadership from a former administrator at Lakehead led to more research-focused CSL, while at Wilfred Laurier, CSL’s beginnings in large psychology classes led to an emphasis on the quantity of placements and a technology-focused approach to managing student numbers. In some cases, programs had already begun in nascent forms prior to McConnell funding, and those in existing CSL leadership roles were thus key players in the funding applications and subsequent shaping of programs.

In addition, as noted above, the McConnell Foundation played a role in shaping programs. In addition to its funding program, it hosted meetings to share ideas across funded universities and also established CACSL to do this more broadly via conferences, a website with resources, and so on. But the ability of CACSL to play a significant role in a national CSL movement has been limited by its lack of resources as well as the unique development of programs in very different contexts.<sup>10</sup> Just as other areas of Canadian policy have been impacted by provincial-federal jurisdictional tensions and regional differences, CSL reflects these realities.

Although McConnell’s aim of changing universities in substantial ways was probably not realized, their provision of significant seed funding was important in developing and expanding CSL programs in ten universities. Most institutions were able to maintain and some expanded their staff complement, number of students, courses, and community partners through a combination of university and private support at the end of the five-year McConnell funding. On the other hand, a few were satisfied with their small size, focusing on providing more intensive community-based experiences and building deep relationships with community. These choices about unit organization, staffing, and funding reflect many contextual factors, including the size of universities, whether they are research or teaching intensive, backgrounds of program leaders, and community context (e.g. rural vs. urban).

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<sup>10</sup> At this time of publication, CACSL is inactive and without leadership (see information provided by Dr. David Peacock in the introduction to this issue); the role the alliance will play moving forward in CSL in Canada is therefore difficult to predict.

As suggested above, the question of growth was relevant for most participants. It was clear that some CSL leaders felt significant pressure from university administration and perceived McConnell Foundation expectations to involve large numbers of students from the start. But McConnell did not actually require reporting of numbers; in fact, a letter written by a program officer to the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (Cawley, 2007) suggested that grant recipients should give greater attention to community impact and not just “outputs” (e.g., number of students and courses). Over time, patterns and relationships with internal and external partners became institutionalized. For example, programs with the initial aim of including as many students as possible in CSL were unlikely to suddenly cut their numbers drastically, even when funding ended. In addition, as programs became more embedded in structures, universities began to compare themselves with one another (particularly those of a similar size) and engage in isomorphic practices around what they saw as “best practices” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1986).

### **Conclusions**

Both unique and common contextual factors have impacted how CSL programs have developed within a group of Canadian universities. It is evident that the organization of programs (institutional location, unit organization, and delivery mechanisms) impacts and is impacted by the founders, contexts, and type of programs. The number and type of staff (e.g., academic or administrative, part-time/full-time, level of position), institutional location of programs (e.g. in student service units, faculties, or research centres), and the delivery of programs (e.g., curricular, co-curricular, international) are interrelated and have important implications for the program as a whole. To this point, programs have evolved in quite distinct ways, despite the common influence of McConnell funding. Differences in region, culture, and university size have affected the trajectory of CSL in Canadian higher education, and, unlike in the United States, the lack of governmental involvement has also made it difficult to talk about a national approach. In our view, this is not problematic. More importantly, as CSL programs continue to be established and evolve at Canadian universities and colleges, discussions are needed about how the range of internal and external factors should be taken into account in decisions about CSL program aims, structures, and outcomes in different sites.

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## Establishing the Roots of Community Service-Learning in Canada: Advocating for a Community First Approach

Wendy Aujla and Zane Hamm

**ABSTRACT** This article explores the roots of the Canadian community service-learning (CSL) movement through a comparative discussion of service-learning in Canada and the United States. The article provides a brief overview of CSL's historical foundations in both countries, addressing especially how differences in CSL funding infrastructure have distinctly shaped the movement in each country. While national funding bodies and nation-wide institutionalization remain central to CSL in the U.S., Canada's CSL efforts have predominantly been shaped by the efforts of private foundations and grassroots community agents. This essay analyzes the obstacles and problems currently within Canadian CSL, but also provides recommendations around documentation, sustainability, and the future of CSL in Canada, including the recommendation to maintain a community first approach in Canadian CSL. As it considers how the influence of the United States continues to shape CSL in Canada, and how the two national movements remain distinct from one another, we hope this examination will contribute an historical perspective to scholarship on Canadian CSL and will offer entry points to engage in critical conversations on the emergence of the field.

**KEYWORDS** community service-learning/service-learning, community engagement, community, Canada, United States

Community service-learning (CSL) in Canada began in the mid-1990s and grew throughout the 2000s, but despite some previous attempts to examine the field in this country, literature that explicitly explores the unique and growing Canadian context is limited. As Taylor and her colleagues (2015) highlight, in order to guide CSL programs in this country, specifically Canadian research and knowledge is required. Understanding the history and theoretical foundations of CSL is also integral, as these foundations inform pedagogical approaches used in CSL contexts and they impact the direction of CSL courses and programs. Although CSL in Canada has been influenced by the earlier development of service-learning (SL) in the United States, which began in the mid-1960s (Taylor et al., 2015), there are differences between the two national contexts, including geography and population density, funding and infrastructure, and underlying values and aims. In this paper, we examine how the service-learning movements have been differently shaped in Canada and the United States in order to capture the distinctiveness of Canadian CSL.

We argue that the uniqueness of Canadian CSL is rooted in its dispersal over a large territory with a relatively small and regionally distinct population; in its initial, catalyst funding through a philanthropic organization, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, rather than through government; and in its prioritization of local community concerns over nationalism, character education, or citizenship as pedagogical drivers, all of which have been more predominant concerns in the U.S. Our paper points toward the Canadian movement as locally specific, variable, and grassroots in structure. In contrast to CSL in the United States, which developed via a more balanced orchestration of private and public forces, and which has become more standardized given that CSL is now institutionalized and funded at the national level, private foundations were especially critical to CSL's establishment in Canada, and this history continues to shape how Canadian CSL functions today. To advance this argument, we first define service-learning and provide an overview of its history, funding, and infrastructure in the U.S. Next, we provide an outline and analysis of CSL in Canada. We discuss the role of the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL) in directing CSL movements in Canada and examine issues of funding, evaluation, and research. Throughout, we provide practical recommendations to sustain the Canadian field, building on Taylor et al.'s (2015) question: "what institutional structures and supports are necessary for CSL to flourish?" (p. 2). As part of these recommendations, we advocate for a Canadian approach to CSL that emphasizes the roles of community partners and students as co-educators and scholars who, together with faculty and post-secondary staff, are building a body of knowledge that is grounded in both theory and practice. CSL in Canada needs to prioritize long-term and sustainable relationships between partners who support civic engagement at the community and institutional level (Chambers, 2009; Gemmel and Clayton, 2009; Smith, 2010).

### **Defining the Terms: Service-Learning and Community Service-Learning**

Definitions of service-learning and community service-learning are contested (Giles, 2008; Mooney and Edwards, 2001; Saltmarsh, 1996). Kendall (1990) observes that approximately 147 different terms have been used; in addition to "service-learning," the terms "public service," "community service," "experiential learning," "study-service connections," "social action," "civic education," and "action research" are often used interchangeably (Lena, 1995, p. 109). No one universal definition has emerged, despite Sigmon's (1994) widely-used typology, which distinguishes service-learning programs "from other approaches to experiential education by their intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to focus on both the service being provided and the learning" (Furco, 1996, p. 12). We contend that SL and CSL are different from other practice-based or community-based learning—for example, internships, co-op placements, or community activities that enhance course content. As Bringle and Hatcher (1996) explain, other forms of experiential learning and "the learning objectives of these activities typically focus only on extending a student's professional skills and do not emphasize to the student, either explicitly or tacitly, the importance of service within the community and lessons of civic responsibility" (p. 222).

Even though both "service-learning" and "community service-learning" operate as terms

in Canada and the United States, “service-learning” is more commonly used in the U.S., whereas the term “community” is often added in Canada. Smith (2010) suggests that the Canadian terminology “deemphasizes the problematic word ‘service’” (p. 12), which, because it invokes the categories of “server” and “served,” can be seen to terminologically enshrine unequal power relations between providers and recipients of “service” activities (Cameron, 2010; Giles, 2008; Himley, 2004; Mooney and Edwards 2001; Saltmarsh, 1996; Smith, 2010). As Smith (2010) further explains, CSL practitioners and institutions in Canada are often committed to community-building endeavors that extend beyond campus-community partnerships; higher education is not the essential component of Canadian CSL: “The frame or context is the whole community, and universities are only part of the community” (p. 9). Margo Fryer, former Director of the Learning Exchange at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and a founder of CSL in Canada, confirms that a strong commitment to community was at the heart of the vision for community-engaged learning and research that set the stage for CSL in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

Given the differences in language used to describe the field, we use the terms CSL and SL to signal our use of either Canadian or U.S. literature, respectively. However, like Smith (2010), we recognize that not all Canadian universities (e.g., the University of Manitoba or Brock University) or scholars, such as Chambers (2009), place the word “community” before service-learning. Regardless of the term used (SL or CSL), this is a pedagogical approach in which students are challenged to think critically about and apply their classroom experiences to community work done where they study and live (Bingle and Hatcher, 1996; Butin, 2007b; Gemmel and Clayton, 2009; Morton, 1995). Certainly, a feature shared by both terms is the hyphen between “service” and “learning,” which signals that the two are not separate activities (Hoppe, 2004). Flecky (2011) notes that “the hyphen between *service* and *learning* is purposeful; it denotes a balance between the service and learning outcomes resulting from the partnership experience” (p. 2). We would add that service and learning coincide and that the hyphen identifies how service combined with learning allows for transformative experiences.

## **Brief Overview of Service-Learning in the United States**

### ***Historical and theoretical foundations***

Flecky (2011) traces the roots of SL in the U.S. to social-reform movements of the late 1800s and the establishment of land grant colleges in the 1900s, which “focused on the needs of the local farming communities” (p. 6; see also Smith, 2010). As Bingle and Hatcher observe (1996), American universities “have a tradition of serving their communities by strengthening the economic development of the region, addressing educational and health needs of the community, and contributing to the cultural life of the community” (p. 221). Universities are seen as being responsible for making their resources available to the larger community (Bingle and Hatcher, 1996), as well as “preparing students for productive citizenship” (Furco, 2010, p. 375). Indeed, one of the key goals of higher education in the U.S. is to produce educated

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<sup>1</sup> Fryer’s experience and the history of the Learning Exchange is shared in “The Call” (n.d.).

and socially responsible or “good” citizens who can serve the nation and community (Boyer, 1996; Flecky, 2011; Lena, 1995), although what exactly “good” citizenship entails is too often undertheorized in literature and practice (Kahne and Westheimer, 1996).

In the 1960s and 1970s, criticisms emerged about the failure of universities in the U.S. to respond to social issues and encourage responsible citizenship in a democratic system (Boyer, 1996; Butin, 2010; Ward, 2003). Service-learning began during this time as “an attempt to undermine the taken-for-granted assumptions of an academy seemingly out of touch with its sense of purpose and unreflective about its own pedagogical practices” (Butin, 2010, p. xv). “One of the guiding themes,” Taylor et al. (2015) add, “was the perceived need for students to get out and connect with the social realities of the real world” (p. 8). Internships were the primary form of service-learning throughout the 1970s: the federal government “invested approximately \$6 million annually in service learning programs, funding full-year, full-credit [internship] opportunities for students to engage in anti-poverty work in their communities (Lounsbury & Pollack, 2001)” (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 8).

Service-learning was formally recognized as such in the 1980s (Taylor et al., 2015), followed by a period of “phenomenal growth” in the 1990s (Flecky, 2011, p. 6). During the 90s, the public was concerned with the “national obesity epidemic, high citizen apathy, increased religious and ethnic conflicts, rising crime rates, soaring student drop-out (or early leaver) rates, among other social issues,” and the role of higher education in addressing these societal problems (Furco, 2010, p. 376). These concerns sparked discussions about the value of “social capital”—that is, the importance of social networks and reciprocal relationships of trust between universities and communities—in addressing societal issues (see Putnam, 1995; Serino, Marciano, Scardigno & Manuti, 2012). In response, there was a call to reform higher education and renew its “commitment to community service” by combining learning and service to make a unique contribution to academic curricula (Lena, 1995, p. 108). Service-learning thus became a strategy for curricular reform, with perceived “curricular irrelevance and the desire to create meaningful undergraduate experience (Kezar & Roads, 2001)” as part of what drove the agenda (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 8). In this milieu, the dominant form of SL shifted to the “service-learning course, a credit-bearing academic course with a typical syllabus...along with a related community service component” (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 8), which continues as a prominent form of service-learning today.

Also in the 1990s, scholar Ernest Boyer called for U.S. higher education to once again reconsider the role of education to create responsible citizens (Boyer, 1996; Bringle and Hatcher, 1996; Ward, 2003). Commonly cited as one of the “founding fathers” of service-learning, Boyer (1996) was hopeful that higher education could assist with social, civic, economic, and moral problems through the *scholarship of engagement*, a term he coined. In his words, “the term engagement is used as a response to a general uneasiness many in higher education are feeling about the nexus of higher education’s past, present, and future and how this composite history plays a role in society” (as cited in Ward, 2003, p. 12). Arguing that academics were not interacting with intellectuals and others off campus, Boyer (1996) contends that the value of off-campus interaction is understanding and responding to society’s problems. He advocates

for higher education that engages with issues outside the “ivory tower,” maintaining the need for community engagement to be institutionalized as an essential part of higher education.

More recently, critics (Butin, 2006; Furco, 2010; Hartley, Saltmarsh, and Clayton, 2010) questioned whether service-learning in the United States has fulfilled its transformative potential. According to Hartley et al. (2010), the momentum stalled and the ability of higher education to address societal challenges is again under scrutiny. While some students value engagement efforts like CSL as a method of transformative learning or enhancing social responsibility, others view CSL mostly as a means to explore employment opportunities and acquire job skills through hands-on experience (Gemmel and Clayton, 2009; Himley, 2004). These two perspectives need not be seen as incompatible; we argue that students can be transformed in CSL and also gain skills to improve their employability.

### ***Structure and funding***

Some national organizations and structures have funded and supported SL across postsecondary institutions in the United States. In 1985, a group of university presidents formed a national coalition called Campus Compact to promote community engagement through service programs in higher education (Butin, 2007a; Cameron, 2010; Flecky, 2011; Furco, 2010; Smith, 2010; Taylor et al., 2015; Ward, 2003). In 1995, roughly 250 institutions were involved in Campus Compact, and today the coalition reports that nearly 1,000 institutions (colleges and universities) are part of this network (“Who we are,” n.d.). This rise in institutional support for SL, especially at the highest administrative levels, shows that civic and social responsibility continues to be valued in the U.S. higher education system. Significantly, while the national support structure for CSL in Canada, as we detail later, was founded and managed by individual faculty and staff, SL in the U.S. has seen consistent support from administration, which has led to its more uniform institutionalization across the nation.

A critical moment in the development of the field in the U.S. occurred in 1994, when the federal government passed the National and Community Service Trust Act.<sup>2</sup> This Act made “funds available to higher education institutions to set up service-learning initiatives that encouraged students to engage in community service projects tied to academic learning objectives” (Furco, 2010, p. 377). Combined with Campus Compact, this Act and the subsequent establishment of the government granting program Learn and Serve America formed a national structure to fund and support SL initiatives (Flecky, 2011). Further support for SL was secured through partnerships between private foundations, such as the Kellogg Foundation, and national higher education organizations (Furco, 2010; Smith, 2010). Over a decade later, in 2009, federal funding for SL remained strong: “President Obama declared this period ‘the new era of service’ as he signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, allocating over a billion dollars to service-learning” (Raddon and Harrison, 2015, p. 136). In recent years, however, funding of SL in the U.S. has changed. Post-secondary institutions are now often required “to match the [government] grant funds with institutional funds or other

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that this came after the advocacy and practices of universities around SL.

in-kind resources as the way to secure greater institutional investment in public engagement work” (Furco, 2010, p. 379). Furthermore, many federal- or state-level grants have ceased, requiring institutions to readjust service-learning activities and seek other sources of funding.<sup>3</sup> Furco (2010) interprets the shift as a move away from dependence on federal funding and toward the institutional sustainability of SL, but it is also important to consider how this shift embodies a neoliberal agenda, in which government responsibilities are off-loaded onto the private or non-profit sector.

Indeed, the institutionalization of SL “across the majority of colleges and universities” in the U.S. (Butin, 2010, p. xiv) has been achieved not only through a legacy of strong federal funding and policy, but through related processes of “accreditation, classification, and ranking schemes” (Hollander, 2010, p. viii). In 2005, for example, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching established an “elective classification for HE [higher education] institutions to be recognized as community engaged institutions” (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 8). This elective Community Engagement Classification system<sup>4</sup> builds on Boyer’s vision for higher education by identifying three elements of community engagement at postsecondary institutions: 1) curricular engagement; 2) outreach and partnerships; and 3) curricular engagement and outreach partnerships together. The benefits of this tool include its ability to track SL across campuses and to provide faculty with a renewed interest to make SL noticeable and sustainable in higher education (Flecky, 2011).

In addition to almost a half-century of government and post-secondary support for the field of service-learning, individual instructors, students, staff, and community partners are well-supported in SL curriculum and/or program design and delivery through the wealth of open-access resources available through the National Service Learning Clearinghouse, as well as a robust body of nation-specific research available through U.S. journals, including most notably the open-access *Michigan Journal for Community Service Learning*. In sum, SL in the U.S. is well-established, having moved from early concerns about legitimacy to ever-increasing visibility, institutionalization, and standardization across the country.

### **Canadian CSL: Overview and Recommendations**

Keshen, Holland, and Moely (2010) argue that the roots of CSL in Canada “trace back to the late-nineteenth century, are as old as similar U.S. initiatives, and link to the intensification of social problems associated with the rise of urban-industrial society” (p. ix). But land-grant universities, like those to which the roots of SL in the U.S. are traced, were present only in Canada’s western provinces (Smith, 2010, p. 5). Many Canadian universities of the time were affiliated with and financed by churches (Keshen et al., 2010, p. xi) and were informed

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<sup>3</sup> In 2011, the government funding for Learn and Serve America (LSA) was removed. See Ryan (2012).

<sup>4</sup> The definition of community engagement from the Carnegie Foundation is the most widely used and cited in the existing discourse (Furco, 2010).

by Christian principles of outreach and charity.<sup>5</sup> They were also informed by “the rise of Progressivism and the modern social sciences,” which promised “greater efficiency, order, and uplift, particularly to urban centres confronting growing social challenges” (p. ix). Influenced by service initiatives in Britain (such as the settlement movement), “Canadian university students were encouraged during this time to work with inner city church missions and organizations such as the Young Men’s Christian Association” (p. xi).

While service and “engagement” thus have a long history in Canadian institutions, CSL as such originated in 1996 at St. Francis Xavier University (StFX) in Nova Scotia (Keshen et al., 2010, p. xii), a Catholic-affiliated institution with a long history of community engagement and economic development (p. xi). Located in the small, rural town of Antigonish, the program at StFX was initially organized by a single faculty member and has always had an explicit focus on social justice (Gelmon, Sherman, Gaudet, Mitchell, and Trotter, 2004, p. 205-206) rather than charity (an important distinction in CSL approaches, discussed later). In 1999, based on the strength of their existing work in CSL, StFX received five years of program development funding from the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation (p. 205).

The beginning of widespread institutionalization of CSL in Canada did not occur until 2005, when the McConnell Foundation provided seed funding to initiate CSL programs at ten universities across Canada and to help establish a national association, the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (Raddon and Harrison, 2015).<sup>6</sup> As of 2010, CSL programs could be found at over fifty universities in Canada (approximately two thirds of the total), although most of these were five years old or less (Keshen et al., 2010). Taylor et al. (2015) note that overall, since 2000, “there has been significant growth of CSL within Canadian universities and colleges. But programs tend to be small in terms of staffing, resources, and student numbers” (p. 2).

As in the United States, CSL in Canada is driven by an interest in improving student experience (Fryer et al., 2007) and the “conviction that universities have a responsibility to make their research, teaching, and service more relevant to, and engaged with, important societal issues” (p. 7). In Canada, most post-secondary institutions are publicly funded, which may heighten this sense of accountability (p. 7).<sup>7</sup> Canadian CSL has certainly learned from the evolution of SL in the United States, but as Smith (2010) states, it “cannot seem to be a direct import from America; it must show sensitivity to Canadian leaders’ values

<sup>5</sup> Himley (2004) also traces the roots of SL in the United States to Christian outreach (particularly that of white women volunteers), but this does not appear to be as strong an explanatory narrative of SL’s origins in the U.S. as is the land-grant tradition. In both national contexts, the linkage between Christianity and service-learning needs further research.

<sup>6</sup> Approximately 40% of the universities in Canada applied to the McConnell Foundation’s call for proposals (Cameron, 2010, p. 12).

<sup>7</sup> Other scholars (Keshen et al., 2010) posit that it is perhaps *because* Canada’s universities are largely funded by the government (with far fewer privately funded or faith-based institutions than in the U.S.) that Canada has been slower to take up CSL. In the U.S., private institutions are most involved in SL: “[a]ccording to a 2008 report from Campus Compact, ‘Faith-based and historically black colleges and universities reported the highest levels of student service, with 61% of students participating in service and civic engagement’” (Keshen et al. 2010, p. xii). The reasons for this statistic requires further research, but one could speculate that the charity ethic of much Christianity and the struggle for civil rights in the black community have played a role in shaping the SL picture in the U.S..

and social structures” (p. 1). While Smith does not elaborate on these values, Cawley (2007) from the McConnell Foundation proposes that they include respect for diversity, solidarity, environmental stewardship, and spirituality (p. 3). Fryer (2007) further explains that community service-learning in Canada is “grounded in [a] tradition of caring for each other, which...is related to factors such as our relatively harsh climate and our rural history...[w]e have needed each other to survive” (p. 5). She cites the “strong social safety net” of the post-WWII era and “our publicly funded, universal health care system” as examples of this ethic of care (p. 5). Chambers (2009) echoes this idea, noting that “commitment to the social well-being of Canadian citizens and public institutions is viewed as a central value of the Canadian identity” (p. 94). Another perspective might be to consider that CSL emerged in Canada, post-1970s, at a time in which the political climate was largely showing support for social-democratic values, and so the ethic of care that Fryer (2007) and Chambers (2009) identify within Canadian CSL makes sense when situated within these political conditions.

While many Canadians embrace these values, it would be naïve to suggest that they characterize Canada in any uncomplicated fashion. As a settler colonial nation-state with a legacy of discriminatory and sometimes genocidal policies and practices, including Indian residential schools, the internment of Japanese-Canadians, the Chinese Head Tax, and the ongoing abrogation of treaties with Indigenous nations, to name a few, Canada, like the U.S., is hardly “caring” to all peoples within its borders. One need only consider the chronic underfunding of education for First Nations children on reserve, for example, to realize that Canada’s commitment to social well-being does not extend equally or equitably to all. Therefore, even though CSL discourse in Canada “rarely invokes Canadian national identity” (Smith, 2010, p. 5), and never with the patriotic fervor of the States, preferring instead to focus on the “needs of local communities and global contexts” (p. 5), it is incumbent upon CSL practitioners and researchers in this country to examine critically the way in which “Canadian values” can obscure the very inequities that CSL claims to address.

### **National CSL infrastructure and the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning**

As Taylor and her colleagues (2015) emphasize, Canadian CSL “lacks the coordination evident in the US” (p. 9). In part, this is because Canada is a large country with a relatively small population,<sup>8</sup> a factor that impedes “our ability to build momentum for CSL and community engagement” (Fryer et al., 2007, p. 17). As Fryer explains, even teleconference scheduling is a challenge across distance and time zones. “It is hard,” she emphasises, “to create a critical mass of practitioners and researchers . . . to include the diversity of voices we would like to include” (Fryer et al., 2007, p. 18). Also, because Canada is an officially bilingual country, “with a long-standing Francophone separatist movement in Quebec,” there is the additional challenge of building national momentum across linguistic and political differences (p. 17).

The Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL), a national organization

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<sup>8</sup> Canada is the second-largest country in the world, covering 3.85 million square miles, and has a population of roughly 33 million (as of 2011). The U.S., which covers 3.8 million square miles, has a population of 310.5 million (as of 2011).

for CSL in Canada, has worked to create this momentum, connecting key players in the field, assisting with CSL research, and creating linkages between organizations at national, provincial, and local levels. Although CACSL is currently inactive,<sup>9</sup> its many contributions are recognized as foundational to CSL in Canada. Historically, it has played an integral role in archiving and distributing information about CSL programs, and it has guided CSL practitioners with various tools to support their involvement in CSL practice. CACSL's origins can be traced to 2001, when StFX invited CSL practitioners from across Canada to attend a three-day symposium on CSL in Canada (CACSL). Approximately ten people attended this initial meeting (Fryer et al., 2007, p. 11). Subsequent meetings were held in 2002 at the University of Guelph, where a national listserv was created; in 2003 at the University of British Columbia; and in 2004 at the University of Ottawa.

At the 2003 meeting in Vancouver, a national steering committee was formed “with specific goals to create a national association to promote and support CSL in Canada, especially through exploring funding opportunities for both individual campus CSL programs and the national association” (CACSL).<sup>10</sup> From its inception onward, the steering committee was made up of a mix of faculty and university staff (e.g., curriculum development specialists, student support staff) and, later, community partner representatives (e.g., Volunteer Centre staff) (N. Van Styvendale, personal communication, March 10, 2017).<sup>11</sup> This mix speaks to the deliberate democratization and grassroots approach of CSL in Canada and is distinct from the approach taken by national organizations in the U.S., such as Campus Compact or IARSLCE (International Association for Research in Service-Learning and Community Engagement), whose boards are composed mainly of faculty and university administrators.

As a national support structure, partnership broker, and resource hub, CACSL paralleled Campus Compact, although without the same structural effect or organizational reach of its southern counterpart. This is because CACSL did not benefit from the same level or stability of funding, something which the current status of the alliance ultimately speaks to. In 2004, the J.W. McConnell Foundation provided funds to establish the association, but CACSL relied on one staff member (who, from the end of McConnell funding in 2010, operated on a part-time and then volunteer basis) to coordinate networking and learning opportunities, whereas Campus Compact has a healthy cadre of national staff, as well as executive directors for offices in individual states.

Originally, the acronym CACSL stood for the Canadian Association for Community Service-Learning; in 2007, the name was changed to the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning to “more truly reflect a vision of a collaborative, supportive network of CSL colleagues and programs across Canada” (CACSL). The change also recognized that “association” was an inaccurate term, suggesting formal cohesion when the organization was

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<sup>9</sup> See the introduction to this issue for more details. Despite its current inactivity, the CACSL website remains online, and there has been a call for new leadership for the alliance. Our paper emphasizes the need to support and fund CACSL as a vital, ongoing resource for the CSL movement in Canada.

<sup>10</sup> See Briggs, this issue, for more on the development of CACSL.

<sup>11</sup> See CACSL's website for a list of past steering committee members.

more of an informal network. Over the years, CACSL played an important role in hosting an annual conference that provided unique networking opportunities to Canadian CSL scholars and practitioners. Information and records of past achievements and events are still available through the CACSL website. The first conference, in 2012, was held at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon (“Impacts of Community Engagement”), followed by the second, in 2014, at Algonquin College in Ottawa (“Healthy & Resilient Communities”), and the third at Mount Royal University in Calgary (“Impact for Sustainability”) in 2016. For the latter two, CACSL partnered with Volunteer Canada to co-host a conference and Volunteer Centre Leadership Forum, thus increasing community voice at the event and highlighting the national commitment to community. This national event for CSL and Community Engagement (CE) alternates with Community University (CU) Expo to connect CSL scholars conducting research and pedagogy on CSL/CE. Because of the focus on community partners and perspectives, the biennial conference and the annual CU Expo have a markedly different tone and agenda from the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE) conference, a U.S.-based organization with an intensive research focus and largely university-based membership.

Canadian CSL will benefit from the foundation of networking and coordination provided by CACSL. Looking toward the future, we are hopeful that there will be renewed, active leadership for CACSL, and—perhaps as part of this renewal—we suggest an online network to advance Canadian scholarship on CSL. Similar to the graduate network in the U.S. (Graduate Student Network – GSN, an affiliate community of IARSLCE), an online network for Canadian scholars would provide a virtual community to advance CSL research and share promising practices. This virtual community would benefit from students and faculty, community partners/organizations, and other key players (administrators, coordinators, or evaluators of CSL programs within Canadian institutions) who are essential in providing consistent leadership for CSL; these perspectives are vital to critical conversations that shape the field (Gemmel and Clayton, 2009; Hayes, 2006). An online forum is particularly relevant in the Canadian context since the country is geographically large and universities are dispersed. Unlike the U.S., which has state and regional groups and events (e.g., Campus Compact has annual regional conferences), Canada has limited regional sub-groups or infrastructure due in part to its much smaller population.<sup>12</sup>

### **Funding and Evaluation of CSL in Canada**

CSL programs in Canada have been funded mainly through foundations, the private sector, and provincial government allocations to postsecondary institutions (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 9).<sup>13</sup> This funding model is different from that in the U.S., where, in addition to substantial private

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<sup>12</sup> Taylor et al. (2015) note the existence of an *Ontario CSL Network*, formed in 2009 and including approximately 24 universities and 8 colleges (p. 9). To our knowledge, no other regional networks exist.

<sup>13</sup> As of 2007, there were no specific funds allocated by provincial governments for CSL (Fryer, Wallis, Sattar, Annette, Battistoni, and Lund-Chaix, 2007, p. 11). This still appears to be the case. CSL is provincially funded in the sense that institutions are funded by the provinces and may choose to allocate funds to CSL programs.

sector and foundation funding, the federal government has provided ongoing support through granting programs such as Learn and Serve America. Because Canada does not have a federal department or ministry of education, and “[u]nder Canada’s constitutional division of powers, postsecondary or higher education is the responsibility of provincial governments” (Fryer, 2007, p. 11), national funding for CSL would be difficult to achieve. One exception would be funding through federal research grants, such as those provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), which can support individual CSL research projects (Smith, 2010).

In the absence of government funding, CSL in Canada has been profoundly shaped by the support and interests of private foundations, most notably the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, but also the Carthy Foundation and the Max Bell Foundation (Smith, 2010, p. 9). An emphasis on community impact has been necessary to secure support from these foundations, which “have been much more interested in social innovation, community participation, and community impact than the institutionalization of a program within a university’s structure” (Smith, 2010, p. 9). In addition to funding the CSL program at StFX in 1999, the McConnell Foundation provided \$9,500,000 to support CSL at ten Canadian institutions between 2004 and 2011 (Cameron, 2010; CCED, n.d.; Smith, 2010; Taylor et al., 2015). This funding was motivated, as then-Senior Program Officer John Cawley (2007) observed, by the Foundation’s interest in “capacity building for community organizations and in supporting the relationship between universities and the larger communities in which they are located” (p. 1). In CSL, the Foundation saw the opportunity to “raise fundamental questions about the relevancy of universities as we know them” through the “democratization of knowledge—in which many stakeholders with diverse backgrounds collaboratively engage in a process of sharing information and creating knowledge for use by communities” (Cawley, 2007, p. 3). The goal, as Keshen et al. (2010) summarize, was to “transform[] universities into community-builders” (p. xii). As the catalyst for widespread CSL in Canada, McConnell’s stated focus on building community capacity and transforming the university is quite different from at least the initial motivations for SL in the United States, which focused more on disseminating the university’s resources than transforming them. Despite the good intentions of these foundations, we recognize the need to contextualize their stated goals by acknowledging that these are private agents who may be working toward particular political and social goals of their own. Further, more work needs to be done to compare the mandates and practices of CSL private funders across the U.S. and Canada in order to explore how CSL is shaped by differing private agendas.

With the end of McConnell Foundation funding for CSL initiatives, programs in Canada face sustainability challenges into the future (Stack-Cutler and Dorow, 2009; Hayes, 2006). While CSL projects can often find internal institutional support—for example, through a university’s teaching and learning fund—Butin (2006) cautions that funding through such “‘soft’ short term grants” contributes to the instability of SL in higher education (p. 474). Ultimately, if we want to see CSL expand in Canada, we need to strategize at both the national and local level about how best to attain sustainable, long-term funding. In considering future funding models, we should also consider the McConnell Foundation’s retrospection that

“[b]y making grants to the universities, the Foundation reinforced the power imbalance between the universities and community organizations. As a result, universities have tended to frame the placements around courses and allocate budgets to meet their needs” (“Key Lessons”). Given these concerns, one possibility would be to advocate for funding to support community organizations, rather than (only) postsecondary institutions, to develop the infrastructure needed for CSL programs or community-campus partnerships more generally.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of evaluation, implementing a classification system for CSL (such as that developed in the U.S. by the Carnegie Foundation) has possibilities, limitations, and risks. Fitzpatrick (2013) recommends a similar type of assessment for Canadian universities, to allow CSL to become more visible and sustainable here. Such a tool would strengthen accountability and consistency in how service activities are presented and practiced by institutions, ensuring that university mission statements align with actual engagement activities on campus. But any standardization poses risks and may elide the regional and relational differences that characterize CSL in Canada. There is also value, we suggest, in the more nuanced understandings of engagement that can be generated through stories and qualitative interviews with community partners, faculty, staff, and students. Recently, the SSHRC-funded national research collaboration CFICE (Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement) began to investigate the “co-creation of a community-first classification system for community-campus engagement (CCE) in the Canadian context” (Koller, 2017). Based on a review of international models of classification and preliminary discussions with those involved in the CCE movement in Canada, the team concluded that “it is more appropriate in the Canadian CCE movement to talk about ‘culture change’ in higher education, the process whereby an ethic of CCE might be authentically embedded in the practices of PSIs [post-secondary institutions], rather than ‘institutionalization,’ which implies a structural rather than a relational process” (Koller, 2017).

For culture change to occur, institutions must take engaged scholarship into account in the evaluation of faculty members for tenure and promotion. Canadian universities have “increasingly adopted the language of community engagement in their speeches and mission statements,” but this messaging “has not yet been fully matched by a growth in institutional supports for community-engaged scholarship [which includes CSL], including professional recognition” (Barreno, Elliot, Madueke, and Sarny, 2013, p. 3). The McConnell Foundation likewise observes that “the current tenure, pay and promotion policies of universities for academics, in which research and publications are the main criteria inhibit the growth of effective CSL programs. Until community service is valued in the same way, many academics will be reluctant to commit the time necessary to effectively design and implement CSL programs” (“Key Lessons”). In 2010, the Community-Engaged Scholarship Partnership, a working group comprised of members from eight Canadian universities and supported by the international organization CCPH (Community Campus Partnerships for Health), examined the written policies of sixteen universities and three colleges, as well as conducted qualitative interviews with community-engaged scholars across Canada. Although CCPH found the

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<sup>14</sup> See Briggs, this issue.

standards of practice for community-engaged scholarship to be “fairly consistent across institutions” (Barreno et al., 2013, p. 74), this work was not always consistently recognized. One challenge is that “[c]ommunity-engaged scholars work primarily in the public sphere, [so] CES is often taken out of the research realm and placed in a realm of public service, voluntarism and community outreach” (Barreno et al., 2013, p. 74). CCPH developed a rubric for use by tenure and promotion committees (p. 81-83). The rubric identifies characteristics of community-engaged scholarship, such as clear and measurable community outcomes, and effective dissemination of knowledge to multiple audiences, which should be operationalized in locally specific ways to mesh with specific community and institutional contexts.

### **CSL scholarship and theoretical models in Canada**

Experiences of CSL are documented across the country, with a historical timeline on the CACSL website, reports that scan the Canadian field, and compilations of Canadian CSL resources (Brown et al., 2007; Gemmel and Clayton, 2009; Hayes, 2006; Raykov, Taylor, and Yochim, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). Much of this scholarship is recent, with around 60% of it published in the years since 2010 (Raykov et al., 2015, p. 1). Although there has been a recent surge of Canadian scholarship, Taylor et al. (2015) found that more than two thirds (69%) of the 2,667 peer-reviewed service-learning studies listed in the ERIC database were conducted in the United States; only 4% were Canadian (p. 12). There is a need to coordinate, synthesize, and share knowledge about CSL, perhaps through a web portal or hub, and to conduct further research and scholarly work on all aspects of CSL. With the 2015 launch of this very *Engaged Scholar Journal*, there is an opportunity to establish a central Canadian site for the publication of CSL research, which until now has been published mostly in U.S. journals (Raykov et al., 2015).

Taylor et al. (2015) provide a valuable review of existing SL/CSL literature in four common themes: CSL delivery and outcomes; student learning about civic engagement, social responsibility, and difference; diversity in the CSL classroom; and structures and supports for effective CSL. While this review does not focus only on Canadian sources, its analysis of scholarly trends highlights a continuum of interests that exists on both sides of the border. Taylor et al. (2015) emphasize that “literature related to Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit and Metis) students [is] particularly limited” (p. 23), a gap that exists in the U.S. scholarship as well, and is especially striking given the settler colonial history and ongoing policies and practices of both nations. In response to this gap, as well as the need for an intersectional approach to CSL research more generally, Taylor et al. (2015) call for specifically “Canadian studies exploring the ability of CSL to provide meaningful educational experiences for Indigenous, first generation, international and racialized and differently-abled students.... Research into the relationship between student positionality and experiences in communities is also needed” (p. 29). Given the current interest Canadian post-secondary institutions have shown in reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, as well as the country’s continuing investment in the discourse of “multiculturalism,” it is timely for Canadian scholars to pursue research that examines the role that CSL plays in promoting or critiquing these national projects.

In terms of research methodology, much current CSL/SL research is descriptive; it uses

case studies or describes programs or courses (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 13). Specific methodologies are not often discussed; when they are, qualitative methods, interviews, and focus groups are more common than quantitative, mixed methods, participatory, or action research methods (p. 13). There is a need for research that uses these methods, as well as longitudinal studies, which are also lacking (p. 4). As Gemmel and Clayton (2009) argue, scholars need to capture how key constituencies (students, institutions, and communities) conceptualize the outcomes of CSL, specifically in Canada. The key is to collect information that “increases the institutional assessment of student learning outcomes and community impact of service-learning,” rather than merely quantifying the number of service-learning courses and so forth (Bringle and Hatcher, 2009, p. 41). It is crucial that this scholarship include the perspectives of the community, which are still largely absent in the existing literature (Stoecker and Tryon, 2009).

Theoretical models to guide CSL in Canada are also needed, as few such models exist (Chambers, 2009). As in the U.S., CSL in this country is influenced conceptually by the educational theories of John Dewey, David Kolb, and Paulo Freire (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 2). Drawing on these scholars, Chambers (2009) summarizes the theoretical underpinnings of service-learning, providing four theories of learning (experiential education, social learning, student development, and liberatory education) to guide CSL approaches in Canada. Through these theories, he argues, we can understand “how learning occurs within a social context (experiential education and social learning), how student participants are impacted, personally and educationally, by their involvement in service-learning (student development), and how social change and social consciousness can occur through service-learning (liberatory education)” (p. 95).

In addition to these educational theories, CSL is informed by what Chambers (2009) calls three “touch points”: the philanthropic approach, the social justice approach, and the social transformation approach. These approaches, which speak to the varied orientations and desired outcomes of CSL practices, echo the long-established distinction between “charity” and “social justice” models of CSL (Kahne and Westheimer, 1996; Morton, 1995), which are sometimes referred to as “traditional” and “critical” models (Mitchell, 2008). Put simply, the traditional or charity model “emphasiz[es] service without attention to systems of inequality” (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 16), whereas the critical or social justice model “aims to ‘dismantle structures of injustice’” (Mitchell as cited in Taylor et al., 2015, p.16). It is important to remember, however, that “the realities of programming are more complex than these dichotomies suggest” (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 16); indeed, because CSL, by its very nature, is shaped by multiple people, perspectives, and conditions, any iteration of CSL may include a mix of charity and social justice approaches, or may align with neither.<sup>15</sup> Prominent service-learning scholar Dan Butin (2007b) takes a similar tack, proposing that there are four types of

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<sup>15</sup> In considering how the charity versus social justice debate applies in a Canadian context, note that Canada’s first CSL program was at StFX, an institution with a history of social justice work (see Kahlke and Taylor, this issue).

SL (technical, cultural, political, and anti-foundational),<sup>16</sup> but stressing that these approaches are not mutually exclusive; often, they overlap. Chambers (2009), like Butin, notes that his three touch points “serve as bridges, not walls. In other words, the touch points connect and overlap and are not seen as strict impenetrable cut-offs between approaches” (p. 85).

In sum, CSL models in Canada are not unique. Canadian scholarship builds on theories that are widely cited in the U.S. literature, and tends not to address, in-depth, how these theories specifically apply (or do not apply) in the Canadian context. Drawing and perhaps departing from existing models, Canadian scholars and practitioners have an opportunity to build CSL models specific to the Canadian or regional context. As Kahlke and Taylor argue in this issue, CSL in Canada is place-based, shaped by the community needs and institutional particularities of the places in which it is located—there are community-driven, issue-based programs (like the Food Security Research Network at Lakehead University), locale-specific initiatives (like the Trent Community Research Centre, located in downtown Peterborough), and theme-based social enterprises (like the *Projet d’Intervention dans la Communauté* at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières). Canadian theories and models of CSL should draw on and analyze these specificities.

## Conclusion

Now over two decades old, CSL in Canada continues to grow and garner public attention in 2018. Funding opportunities at the beginning of the twenty-first century, particularly through the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, generated many CSL activities that continue to exist across Canadian universities and communities. Also during this time, CACSL arose as a national hub that facilitated valuable connections between faculty, staff, students, and community members through CSL activities, resources, and events. In Canada, the field emerged not through the mandate of high-level administrators or the support of government, as it did in the U.S., but through the coming together of scholars and postsecondary staff, and the support of philanthropic foundations interested in “social innovation, community participation, and community impact” (Smith, 2010, p. 9).

Canadian CSL is distinct from SL in the U.S., which centres on nationalistic concerns about U.S. society, educational reforms, democracy, and the need to serve the country. As the U.S. continues to institutionalize service-learning, CSL in Canada focuses on partnerships with community to support initiatives across various disciplines and faculties. “Sustainability,” as Smith (2010) argues, is still a key term in Canadian CSL discourse (p. 7). “Unlike the American movement,” she continues, “higher education is not the central stage of the initiative. The frame or context is the whole community, and universities are only part of the community writ large” (p. 9). Even so, CSL here is strongly influenced by SL in the U.S., and much can be learned from what does and does not work there; some of the recommendations in this

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<sup>16</sup> Butin’s “‘technical’ conception focuses on the pedagogical effectiveness of CSL; a ‘cultural’ conceptualization considers the meanings of the practice for the individuals and institutions involved; and the ‘political’ conceptualization aims to empower historically marginalized groups in society. Finally, an ‘anti-foundational’ approach aims to foster a state of doubt in students as a prerequisite for thoughtful deliberation” (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 11).

paper—for example, the idea to create a similar Graduate Student Network, but to adapt it to engage all stakeholders involved in CSL—came from reflecting on the work done in the U.S.

Nearly a decade ago, John Cawley from the McConnell Foundation acknowledged the deep roots that CSL had on campuses and in communities across Canada. Today, strategic conversations need to take place about the shape of CSL across the country and the obstacles that exist, particularly around funding and national strategy, to ensure that CSL continues to be mutually beneficial to communities and postsecondary institutions, that it is delivered effectively, and that its outcomes for all stakeholders are documented. As scholars such as Hayes (2006) and Taylor et al. (2015) maintain, now is the time to strengthen a coordinated approach with specific attention to Canadian research and practice, and, we argue, with CACSL adequately resourced and staffed as a national coordinating body.<sup>17</sup> Our findings highlight the value of building a *culture of engagement* through sustainable infrastructure that invites and enables a continuous cycle of learning *with* and *in* the community. Future action could include establishing a central location for the combined body of knowledge to support and critique CSL in the Canadian context, sharing resources, and interviewing founders of CSL in Canada to gather their insights. This coordination on a national scale will continue to advance the field.

Our exploration has focused on how the mandates and policies of private foundations have shaped the relational pieces of community service-learning in the Canadian context. Consistent with these findings, our proposed approach to CSL as community-engaged learning and research draws on the strengths of relationships with community partners, Canadian CSL history, and Canadian researchers' contributions. We advocate for a “community first” approach to CSL which strengthens sustainable partnerships to support civic engagement at the institutional and community level.

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<sup>17</sup> Ways to staff and provide resources for CACSL will have to be explored, but some possibilities include SSHRC, the McConnell Foundation, and the Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation. See: <http://www.trudeaufoundation.ca/en>.

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## Community Service-Learning: Why Can't Canada Be More Like Mexico?

Victoria Calvert and Halia Valladares Montemayor

**ABSTRACT** In Mexico, the community service strategy and requirements for undergraduate students are both longstanding and mandated by the Mexican Constitution. Students undertake a minimum of 480 hours of service during their undergraduate degrees, which are coordinated through their universities' Social Service (SS) departments. Many Canadian universities and colleges offer community service through courses and volunteer programs; however, the practice and adoption levels vary widely. Student involvement with community partners, as represented through community service-learning (CSL) and volunteerism in Canada, are sponsored by many post-secondary institutions but are not driven by a national agenda. While, in Mexico, community service is documented at a departmental and institutional level for reporting to stakeholders and the government, in Canada, documentation of community service varies with the institutional mandate and is often sporadic or non-existent; the imperative for systematic student engagement and citizenship development has not been recognized at the national level. This research paper provides an overview of the community engagement practices in both countries, with the national patterns represented through a summative review of selected Canadian and Mexican universities. Suggestions for processes and practices for Canada are proposed based upon the Mexican model.

**KEYWORDS** service-learning, social service, institutional support, legislation, Mexico, Canada

North American post-secondary institutions have demonstrated community engagement through many venues, including co-operative education, student volunteer activities, practicums for professional programs, community-based research, and community service-learning pedagogy (Bringle & Hatcher, 2005). Community service-learning (CSL) is a course-based practice that has been increasingly recognized as an effective teaching methodology which bridges academic curriculum with experiential education through community service.

Many educators recognize that CSL can offer transformational educational experiences that are necessary for deep cognitive understanding and personal development opportunities (Eyler & Giles, 1999). While early community service-learning adopters in the United States focused on civic engagement (Astin & Sax, 1998) and the development of ethical behaviors (Diamond, 2005) as core benefits of the pedagogy, subsequent research indicates a myriad of developmental attributes including cultural empathy and understanding (Bringle & Hatcher,

2010), environmental and community sustainability (DeTray, 2005/2006; Rands & Starik, 2009), and leadership capabilities (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005).

Despite research demonstrating the attributes of community service-learning as a pedagogy, it is perhaps surprising that the practice has not been more widely adopted and that a Canadian national mandate for CSL does not exist. This essay seeks to draw attention to the community engagement philosophy and practice of Mexico, arguing that there is much to learn from a country that has embedded social service in undergraduate programs for almost a century. This essay provides insight regarding the community service requirements, level of adoption, institutional support, and documentation of practices in both countries. Given the broad range of community engagement, we are focusing only on course-based community engagement, typically defined as *community service-learning* in Canada and *social service* in Mexico. A literature review highlighting the effects and trends pertaining to community service-learning will lead into a brief overview of the legislation guiding educational and volunteerism practices. Canadian practices will be described, with detailed illustrations from four institutions. The community engagement patterns of Mexican post-secondary institutions and case examples will then be outlined. Finally, taking into consideration the environmental differences between the two countries, a comparison of the community engagement practices of Canada and Mexico will be drawn, with suggestions provided for Canadian academic administrators and policy-makers to ponder.

### **Literature Review**

Experiential learning has been a cornerstone of academe for almost a century. Experiential learning pedagogies build upon Dewey's (1933) philosophy of educative experience, which recommends active learning and reflection, and include practices such as lab work, practicums, co-operative work terms, cases, community service-learning, and volunteer programs. The majority of Canadian universities active in community engagement typically offer distinct learning opportunities, employing community service-learning and volunteering activities. While definitions of CSL are contested, the literature emphasizes that community service-learning is not volunteerism; that it applies only to projects or activities within credit courses that are based upon theoretical foundations with clear learning objectives, structured actions, and a reflective exercise (Kenworthy-U'Ren & Peterson, 2005); and that both the student and the community partner must benefit (Govekar & Rishi, 2007).

Generally, community service-learning methodology is flexible and encompasses a wealth of teaching options, ranging from short activities to semester-long projects; it may be team-based or individual, and it may account for a small or significant portion of the term mark (Taylor & Pancer, 2007). The level of creativity required of the student will vary (de Janasz & Whiting, 2009), as will the degree of project complexity and the adaptability required by students through exposure to diverse socio-economic conditions or cultures (Hartel, 2010). In an anthology of community service-learning, Beatty (2010) identifies three common models: 1) the professional model, which focuses on career training with cognitive learning goals; 2) the civic engagement model, which focuses on developing active and engaged citizens;

and 3) the social change model, which focuses on empowerment and social justice. Eyler et al. (1999) suggest that four criteria need to be satisfied for the community service-learning experience to be successful for the student: 1) personal and interpersonal development; 2) greater understanding and application of community service curriculum; 3) the transformation of perspective; and 4) the development of citizenship understanding and behaviors. Many proponents of community service-learning would also add that projects should enhance the sustainability of the community partner (Calvert, 2012).

Numerous empirical articles have established the credibility of community service-learning as an effective pedagogy for developing students' cognitive ability (Eyler et al., 1999), empathy (Bloom, 2008; Lundy, 2007), life skills (Astin et al., 1998), civic engagement (Einfeld & Collins, 2008), teamwork (Govekar et al., 2007), and motivation to study (Flournoy, 2007). Outcomes for students have been linked to the development of leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills (Tomkovick, Lester, Flunker, & Wells, 2008), and the development of corporate social responsibility values (Lester, Tomkovick, Wells, Flunker, & Kickul, 2005).

Three nascent community service-learning research themes are sustainability, social entrepreneurship, and international engagement, discussed in brief below. Sustainability is a broad topic that encompasses not only social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors, but the viability of community organizations. Professors develop community service-learning projects that contribute to sustainability with an emergent recognition that students become passionate about the cause when they are intellectually and emotionally engaged (Shrivastava, 2010), and furthermore, that they will become proponents of change, thereby facilitating community development (Dana, Murphy & Callaghan, 2010). Students engaged in community service-learning projects also ease the financial burden imposed by cash-strapped governments and donors (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard & Washburn, 2009). A study by Kenworthy-U'Ren (2008) supports community service-learning as a "best practice" for student experience and community sustainability.

The energy, creativity, and skills displayed by students through community service-learning may also be directed towards students' development of social entrepreneurship attributes. Gregory Dees (1998) describes social entrepreneurs as agents of change who contribute to the organizational sustainability of non-profit organizations through creative entrepreneurial solutions. Universities are building programs to develop social entrepreneurs (Sheil & Bahk, 2010; Tracey & Phillips, 2007), wherein students create or assist ventures that require innovative solutions, while pursuing a social mission (Calvert, Jagoda, & Jensen, 2011). Mount Royal University, for example, offers a range of courses whereby student projects support nonprofit organizations or enhance the efficiency of organizations that promote social benefit, such as organic food distributors or transportation firms employing restaurant waste as fuel.

International service-learning is increasingly popular both as an activity and as a research topic. Popular topics of investigation include: the impact of service-learning on community partners; ethical issues, such as the power dynamics between wealthy northern countries and southern countries; and the complexities of cultural empathy and understanding. Research indicates international service-learning student experiences are transformational (Bringle et

al., 2010), enhance cultural sensitivity (Borden, 2007), increase diversity awareness (de Janasz et al., 2009), and contribute towards the development of global citizens (Battistoni, Longo, & Jayanandhan, 2009). A recent study provided empirical evidence of the effectiveness of CSL in the development of cultural sensitivity (Holsapple, 2012), which is increasingly important in light of the growth of diversity across global populations (Hartel, 2010; Zlotkowski, 1996).

### **Educational Mandates**

Within the federal system of shared powers, Canada's Constitution Act of 1867 provides that education is under provincial and territorial jurisdiction; as such, there is no federal department of education and no integration at a national level. Provincial ministries of education are responsible for the organization, delivery, and assessment of education at the elementary and secondary levels, for technical and vocational education, and for postsecondary education. Some jurisdictions have separate departments or ministries, with one having responsibility for elementary and high school education, and another for postsecondary education and skills training (CMEC, "Education in Canada," n.d.).

Among Canadian provincial jurisdictions, significant differences in curriculum, assessment, and accountability policies exist to address the diverse geography, history, language, culture, and specialized needs of the populations served. While the federal system does not enforce national standards, there are higher education and professional associations with that mandate. There are several national educational associations, including Universities Canada (formerly called the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada or AUCC), which promotes the interests of higher education, and whose members represent many of the postsecondary institutions in Canada. The organization provides a framework that requires institutions to adhere to set principles of quality assurance and transferability for accredited courses, as verified through audits every five years ("How Quality Assurance," n.d.). Another national organization, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), is an intergovernmental forum, of which all provinces and territories are members, whose mandate includes: discussion of policy issues, promotion of initiatives of mutual interest, cooperation with other national education organizations, and the representation of the education interests of the provinces and territories internationally ("About CMEC," n.d.). Statistics Canada indicates a national population of 35 million people, of which 2,034,957 were students attending post-secondary institutions in Canada during the 2015-2016 academic year (2016). 97 postsecondary institutions are members of Universities Canada (Universities Canada, n.d.). While Universities Canada and CMEC provide frameworks and guidance on curriculum, they do not provide guidelines or requirements for community service-learning.

The fragmented Canadian approach to community engagement contrasts with the Mexican practice of required community engagement, which emerged during the post-revolutionary period of 1910 to 1917. The revolution forged a particular philosophy for higher education, which proposes that university graduates should have a background in the sciences and humanities that demonstrates sympathy with the working class. The constitutional requirement for university graduates to participate in social service reflects a national imperative to solve

problems pertaining to low income populations, but also the need to establish a Mexican educational identity (Cornejo, 1992). Of the Mexican population of 120 million in 2015, 2.9 million were students registered in 2,359 post-secondary institutions.<sup>1</sup>

In 1936, the first group of students participating in social service were from the Faculty of Medicine at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México/National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM); they provided health services to a community in Atlixco, Puebla. Upon completing six years of medical studies, the students were required to provide six months of services in a community without a medical doctor (Cornejo, 1992). Afterwards, social service was instituted for all faculties at UNAM. However, it was not until 1942 that social service was adopted through the Mexican Constitution (Cornejo, 1992). The Mexican Constitution stipulates social service for undergraduate students in Articles 3 and 5, and the National Congress passed a regulatory legislation entitled “*Ley Reglamentaria del artículo 5 constitucional, relativa al ejercicio de las profesiones en el Distrito Federal*” (Ramirez, 2012). The ruling indicates that social service is to be either modestly paid or on a volunteer basis; it is for the benefit of the society and the state; it is a requirement to obtain a degree; it should not be performed for less than six months or more than two years (universities typically translate the requirement in their internal policies as a minimum of 480 hours); and universities are responsible for the students while they are performing social service activities (Ramirez, 2012; Universia, 2014).

During the 1945 to 1980 period, Mexican students primarily performed social service to government and health organizations. In 1981, the Commission to Coordinate the Social Service of the Students of Post-Secondary Institutions (COSSIES) was established; it developed the bylaws that provide the basis for all current rulings on the topic (Cornejo, 1992). In 1990, COSSIES was replaced by the Programa Nacional de apoyo al Servicio Social/National Support Programme for Social Service (PRONAS), which provides aid, advice, and information to universities (UJED, 2014).

Whereas a national mandate for community service-learning in Canadian post-secondary institutions cannot be legislated through the federal government, the universal Mexican requirement resulted from a federal mandate and is supported through legislation, long-standing practices, and national organizations. While we recognize Canada cannot model CSL after the Mexican approach due to its educational structure, we would like to provide insight into a national CSL practice that is integrated throughout every post-secondary institution. We believe that it is worthwhile reflecting on how such practices could be adopted in the Canadian context, despite constitutional limitations.

### **An Overview of Community Service-Learning at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada**

Community service-learning has been adopted by more than forty Canadian universities and colleges as a teaching and community outreach strategy, as indicated either through institutional websites or affiliations with the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL).

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://ciees.edu.mx/index.php/publicaciones/estadistica>

Academic institutions vary in their commitment to community engagement, which may be assessed by measuring several factors, identified below. The need for institutional support has been a theme expressed by faculty, community partners, and researchers for many years. Barbara Holland (2001) explored the structure necessary for successful community service-learning projects and stakeholder outcomes, identifying structured assessment, solid communication with community partners, and institutional support as contributing factors. The work required to develop community partner relationships (Calvert, 2012), create and assess projects that fit both time constraints and curriculum requirements (Calvert, 2011), and address perceived risks implicit in such projects (Andrews, 2007) highlights the critical need for institutional support. The degree and range of institutional commitment and support may be demonstrated through the following markers: a dedicated community engagement centre; co-curricular recognition of community engagement; an academic or strategic plan that reflects commitment to engagement; and long-term community partnerships, each detailed below.

First, institutional support may be demonstrated through a community engagement centre: the level of staffing, funding, and resource materials for students and faculty offered through a dedicated centre provides a clear indication of the importance attached to community engagement. Whereas some institutions host community service-learning activities through Learning Services or Student Affairs, others have developed stand-alone community engagement centres which include community service-learning. Centres typically provide materials for faculty, students, and administrators to meet with potential community partners, establish relationships, and identify projects. Some universities, such as the University of Toronto, host yearly faculty development institutes to share community service-learning practices. Dedicated staffing for community service-learning and community engagement ranges from nine full-time staff at the Centre for Community Engaged Learning, where administrators are assigned to academic departments to assist in the design and support of community engagement, to institutions such as Queen's University, where only one designated faculty member or administrator is assigned to community engagement on a part-time basis or as part of their other duties. There are some institutions, such as Thompson Rivers University and the University of Lethbridge, that do not publish any involvement in community engagement; individual faculty or programs may conduct community service-learning, but such participation is not publicized at the institutional level. Other institutions, such as the University of Ottawa, have extensive and visible interface opportunities with the community through efficient databases that match students to community partners for volunteer activities, and faculty to community partners for community service-learning projects.<sup>2</sup>

Co-curricular recognition is another gauge of institutional support. Several institutions, including the University of Alberta, Mount Royal University, and the University of Ottawa, offer a certificate of recognition for students who complete a significant number of community service-learning and/or volunteer activities. The certificate typically requires either three or

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<sup>2</sup> We gratefully acknowledge the information provided in an interview in 2015 by Mona Hafez, Manager, Community Engagement, Centre for Global and Community Engagement, University of Ottawa.

more courses with community service-learning projects embedded in the curriculum, or a combination of coursework and volunteer activities that are recorded by the community partner and the institution. However, because the documentation of student engagement is cumbersome and requires institutionally accepted practices and systems, co-curricular recognition is not widespread, with many institutions recognizing community service-learning activities only at the course level.

Strategic planning is another important activity that registers commitment. Institutional articulation of community engagement as a component of strategic planning often aligns with the adoption of a high level of community engagement through volunteer programs and course-based projects. Statements of commitment to community engagement are common for some universities, but they are not necessarily translated into funding for a community engagement centre or staff. In order to express genuine commitment to engagement, institutional mission statements must flow into community engagement practices, as at the University of Alberta, where as part of the Academic Plan *For the Public Good*, the University articulates its “commitments to learning, discovery, and citizenship, and to connecting communities” (“Campus sustainability,” n.d.).

Finally, an institution’s support for long-term community partnerships is a key measure of its commitment to engagement. The alignment of goals for faculty, the community partner, and the academic institution is challenging, with ongoing institutional commitment necessary for fostering collaborative programs (Brundiers, Wiek & Redman, 2010). Duffy (2010) cites the danger of “one-shot” projects which provide a brief burst of assistance to community partners but that drain resources, such as personnel, and do not contribute the partners’ ongoing sustainability. The development of true long-term dyadic relationships between faculty and community organizations is perceived to be a critical contribution not only to effective and rewarding learning experiences for students, but also to the sustainability of community partners and the deeper engagement of students in social interventions and social activism (Rasch, Murphy & Callaghan, 2010). The selection of partners with a focus on potential long-term relationships reflects a mature community service-learning practice and a high level of institutional and faculty commitment (Calvert, 2012). While many academic institutions indicate their support for sustainability through community engagement, evidence of long-term partnership development as articulated in articles or public information such as websites is lacking, reflecting the developmental nature of community service-learning practices at the institutional level in Canada.

When examining the Canadian community service-learning landscape through the above criteria, the lack of consistency between institutions is evident: the articulation of institutional support and practice varies from a high level of visibility with extensive resources and support for faculty, students, and community partners, to no indication of faculty or institutional community engagement. Further, there is a profound lack of measurable deliverables at the institutional and national level. While a few institutions provide some indication of the level of engagement by identifying the number of students and faculty engaged in community service-learning through coursework, the number of hours of community engagement, and

the number of community partners, the reporting is summative, and the impact upon students and community partners is typically not assessed or conveyed. A sampling of the community service-learning practices at four Canadian institutions through a review of their websites is provided in Table 1. While we recognize that there are additional colleges and universities pursuing community engagement at a course and institutional level, a detailed survey of all practicing institutions is beyond the scope of this paper.

**Table 1. An overview of the community service-learning practices of four Canadian universities**

Criteria <sup>3</sup>	University of Alberta	University of Ottawa
Community engagement centre	Active for over a decade, with a base in the Faculty of Arts and an active advisory board of faculty and community partners.	The Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement has been active for over a decade. Community service-learning and volunteerism are equally supported and recognized.
Staff	Staff includes a director, faculty, and administrators who provide one-stop service and materials for stakeholders.	The director, community coordinators, and student researchers and facilitators support community outreach.
Measurement of community service-learning and volunteerism	Reports are provided periodically; the website indicates 1000 students, 60 courses, and 150 community partners per annum. With a student population of 39,000, the participation rate is estimated to be 3%.	An annual report is provided for community service-learning and volunteer activities. In 2015, over 2,257 students in 148 courses were involved in community service-learning; almost 3,000 more students volunteered.
Student or faculty recognition	The Certificate in Community Engagement and Community Service-Learning is awarded to students completing one community service-learning course and three courses with community service-learning components as well as a volunteer activity.	Awards for excellence in service learning by students, faculty, and partners. A certificate is awarded to students completing three community service-learning or volunteer activities. Scholarships are provided for local and field school projects.
Academic or strategic plan	The Centre's mission reflects the philosophy of the Academic Plan.	The Centre supports the university vision.

<sup>3</sup> Referenced from the University of Alberta ("Community service-learning," n.d.); the University of Ottawa ("Community service learning," n.d.); the University of British Columbia ("Learning exchange," n.d.); and Mount Royal University ("Community service learning," n.d.). Data gathered in 2015. See reference list for full citation information.

Website	Fully developed with materials for faculty, students, and community partners. A database identifies community service-learning courses.	Fully developed with reference sheets and handbooks for stakeholders. An extensive database documents activities and facilitates volunteer placements.
Specially designed community service-learning courses or volunteer activities	Courses specifically designed as CSL offer an in-depth exploration of theories and practices of civic engagement. Some have an industry focus or require community service-learning or volunteer experience.	Staff at the centre work with faculty to incorporate community service-learning into their course curriculum. Extensive volunteer activities are available to students through the database.
International service-learning	International field schools enable students to achieve a certificate in global citizenship.	International volunteer activities and community service-learning courses are offered.
Support for research	A community service-learning research group was established in 2013.	Professors work with staff from the centre on projects and are active in community service-learning research and publishing.
<b>Criterion</b>	<b>University of British Columbia</b>	<b>Mount Royal University</b>
Community engagement centre	Founded in 1999 as a catalyst for social innovation and student engagement. Strategic growth and programs are supported by the institution and donations.	Founded in 2013 at the institutional level, recognizing over twenty years of student and faculty community engagement in course work. Numerous workshops on community service-learning research and curriculum are offered.
Staff	A director and specialized staff offer workshops and support to faculty and community organizations.	One faculty member provides teaching and research support to faculty for community service-learning activities on a part-time basis.
Measurement of community service-learning courses and volunteer activities	The most recent public reporting from 2010 indicated 1,342 students worked with a total of 77 NPOs, 121 public schools, and 10 small businesses.	During the 2015-2016 academic year, over 2,500 students provided 300,000 hours of community service-learning with over 450 community partners. Twenty five percent of the student population is engaged in community service-learning.

Student or faculty recognition	Student stories regarding their experiences are shared on the UBC website.	A citation in community service-learning is awarded to students completing three community service-learning designated courses; approximately 300 students qualify annually.
Academic or strategic plan	In 2011 the strategic direction of the Community Engagement Centre was updated.	The Academic Plan supports community engagement and experiential learning.
Website	Provides some information for stakeholders; a database provides community engagement opportunities for students.	Preliminary stages with curriculum and research references for faculty; no material for students or community partners.
Specially designed community service-learning courses or volunteer activities	Community service-learning, volunteerism, and community research are blended into the UBC definition of community-based experiential learning. Staff work with faculty and students to develop engagement opportunities.	Several community service-learning courses are being designed as introductory general education. Over 40 courses, some with up to 16 sections annually, have community service-learning projects with long-standing community partners.
International community service-learning	There is an emphasis on fostering global citizenship through field schools with long-standing partnerships and funding for students.	International field schools with a strong community service-learning component have been developed. While some are two weeks long, others extend over four weeks and entail several courses.
Research Support	Not identified.	A research group of 14 faculty publish and share research agendas.

### **An Overview of Post-Secondary Institutions in Mexico**

At the outset of this section, we gratefully acknowledge the support provided by Elena Montemayor Rodriguez, Director of Teaching Profession at Universidad Autonoma de Tamaulipas (UAT). Elena used her connections or *guanxi* to obtain valuable information about community service in Mexico not available to the public or in online sources.

Social service in Mexico is an integral part of the undergraduate student experience; organizing and monitoring community engagement is a priority for academic institutions, with faculty and administrators across the institution involved in the process. It is neither community service-learning nor volunteerism, but rather combines the two practices; students apply their academic training in required community engagement outside of academic classes.

In addition to the support provided by the Programa Nacional de apoyo al Servicio Social/National Support Programme for Social Service (PRONAS), universities in Mexico are members of the Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación

Superior (ANUIES), which is a collaborative association for social service that has supported research and data analysis since 1970. ANUIES aims to create an academic space for reflective practices, analysis, and the promotion of research pertaining to social service. Further, it provides awards and diploma programs for innovative programs and the management of social service for administrators, and also organizes national and regional meetings (Escamilla, 2013).

ANUIES has organized thirty-one national and five international conferences based in Mexico related specifically to social service, with varied universities serving as hosts. According to Lopez et al. (1997), the objective of the conferences is to discuss issues and strategies pertaining to social services, including logistical issues, university curriculum, student training, the development of administrative processes, and optimization of the student experience. During the conferences held during the 1978 to 1993 period, a total of thirty-nine proposals related to social service were reviewed, resulting in eighteen strategic initiatives and operational strategies that required nation-wide adoption. This included the 1986 creation of an inter-university commission for social service that integrated all public universities, and the provision of funding to train university personnel in charge of social service. Research papers related to social service training, program design, and impact are prevalent at these conferences.

### **Examples of Social Service in Mexico**

At UNAM, Latin America's largest university and the oldest post-secondary institution in Mexico, social service is coordinated by the General Directorate of Orientation and Educational Services (GDOSE). There is a Vice-Directorate of Social Service, with departments overseeing registration and program activities. In addition, social service activities are regulated by department-based faculty committees that establish requirements through internal policies and administer interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs. These faculty committees are responsible for regulating, coordinating, supervising, and evaluating the social service activities for students, and for providing documentation when requirements are fulfilled (UNAM, 2014). UNAM has more than 4,000 registered social service programs in their database, which is available through a centralized social service website. Students can research programs that have been approved by their faculty and decide the best place to apply their specific degree knowledge (UNAM, 2003). The programs of study with the greatest demand from community partners include: law, social work, psychology, architecture, sociology, management, and accounting. The types of activities the students are required to perform vary from activities directly related to their field of study to simple administrative tasks that are skill-specific.

UNAM provides orientation workshops to students prior to their service, as well as personalized advising thereafter. The social service website informs students about administrative requirements and offers an automated database that identifies potential community partners. The university sends emails and electronic postcards to update students regarding social service information sessions, and a week of specialized training sessions is offered each semester (UNAM, 2014).

At the Autonomous University of Tamaulipas (UAT), the management of social services

is similar to that at UNAM, with a comprehensive administrative structure including a general director, the support of two divisions for planning and management, three sub-directors of social service (one for each of the campuses in the province), coordinators for each faculty, staff to update the website, and a coordinator for social service teams. At UAT, students have the option of performing social service individually or in teams. Students in medicine, nursing, and dentistry are required to provide one year of social service; all other faculties require only 480 hours of service. Students may perform the service at government institutions, non-profit institutions, agricultural centres, educational institutions, or for companies. While medical students are required to have 97% of their courses completed prior to service, all other programs require only a 60% completion rate. To ensure that standards for social service are attained, random visits to audit partner institutions and students are performed. Students are required to submit reports, a work program, an acceptance letter from the community partner, and other documents into an online system (UAT, 2014a; UAT, 2014b; C. Ibarra Gonzalez, personal communication, August 21, 2014).

A sampling of the social service practices for the aforementioned Mexican universities, both with a long-standing history of administrative skill in the area, is provided in Table 2. All colleges and universities pursue social services to a similar extent due to legislative requirements, and as such have similar processes and systems. A detailed survey of additional institutions would provide only minor incremental insight into social service practices and is beyond the scope of this paper.

**Table 2. An overview of the social service practices at two Mexican universities<sup>4</sup>**

Criteria <sup>5</sup>	National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)	Autonomous University of Tamaulipas (UAT)
Social service centre	The first social service activity was conducted in 1936, with full adoption in the 1940s. The centre is under a department called DGOSE.	Centre created in the 1970s at the founding of the university.
Staff	Twelve staff provide services through the centre, with one professor assigned to social service in each faculty.	The centre has 15 positions, with an additional 26 coordinators, a minimum of one representative for each faculty.

<sup>4</sup> Table self-developed from information obtained from both universities' webpages, other secondary data sources, and documents provided by UAT senior administration, all listed in the references.

<sup>5</sup> Referenced from <http://www.dgoserver.unam.mx/>; <http://www.siss.uat.edu.mx/>

Measurement	Reports are provided periodically; the website indicates 324 programs in 2009 and 322 in 2010, with an estimated 10,700 students participating annually.	Reports are per faculty, as well as a total for the campus. Students prepare monthly reports and a final report. The directorate provides reports every six months to partner institutions, the university's quality department, and the university president. An estimated 3,600 students participate annually.
Student or faculty recognition	There is a yearly award dedicated to social service for each program. The objective is to recognize students who had distinguished participation with social impact, and contributed to the economic, social, and educational level of the country. Recipients receive a silver medal and a certificate.	Students get a final letter stating that they fulfill the requirements for social service. Awards for students or faculty are not mentioned.
Academic or strategic plan	The Centre's mission reflects the national and university legislation and General Social Service Regulation (1985).	The Centre's mission reflects the national, state, and university legislation.
Website	Fully developed with materials for social service coordinators, students, and community partners.	Fully developed with materials for social service coordinators, students, and community partners. Contains a database system.
Specially designed social service activities	The centre provides orientation workshops and personalized and ongoing advising for students and community partners.	The social service coordinator for each faculty provides an orientation course to students before they start their service. Additional services are available from the main centre.
International social service	The social service legislation restricts foreign activities.	The social service legislation restricts foreign activities.
Support for Research	Not mentioned at the university level.	Faculty conduct research in social service and participate in national conferences.

### The Differences: What Can Be Learned

According to a report from UNAM (2014), one of the biggest concerns pertaining to social service in Mexico is that the students do not perceive a relationship between the social service

mandate and the activities they are assigned. For example, the community partners assigned as supervisors may ask students to do bureaucratic errands, instead of asking them to perform activities through which they could apply their discipline-specific knowledge. Some consider the social service programs to be inefficient or insufficient, and reflective of a political agenda that should not be mandated. Mexico could attain better student buy-in for social service by educating students on the importance of these activities, indicating the benefits for them and their community partners, and for the economic and social progress of the country. Furthermore, the current restrictive nature of the legislation does not encourage or recognize international social service; as such, opportunities for students are discouraged, resulting in a more limited adoption of a global citizenship philosophy than countries that encourage international service-learning.

International awareness of the social service practices of Mexico has been limited due to two factors: publications are in Spanish and not available in English translations, and professors researching the impact and processes do not typically publish in journals due to restrictive publication practices. Mexican conferences require full papers, and ISBN numbers are assigned to accepted papers. As such, while many faculty attend and present research at conferences, their work will only be shared with those attending the conference and may not be submitted for wider distribution through journal publication. The sharing of research pertaining to social service with community service-learning scholars would be most beneficial, but is unfortunately rare. We understand that similar barriers may exist for community service-learning scholars in Latin America, further contributing to the lack of awareness outside the region of innovative practices, processes, policies, and strategies. The publication of this article extends an invitation for scholars to explore the implications of these restrictions further.

Academics and administrators in Canada would benefit from a national conversation on the role of community service-learning in post-secondary education. The ad hoc method of sponsoring and administering community service-learning in Canada contributes to community partner confusion and negates a consistent message regarding the effectiveness and moral imperative of promoting community engagement in academic institutions. While the social service practice in Mexico could be refined through additional information-sharing with students and methods to ensure the fit between student skills and community partners, the concept of a national agenda for student service is appealing.

**Table 3. Highlighting the differences**

Category	Canada	Mexico
Community engagement legislation	Neither national nor provincial legislation exists regarding community service-learning at the post-secondary level. Some universities have adopted policies of support.	Article 5 of the Mexican Constitution requires social service as a condition of graduation, as does the individual legislation of each university.
Organization commitment, processes, and administration	While several universities have allocated staff and developed systems and measurement processes, most have limited to no support and do not document activities.	All post-secondary institutions are required to manage the engagement process, including bylaws, administrators, and systems to document student activities at a university and departmental level.
Level of faculty involvement	Faculty adoption varies dramatically: typically, nursing schools and some professional programs designate faculty to organize community service-learning projects.	At least one professor per faculty or school is designated to be the social service coordinator by the dean.
Level of student involvement	Data has not been collected at a national level. In the universities with the highest level of adoption 25% of students participate; in most universities, the level would be less than 5%, and in some less than 1%.	All students are required to participate due to graduation requirements. An estimated 508,953 students provide 244,297,000 hours of social service per year. <sup>6</sup> According to ANUIES (2012) in 2010-2011, 401,074 students graduated; therefore, 192,515,520 hours of community service were provided that year. Students conduct much of the service in the final two years of their degree, and in some degrees only after 97% of their degree course work.

<sup>6</sup> We calculated the number of students engaged in social service yearly by dividing the number of registered students by the percentage that graduate, divided by two as students complete the social service requirement after 60% of their curriculum is completed during the last two years of their degree:  $((3,161,200 \times .322)/2 = 508,953) \times 480 \text{ hours} = 244,297,536 \text{ hours annually}$ .

Nature of community relationships	Some universities co-ordinate community service-learning projects for faculty through a community service-learning or community engagement centre and maintain a database. In many universities, individual professors organize projects with community partners.	The partner relationship varies by profession: each departmental liaison representative organizes student and community projects.
Level of volunteerism in society	In 2010, 47% of Canadians contributed their time to charities and non-profits for 2.07 billion hours, which is equivalent to just under 1.1 million full-time jobs (Vézina & Crompton, 2012).	In Mexico 16.5% of the population (INEGI, 2012) have at least some level of higher education, and as such have participated in social service. Volunteerism is not tracked at a national level.
Scholarship of engagement	Until recently, CACSL provided a blog identifying research opportunities, although a national tracking system does not exist. Many Canadians publish in journals based in the United States. <i>Engaged Scholar Journal</i> is a new venue for Canadian work.	Research is coordinated by a national entity called ANUIES, with representatives from 180 public and private universities attending the annual conference.
International service-learning	Many universities and colleges offer international community service-learning opportunities. While some field schools occur during reading break, many last two to four weeks and may be worth several courses.	Limited opportunities exist for international social service. According to the Mexican legislation, social service should be performed for the benefit of the society and the state (Estudia, 2014). As such, social service may only be performed abroad for Mexican institutions such as consulates, and embassies.
Research	Professors present at national and international conferences. Publication opportunities exist in community service-learning or discipline-specific journals.	Professors present at the national Mexican conference: their papers will only be available on disc to those attending the conference. Publications are rare.

## Conclusion

The community engagement practices of Canada and Mexico are a study of opposites: while Mexico has a federally legislated requirement for community service for all post-secondary students and well-defined systems for universities, Canada, where the federal government's mandate does not include education, lacks a national agenda and the adoption of community service-learning ranges widely, from 25% of the student body in some universities to negligible engagement in others. The Mexican legislation responds to community need and facilitates students' sense of responsibility for the well-being of their community. Although the social service process in Mexico has flaws, including the lack of international placements, the consistent messaging of the importance of service and the well-developed support processes for community engagement provide a model that could guide the agenda of Canadian post-secondary institutions.

While Canadian alliances such as CACSL have promoted dialogue and exchanges between community partners and post-secondary institutions, the imperative for systematic student engagement and citizenship development has not been recognized at a political or national level. A national agenda could be developed, however, with assistance from several influential national bodies and associations, such as Universities Canada and CMEC. The conversation regarding a Canadian national vision for student and community engagement is very much in its infancy; we would benefit from looking at the social practices of our Mexican neighbour and building upon the strong components of their practices.

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## Community Service-Learning in a Large Introductory Sociology Course: Reflections on the Instructional Experience

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and Laura Aylsworth

**ABSTRACT** This paper reports on a pilot project that involved the incorporation of Community Service-Learning (CSL) into a large Introductory Sociology class by drawing on the critical reflections of the six graduate student instructors and the primary instructor who taught the course. Graduate student instructors individually facilitated weekly seminars for about 30 undergraduate students, half of which participated in CSL, completing 20 hours of volunteer work with a local non-profit community organization. We discuss the benefits of incorporating CSL into a large Introductory Sociology class and speculate on the value of our particular course format for the professional development of graduate student instructors. A main finding was the critical importance to graduate students of formal and informal training and collaboration prior to and during the delivery of the course. Graduate students found useful exposure to CSL as pedagogical theory and practice, and appreciated the hands-on teaching experience. Challenges with this course structure include the difficulty of seamlessly incorporating CSL student experiences into the class, dealing with the “CSL”/ “non CSL” student division, and the nature of some of the CSL placements. We conclude by discussing possible methods for dealing with these challenges.

**KEYWORDS** graduate student training, community service-learning

Graduate students are frequently encouraged and expected to gain teaching experience early in their academic careers. Often these early experiences take the form of a graduate student teaching assistantship. In some cases, these assistantships are graduate students’ only teaching-related training and often occur within the context of large introductory classes. Primary instructors who teach these large introductory courses are faced with two challenges: educating undergraduate students and also providing an opportunity for pedagogical training of their graduate student teaching assistants. Unfortunately, the prevalence of large classrooms in many universities limits primary instructors’ ability to adopt pedagogies that avoid privileging the classroom as the only site of (and for) learning. Indeed, the use of community service-learning (CSL) in introductory sociology courses is nearly non-existent because of difficulties implementing CSL with existing resources, relative lack of CSL knowledge and experience, and the time and effort it requires from instructors (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Raskoff, 1994, p. 253).

This paper explores our attempt to directly challenge these issues. We approached the course as a team, led by Jana, a sociology professor who was the primary instructor for the course, and six graduate student instructors, all of whom were sociology doctoral students at the time of the course. None of the graduate student instructors had previously engaged with community service-learning as an instructor. Some of the graduate student instructors had previously led seminar groups/tutorials. We had two primary objectives for the course. First, through the incorporation of community service-learning, we aimed to meaningfully engage undergraduate students with the course material, instructors, and community. Second, graduate student instructors were provided with the opportunity to teach hands-on and to actively facilitate the incorporation of CSL in the course. Each graduate student led a seminar group of about thirty students.<sup>1</sup> While this experience included many challenges, it provided the primary instructor and graduate student instructors with valuable teaching and learning experience. We also encountered various difficulties that are inherent in developing a class that balances specific course objectives with the diverse interests, objectives, and skills of multiple graduate student instructors, community partners, CSL staff, and the primary instructor. Our experiences offer an example for others exploring alternate teaching and learning strategies, and/or navigating multiple graduate student instructors and community partners in large classrooms. In an era of increased university enrolments and reduced budgets, experiences such as these are, arguably, valuable for the quality of undergraduate education and graduate student training.

This paper focuses primarily on the impacts that incorporating CSL in large undergraduate classrooms can have on graduate student instructors. Following a description of the background for and the design and implementation of the course, we reflect on graduate student instructors' experiences engaging CSL as pedagogical practice for the first time, including some of the benefits and challenges of incorporating CSL into the course. Then, we speculate on the professional development value of this course format for graduate student instructors—a topic that lacks sufficient research and resources (Gardner & Jones, 2011; Hou, 2010; Lena, 1995; O'Meara & Niehaus, 2009; Pribbenow, 2005). We highlight the ways that our class format bridged graduate student instructors' formal and informal mechanisms of support and discuss how graduate student instructors develop professionally from exposure to transformative pedagogies like CSL, which offer powerful teaching tools to engage students with course content.

## **Background**

The University of Alberta is a large public Canadian university located in Edmonton, Alberta. The Introductory Sociology course is required for Sociology majors, but attracts students from various faculties including Science, Business, and Education because it fulfills a social sciences degree requirement for these faculties and disciplines. The introductory classroom is an ideal space for maximizing student exposure to the sociological perspective because it

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<sup>1</sup> The entire class attended lectures provided by the primary instructor twice a week (Monday and Wednesday) and then met with their respective graduate student instructor-led seminar groups every Friday.

attracts diverse students (i.e. first- to fifth-year, urban and rural, ethnically/culturally diverse, and international students). The course's primary objective is to encourage students to begin to look at social issues differently—sociologically—and develop critical sociological thinking skills.

CSL would seem naturally to complement this course, which covers such topics as “racial and ethnic stratification,” “gender inequality,” “crime and deviance,” and “stratification by class.” Ideally, undergraduate students explore the concepts learned in the classroom through hands-on CSL projects outside the classroom. They bring their community experiences back into the classroom to share, thereby creating the potential for critical thinking and transformative learning. This type of learning challenges “taken-for-granted frames of reference” and provides students an opportunity for reflection and change and “new understanding[s] of the social world” (Jakubowski & Burman 2004, p. 162; Chesler, Ford, Galura, & Charbeneau, 2006; Mezirow, 2000, p.7; McGonigal, 2005; Miller & Groccia, 1997; Potter, Caffrey, & Plante, 2003).

There is a trend among some sociologists to ground their discipline and teachings “in the real world,” a world to which students can relate. For some, sociology is moving toward a more applied and practical discipline (Brooks, 1997); the use of practica, internships, and co-ops helps move sociology classes and programs in the direction of experiential learning, encouraging students to embrace these opportunities to “*do sociology*” (Mooney & Edwards, 2001, p. 183). CSL provides students a unique opportunity to bridge what is often perceived as a community-classroom divide. According to Lena (1995), “[CSL] permits students to test their insights about sociological phenomena in the field and to reflect on their real-life experiences in a more academically rigorous way” (p. 109-110). Without such experiential learning practices, it is less likely that students will “develop sentiments of obligation, commitment and responsibility toward their future communities, and less likely that they will realize their own potential roles in ameliorating social problems” (Hironimus-Wendt & Wallace, 2009, p. 83).

## **Planning, Design, and Implementation of the Project**

### ***Planning***

The course was a special section of introductory sociology (a 3-credit course), with six graduate student instructors, taught during the 2011 fall term. To prepare for this unique course offering with six seminar sections, the CSL program on campus provided crucial support to the instructors (primary and graduate student) during the summer months leading up to the course. Two of the graduate student instructors had experience in facilitating seminars with previous introductory sociology courses offered by the department. The new challenge was the incorporation of CSL into the seminars. The primary instructor had experience teaching the course with and without graduate student instructors and also had experience incorporating CSL into upper level sociology courses with fewer students. She believed graduate student instructors could benefit from the teaching experience of running their own weekly seminar groups, as well as from an exposure to CSL pedagogy. Three of the graduate student instructors had been exposed to CSL as students, but overall the graduate student instructors had little

previous knowledge of or experience with CSL. They were, however, eager to learn about it and explore its potential as a pedagogical approach.

A number of challenges accompany any effort to incorporate CSL into a course (Butin, 2007), but limited research has examined these challenges in practice (Hou, 2010). In our case, the enrollment of 180 students (over 70% of whom were first- or second-year students) provided an additional challenge. We quickly learned that “large class sizes require logistical and administrative oversight that is likely to only grow when service learning is added to the mix” (Hill, Loney, & Reid, 2010, p. 398). Furthermore, “this requires a significant degree of faculty commitment to service learning. These challenges combine to make service learning within large undergraduate classes seemingly rare” (Hill, Loney, & Reid, 2010, p. 398). The size of the class made our attempt unique from other courses with CSL in our institution.

Without a doubt, the involvement of the CSL program on our campus was integral to the execution of this project. CSL started as a pilot project at the University of Alberta in 2003 with three sociology courses, eight community partners, and 40 students.<sup>2</sup> By 2015, it was an established program facilitating partnerships between more than 75 courses and 180 community partners, providing community-based opportunities for over 1500 students. As its mission, the CSL program is committed to fostering “reciprocal relationships between U of A instructors and community partners that create opportunities for students to reflect on and explore classroom and community learning” (“Mission, Vision, Values,” n.d.). Essentially, the CSL program and staff act as liaisons and consultants for instructors interested in incorporating CSL into their courses: they provide the instructors with resources on the pedagogy behind CSL, recruit community partners, set up the student placements, and provide support throughout the term for instructors and students.

In consultation with the primary instructor, the CSL program arranged the community partnerships that suited the course topics, assisted in the introduction of graduate student instructors to their respective community partners, provided training and support in the weeks leading up to the course, and then offered support throughout the course. This training and support took several different forms and went above and beyond what the CSL program typically does for a CSL course on campus. CSL staff were invested in the experimental nature of this project and provided in-kind support to the project through additional training and support.

CSL staff assisted with the course design and met with the primary instructor and graduate student instructors approximately four times in the weeks leading up to the start of the term. Also during this time, multiple resources including three CSL-related articles (Butin, 2007; Himley, 2004; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) were shared with the graduate student instructors to ensure they understood what their appointment entailed and how it would be different from previous teaching assistantships. The CSL program also has a handbook for all instructors using CSL, which was provided to the course instructors prior to the meetings. In additional

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<sup>2</sup> Following the pilot, in 2005 the CSL program on our campus along with staff, dedicated resources, and on-going funding was created. For more information, see the program website: [www.ualberta.ca/community-service-learning](http://www.ualberta.ca/community-service-learning).

meetings, the CSL Partnership Coordinator outlined procedures and strategies for graduate student instructors to use in working with their respective community partners, including administrative processes and deadlines.

In addition to this support, graduate student instructors also attended a half-day orientation offered by the CSL program to all instructors and community partners embarking on a CSL course. This session provides participants with an overview of CSL, its philosophy, and a discussion of its benefits and challenges as well as the practical and administrative components of the process. In the orientation, CSL staff also highlight responsibilities, such as the graduate student instructors' role in facilitating discussions with community partners about the logistics of the partnership. Orientation also provides an opportunity for graduate student instructors and the primary instructor to hear from other instructors who are incorporating CSL, some for the first time and others returning to it as a pedagogical tool.

Designing and implementing effective CSL courses requires extensive time, energy, and knowledge (Butin, 2007, p. 35). In preparation for the course, graduate student instructors and the primary instructor met regularly to arrange the standardized weekly seminar topics and co-design written assignments. Outside of CSL support, several steps were taken to train the graduate student instructors so they could effectively facilitate weekly seminars and evaluate students' written work. In one session, the primary instructor shared several seminar exercises that were used in the past by graduate student seminar instructors. The group discussed ways of implementing the exercises and tactics for facilitating discussions and debriefs following the activities. In another training session, a writing and teaching expert from the campus Centre for Writers facilitated a two-hour session for the group, presenting a step-by-step process for creating possible writing assignments for students in the seminars. Part of this training also involved lessons and practice in creating effective marking rubrics for the assignments. Graduate student instructors worked together on producing assignments and shared marking rubrics, which helped with providing meaningful and consistent feedback to students. An additional session, led by the primary instructor, was devoted to the creation of the seminar syllabus (separate from the course syllabus). Each graduate student instructor was given some degree of freedom to create a seminar syllabus that reflected his/her individuality while still maintaining standardization with the rest of the team (i.e., weighting of assignments was standard across seminars, but exercises and expectations for seminar participation marks varied). Prior to the commencement of the course, each graduate student instructor created his/her own seminar syllabus, lectures, discussion questions, exercises, and means of tracking seminar participation.

The team continued to meet throughout the course, meeting weekly for the first half of the term and then bi-weekly to discuss seminar activities and experiences with the integration of CSL in the course and, especially, to support each other in this journey.

### *Design*

Prior to the assignment of graduate student instructors to the course, the primary instructor and CSL staff decided that for this first attempt at integrating CSL into such a large classroom, the

six graduate student instructors would each partner with one community agency and facilitate a corresponding seminar section. Although this restricted graduate student instructor input into the format of the course, administrative deadlines and bureaucratic processes rendered it the only feasible option. Accordingly, each graduate student instructor was responsible for a seminar group of about thirty students (half of whom were doing CSL) that would meet weekly and was involved with one agency. For example, one graduate student instructor worked with Habitat for Humanity: her CSL students helped build a house. Another graduate student instructor partnered with the local John Howard Society branch and his CSL students participated in a carnival event for inner city families. Graduate student instructors were asked to email the primary instructor their first and second choice of community partners (out of a total of six community partners). Fortunately, each graduate student instructor was able to partner with their community partner of choice.

One of the logistical challenges we worked on over the summer was how to provide a meaningful learning opportunity for all students, given that there were only a limited number of CSL spots available. Due to a variety of reasons (space, staff responsibilities, etc.), each community partner was only able to take a maximum of 15 students. This meant that only half ( $n=90$ ) of the students registered in the course could participate in the CSL option. The other students required an equally meaningful assignment to enhance their learning and contribute to seminar discussions. We decided that the remaining 90 students would participate in media analyses, critically reading and analyzing newspaper articles related to a specific social issue such as homelessness, poverty, social status, and domestic violence. Students would select three or more reputable newspapers (e.g. *The Edmonton Journal*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Guardian*, *The National Post*, *The New York Times*) to follow throughout the term and analyze articles about their chosen topic. Similar to the CSL students, the media students would bring their experiences reading articles on their chosen topic into the seminar discussions. For example, media students in the seminar group that partnered with the Elizabeth Fry Society Court Work Program would be encouraged to research topics related to women's victimization, domestic violence, prostitution, and the gendered nature of crime and criminal justice.

Optional CSL placements for a proportion of the class are typical at our institution, and the CSL program offers advice and assistance to instructors as they strive to create equality between CSL and "non-CSL" student coursework. In our course, CSL students were required to complete twenty hours of work with their community agency. They were also required to complete two reflective journals based on their placement experiences. In an attempt to equalize the work load between CSL and media students, media students were required to complete three reflective journal assignments based on their media analysis. These assignments asked students to take one of their articles and write a one to two page sociological analysis on it. We estimated that these assignments, combined with the ongoing media analysis, would be a comparative workload to that carried by the CSL students.

### ***Implementation***

All of the community partners, the Partnership Coordinator from the CSL program, and the

six graduate student instructors were invited to attend the first class of the term. The staff member from the CSL program explained the basics of CSL participation to students; each community partner gave a brief overview of their organization and placement responsibilities/projects. Graduate student instructors then introduced themselves as seminar instructors and shared their own research areas, including homelessness, media studies, gender issues, and domestic violence. Terra, for example, shared her interest in religion and alternative medicine, explaining how even though she had been assigned the Habitat for Humanity placement, her lectures and discussions would likely include these topics as well as those related to housing and homelessness, etc. Accordingly, students interested in similar issues might find her section a good fit. However, it was also made clear to students that although each individual graduate student instructor would likely use examples from their own areas of interest, there would be some consistency in the seminars, as the topics covered would relate to lecture material from the primary instructor. The main purpose of these presentations was to inform students about the placements, but we also wanted to create excitement about the CSL opportunities being offered.

During the summer, we developed what we thought was a fair procedure for the assignment of students to seminar groups and CSL/media groups. After hearing the presentations by the community partners, CSL staff, and graduate student instructors, students were asked to submit a one to two paragraph rationale explaining their choice of the CSL or media option. This constituted their first graded assignment. If students were interested in doing community service-learning, they were asked to select their top two placement choices and explain their interest. Students who opted not to choose the CSL option were asked to indicate why they had selected the media option and were encouraged to think through their top two social issue topics based on the subject matter related to each CSL placement. This was a way to help direct students in their choice of a specific seminar group based on the group's community partner (i.e., if the student had an interest in issues relating to social and economic inequality, poverty, or homelessness, for example, they might choose the CSL seminar group that was partnered with Habitat for Humanity).

Two of the graduate student instructors, Terra and Greg, volunteered to review the students' responses and assign students to the respective seminars and CSL/media options. It was evident that some students preferred the CSL option because they could personally relate to the social issue; for example, one student's response mentioned his previous experience with homelessness and expressed a desire to support people in similar situations. He stated:

My second choice for tutorial placement is in the Habitat for Humanity group. Being a student, I understand what it means to have low income. I was also homeless for a month, which gave me incredible insight and respect for home owners and renters. Being a young adult, I also eventually want to purchase a home and with the current state of the housing market, home owning seems unachievable.

Even though the Habitat for Humanity placement was his second choice, his rationale

positioned him as an ideal fit for that option. Other students interested in a CSL placement at REACH (an organization that supports crime prevention programs) stated their concern with crime and the increasing number of homicides in Edmonton. These students expressed their desire to learn about crime prevention and the difficulty marginalized individuals experience accessing resources. One student's rationale reads as follows:

My first choice of tutorial placement would be in the REACH Edmonton group. I currently live in downtown Edmonton, and witness the effects of crime every day. I support the REACH program in their efforts to improve community safety and awareness. The contrast to my previous residence in St. Albert is remarkable, as there was little to no crime.

Every effort was made to ensure students were given a fair chance on a first-come-first-serve basis to a CSL opportunity or the media option. CSL ended up being very popular; the limited number of CSL spots meant that not all students who requested a CSL placement were able to secure a spot and not all students who secured CSL spots did so with their desired organizations. We tried our best to accommodate students who did not receive one of their top two choices by assigning them another placement that addressed similar social issues. For instance, some students who selected Elizabeth Fry Society were moved into the REACH placement because the former placement filled up quickly, yet both dealt with crime. We recognize that this process may have disappointed a few students, but we tried to troubleshoot these issues to the best of our ability.

### **Evaluating the Project**

We began this endeavor unsure of what to expect: How would undergraduate students respond to the CSL course component? How would the CSL and media components play out? How would we manage *both* the CSL and media components within the seminars? We were also unsure what to expect in terms of the impact the experience would have on graduate student instructors. The research component of the pilot project aimed to explore the impact of CSL on undergraduate and graduate students. Undergraduate students completed three surveys near the end of the term.<sup>3</sup>

Evaluating the graduate student experience and potential pedagogical learning throughout the course was also an important part of the evaluation component of the project and is the focus of this article. This evaluation was done on an ongoing informal basis, as well as through more formalized feedback at the end of the term. During our regular meetings throughout the term, graduate student instructors shared reflections on pedagogical and logistical experiences and lessons learned, addressing questions like: What worked in seminar this week? What did not work and why? What exercises are we considering for upcoming seminars? In addition

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<sup>3</sup> The three surveys were: 1) the standard course evaluation with Likert scale questions and an optional feedback section provided to students in all campus courses; 2) a standard survey with open- and closed-ended questions administered by the CSL program in all CSL courses; and 3) a survey created by the primary instructor specifically to evaluate this course.

to contributing to the discussion and sharing her ideas from previous years, the primary instructor took extensive notes at these meetings to analyze upon completion of the term. These meetings also functioned as an opportunity to vent and receive support. For example, some of the graduate student instructors expressed frustration with what they felt was a lack of formal training in CSL, as well as a lack of engagement from community partners prior to course commencement. We all struggled with trying to “seamlessly” integrate the experiences of CSL students with media students in seminars and lectures. The rapport built within our group (graduate student instructors and primary instructor) was such that the discussions were open, honest, sometimes heated, but always respectful. In addition to these ongoing meetings, we held a debrief session at the end of term with all six graduate student instructors, the primary instructor, and CSL staff. This allowed graduate students to share with CSL staff their experiences, including the frustrations and difficulties mentioned above, and to provide recommendations for future CSL projects.

Upon completion of the term, graduate student instructors were also asked to answer a series of open-ended evaluation questions, reflecting on their experience with the project, which were similar to the questions asked throughout the term: What worked? What did not? What would you do again? What would you change?<sup>4</sup> The primary instructor then conducted a thematic analysis of the open-ended evaluation questions, and integrated her notes from the ongoing meetings throughout the term. She wrote a draft manuscript based on the analysis and shared it with the graduate student instructors for comments. Each gave detailed feedback on the draft report and a meeting was held to discuss the manuscript and findings. This evaluative component was a collaborative process that involved five of the six graduate students (one of the graduate students opted not to participate in the writing process because of career and life circumstances).

### **Discussion of Main Themes**

Below, we discuss and reflect on some of the most significant themes that emerged from the graduate student instructors’ feedback on the entire experience, focusing specifically on impacts and benefits for the graduate student instructors.<sup>5</sup> Both challenges and positive outcomes are addressed.

#### ***Formal training and practical classroom experience***

A major challenge the graduate student instructors encountered was that even though some had previous experience teaching seminars, this was their first exposure to CSL pedagogy as instructors. Although there is a relative paucity of research in this area, it seems clear that first time graduate student instructors in any setting—regardless of CSL components—tend to face a variety of challenges (Jungels, Brown, Stomblor, & Yasumoto, 2014). For example, graduate student instructors commonly receive minimal teacher training and must often

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix for a list of these questions.

<sup>5</sup> To maintain anonymity of responses, we have chosen not to connect them to specific graduate student instructors.

resort to mentoring one another informally by sharing tips, best practices, role expectations, and norms regarding course content and structure (Gardner & Jones, 2011; Hunt, Mair, & Atkinson, 2012). This lack of institutional support can increase the anxiety that many first-time teachers experience—the anxiety that results from feeling unprepared, lacking confidence, having problems with student-teacher interactions, and experiencing an overall lack of formal support and guidance (Jungels et al., 2014; Smollin & Arluke, 2014; Pelton, 2014). The stress posed by these challenges is exacerbated when combined with the additional uncertainty and responsibilities associated with CSL integration.

In the case of our course, some of these challenges were addressed by providing graduate student instructors with formal pedagogical training and exposure to the challenges and benefits of CSL in practice. As described above, CSL workshops were devised specifically for the graduate student instructors, the primary instructor conducted a workshop on constructing seminar syllabi, and a campus expert provided information on assignment and rubric creation.

In addition to the formal training, graduate student instructors were provided with the opportunity to practice teaching in seminars on a weekly basis, with the support of their fellow graduate student instructors and the primary instructor throughout the term. As one graduate student instructor stated, “This experience allowed me to hone my teaching skills.” Another indicated that this course added “specific experiences” for a “teaching toolbox.” In addition to gaining practical teaching experience that will be beneficial for future primary instructor responsibilities, graduate student instructors were able to witness firsthand the value of incorporating CSL into the course for undergraduate students (in seminar discussions), community partners (since the graduate student instructors liaised with community partners), and fellow instructors (during reflection). Graduate student instructors agreed that CSL is a valuable teaching tool, and as one instructor expressed, “Grounding academic knowledge in lived experience adds tools for students to evaluate, make sense of, and critique both.” Another one of the instructors came to understand the value of the “philosophy of teaching around community engagement”:

I learned that CSL helps break down the myth or idea of the University being this “ivory” tower. . . . I think bridging this gap between university and community is important to improve how both the institution and community generate knowledge or collaborate on a project to give students a hands-on experience to learning.

Nonetheless, we faced challenges that can accompany any course that integrates CSL. For example, while we sought to avoid the CSL/non-CSL distinction, deliberately choosing the label “media students” to stress students’ unique contributions and avoid the negative connotations of “non-CSL,” graduate student instructors reported struggling with trying to counteract this divisiveness throughout the term. They also reported difficulty linking media students’ research with CSL students’ experiences (as well as CSL students’ experiences with course material). In an effort to facilitate exchange between the groups, one graduate student instructor encouraged media students to pair up with CSL students to peer-edit journal

entries. Graduate student instructors also shared media reports that tied into course content during seminar discussions to engage students and attempt to draw connections between CSL experiences, media findings, and course material.

Arranging community placements for ninety students is daunting. We appreciate the stress this project placed on our institution's CSL office, as it was their first time integrating CSL into a large classroom. An issue that the graduate student instructors faced immediately, however, was the need for placements that would involve ongoing CSL participation. Although some placements had ongoing responsibilities for students, others did not. For example, two placements were "one-offs" (specific events rather than ongoing projects) that only involved students for a few days late in the term. It became clear to the graduate student instructors whose CSL students were assigned these placements that this structure was not conducive to the kind of steady discussion and sharing of experiences *throughout* the term that facilitates transformative learning.<sup>6</sup> Graduate student instructors were required to navigate this challenge because CSL students needed to fulfill CSL commitments, as well as course requirements. In these cases, CSL students were not actually *doing* CSL until the last three weeks of the course. Since these students had no "material" to contribute to the seminars, the graduate student instructors were unable to help explicate connections between the course material and the "real world" of the placement (and thereby actually integrate CSL into their seminars). In addition, CSL students were required to complete their reflective assignments without the benefit of CSL experience to write about, and so they were encouraged, like the media students, to look to the media for assistance. CSL students complained that writing journal entries was difficult when very little CSL work was taking place, which became a huge concern. As one graduate student instructor explained, this "prompted some CSL students to voice their displeasure at the apparent inequity in workload." In fact, this tension endured throughout the course, for despite our best efforts to equalize the work done by CSL and media students, both groups expressed their frustration with a perceived inequality in workload; each group thought the other had it "easier" than they themselves did.

Another challenge arose in placements that did not actually involve community presence. For instance, students working with the REACH community partner were not required to visit a community site because the placement offered a lot of flexibility in terms of where the work was performed. As a result, for some students the service work was being performed alone in their homes on the internet for many hours. When reading their journal entries, the graduate student instructor could sense the students' isolation and how individualistic the work became, despite CSL's explicit focus on strengthening communities. Although working in isolation and outside the organization limited the type of critical reflections students could offer, the instructor encouraged the students to analyze their experiences in terms of a "sense of belonging" to society. Some students went beyond this suggestion to think through the implications of the resources they found on the internet; for example, some resources around

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<sup>6</sup> In retrospect, this issue could have been addressed through course design by having students prepare for the "event" by doing research, preparing proposals, and getting feedback from community partners, thereby being "immersed" in the project even though they technically were not yet participating in the event.

certain social issues, like bullying, were outdated or not available on the agency's website. One student connected these internet resources on bullying to his own personal experience as a victim of bullying. The graduate student instructors and their students were challenged to work together to deal constructively with the problems they faced.

Graduate student instructors also made an effort to discuss issues or challenges with CSL in the classroom setting. This allowed other students in the seminars to contribute to the rich discussions around community and the benefits of CSL, even if a particular student was not having an "ideal" CSL experience. Graduate student instructors also contacted community partners to discuss ways to ensure that students could still think through the course assignments in connection to their community service work.

Community service-learning partnership challenges, such as one-offs and isolation, required critical and reflexive thinking between graduate student instructors, undergraduate students, and community partners. As a result, they also offered learning opportunities for graduate student instructors, who modified teaching plans to accommodate the "messiness" of the CSL placements. We learned CSL (and teaching in general) requires flexibility and time compared to other types of teaching assistantships. However, graduate student instructors also received formal training and hands-on teaching experience and strategies for incorporating CSL, which will be beneficial when they are assigned primary teaching responsibilities in the future.

### ***Informal mechanisms of support***

Perhaps one of the most surprising findings was the development of informal mechanisms of support through the teaching assignment, which buttressed the formal support and training. As previously mentioned, our group meetings and the relationships we formed were major sources of pedagogical, professional, and emotional support. Graduate student instructors brought forward student concerns regarding CSL experiences at the group meetings. The team listened to the problems, shared strategies from their own seminars, and offered suggestions. Our strong, collaborative "teaching community network" (Hunt, Mair, & Atkinson, 2012, p. 199) contributed significantly to the project and the experiences of the graduate student instructors.

The significance of collaboration, not only in the planning stages of the class, but also in ongoing problem-solving, was central in graduate student instructors' feedback. Most graduate student instructors commented on the benefits of the regular meetings to workshop ideas and support each other in the navigation of challenges. It is worth noting that the weekly meetings were not compulsory, yet most, if not all graduate student instructors attended them faithfully, whether they personally required the group support or not. They appreciated that if they personally did not require support that week, perhaps their colleagues might. Interestingly, graduate student instructors also met on their own (in pairs over coffee, for example, to discuss group exercises or issues they had with evaluating student work) outside of the scheduled group meetings. They also consulted and met with the primary instructor as needed. Email communication occurred regularly between graduate student instructors and

the primary instructor throughout the term. As one graduate student instructor explained,

I loved the team work we had going on throughout the term. I knew I could always depend on the other graduate student instructors for support and [the primary instructor]. [...] Teaching is definitely improved by the cohort effect because it gives you an opportunity to guide each other to share what works for you or [what] does not and creates this space for learning [whereby] you feel connected with the course/ other [graduate student instructors].

Graduate student instructors not only found the group support rewarding, they also felt it may have improved the flow and success of the course. As one of the graduate student instructors reflects, “We may have made fewer mistakes because we learned from each other.” In this way, formal training, practical classroom experience, and emotional, educational, and professional support came together.

### **Conclusion**

The primary instructor who initiated this pilot project had two goals: 1) to introduce undergraduate students to CSL and the sociological perspective early in their academic careers; and 2) to provide graduate student instructors with professional development and experience with CSL as pedagogical practice. Ultimately, we recognized that the course had a multi-faceted impact on its instructors. Graduate student instructors had transformative teaching experiences through formal and informal support mechanisms that developed as the course unfolded (Jungels et al., 2014).

The course provided graduate student instructors with unique professional training that included real classroom teaching and an innovative pedagogical approach. We learned that incorporating CSL into a large introductory sociology class is feasible, but in our case it required six graduate student instructors, a primary instructor committed to mentoring the graduate student instructors, and CSL program and department support. A research grant to experiment with this course format made this project possible. The formal supports, including training from CSL staff and a writing expert on campus, were critical to executing the course and standardizing seminar groups. However, equally important (and unexpected on our part) was the informal support system that emerged. Meetings throughout the term enabled graduate student instructors to reflect collectively on experiences, debrief after seminars, share ideas, and brainstorm solutions to the “messiness” of incorporating CSL into a large introductory sociology class.

One of the goals of this article is to privilege the experiences of the graduate student instructors in this pilot project. Graduate student voices regarding teaching experience and professional development are relatively scarce in teaching literature. Also uncommon are faculty experiences with integrating CSL into their courses, especially regarding the “messiness” that accompanies this type of pedagogical approach with multiple partners (graduate students,

undergraduates, community partners, and CSL program staff).<sup>7</sup> Most CSL literature focuses on students' experiences with the pedagogical practice. Faculty considering integrating CSL into a class and/or involving graduate student instructors may find our reflections helpful. Finally, little research exists on the incorporation of CSL into large sociology classrooms.

Administrators, instructors, and graduate student instructors face growing pressures and demands due to increased student enrolment, budgetary constraints, and larger class sizes, all of which limit the potential attention to individual students (Crull & Collins, 2004; Hill et al., 2010). Graduate student instructors face growing expectations and responsibilities due to the rising demand for them to be the primary instructors of undergraduate (particularly introductory) courses (Gardner & Jones, 2011). Consequently, graduate student instructors increasingly shape the nature and quality of undergraduate education (Gardner & Jones, 2011), a fact which emphasizes the necessity of pedagogical training. In response to this necessity, Jungels and colleagues (2014) propose the unique position of a Teaching Associate, who is tasked with providing formal and informal mentorship and support to graduate students facing teaching duties for the first time. This paper provides another option for graduate student instructor training, which includes formal teacher training and a transformative pedagogical approach.

CSL in a large introductory sociology course is a worthwhile endeavour that instructors may find more satisfying over time, especially when pedagogical gains outweigh the challenges. As each placement and partnership was different and unique, we were unable to predict the challenges that would arise, and we learned that there is no one way to tackle both anticipated and unexpected challenges. Rather, we remind instructors and community partners that CSL will in fact bring forward obstacles or struggles to work through, as well as some frustrations, but that the experience does create a transformed learning space for all involved. Providing opportunities to discuss CSL as well as the messiness around it (Himley, 2004) and encouraging graduate student instructor involvement in courses with such components can effectively engage graduate students and faculty in service work (O'Meara, 2008). We hope that CSL will become more prominent in the Canadian academic landscape. In fact, we repeated the effort

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<sup>7</sup> From the perspective of the primary instructor, there are several things I learned from the experience that would influence the way I approach this type of course in the future. I think at the “front end” of course development, having graduate student instructors have a say in who their community partners are is very important—in fact, critical—to the success of the experience. I would go so far as to say that community partners should be actively involved in the creation of the seminar syllabi in order to ensure as much as possible a smooth linkage between what CSL students experience in the community and the classroom. To this end, I would also ask CSL staff for more formal training for graduate student instructors and primary instructors in methods for integrating CSL into the course and ensuring equity in work load experience for CSL and “non-CSL” students. I would also do more in terms of assisting graduate student instructors with lecture development (i.e., perhaps hold a workshop session on developing a student-centered lecture) (Troop, Wallar, & Aspenlieder, 2015), conduct more classroom visits in order to provide feedback to graduate student instructors (Parker, Ashe, Boersma, Hicks, & Bennett, 2015), and do more to bring CSL and media student experiences into the larger lecture. From the primary instructor's perspective, what was interesting and quite telling was, at the end of the course, all six graduate student instructors were keen to “try it again” with the same course the following fall. It is significant that despite the challenges, there was a sense among us all that we were not ready to give up on integrating CSL into a large sociology classroom after this one experience.

at teaching CSL in a large introductory sociology class the year following this pilot project and look forward to reporting on that experience.

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## Appendix: Graduate Instructor Evaluation Questions

Were you familiar with CSL before teaching this course? What have you learned about CSL, University-community partnerships?

Is there value in incorporating CSL into classes? What have you learned from this experience?

How did you relate to the planning process for this course?

Can you please reflect on the teaching process itself – did you experience difficulties with integrating CSL into the seminar? How did you deal with these difficulties? Did you experience successes in doing so? Can you describe these successes?

Have you thought differently about your own teaching as a result of this experience?

Please reflect on whether teaching is improved by the ‘cohort effect’ (team teaching).

How useful (if at all) were the meetings during the summer, meetings with Roger, meetings throughout the term?

How can we improve our integration of CSL into the course?

What did you think of the assignments? What could we do differently to improve the experience for CSL and Media students?

Please reflect on what you did to make the ‘connections’ between CSL/Media and course material happen. What specific techniques/exercises did you use to try and assist students to make these connections?

Can you describe any specific instances of how CSL helped student learning? (any situations where CSL helped concepts come alive for students?)

How would you improve the seminars if you were to teach this course again?

Do you have suggestions for improving the seminars for instructors? For undergraduates?

Any thoughts on integrating CSL into the larger classroom (lecture)?

Would you consider incorporating CSL into a future course you might teach?

What worked for you/us this term?

What didn’t work for you/us this term?

What advice would you give future instructors of this type of a course?

What advice would you give future seminar instructors/graduate students involved in this format/type of course/?

Do you have additional comments you would like to share?

## **From “Academic Projectitis” to Partnership: Community Perspectives for Authentic Community Engagement in Health Professional Education**

**Cathy Kline, Wafa Asadian, William Godolphin, Scott Graham, Cheryl Hewitt,  
and Angela Towle**

**ABSTRACT** Health professional education (HPE) has taken a problem-based approach to community service-learning with good intentions to sensitize future health care professionals to community needs and serve the underserved. However, a growing emphasis on social responsibility and accountability has educators rethinking community engagement. Many institutions now seek to improve community participation in educational programs. Likewise, many Canadians are enthusiastic about their health care system and patients, who are “experts by lived experience,” value opportunities to “give back” and improve health care by taking an active role in the education of health professionals. We describe a community-based participatory action research project to develop a mechanism for community engagement in HPE at the University of British Columbia (UBC). In-depth interviews and a community dialogue with leaders from 18 community-based organizations working with vulnerable populations revealed the shared common interest of the community and university in the education of health professionals. Patients and community organizations have a range of expertise that can help to prepare health practitioners to work in partnership with patients, communities, and other professionals. Recommendations are presented to enhance the inclusion of community expertise in HPE by changing the way the community and university engage with each other.

**KEYWORDS** community engagement, social responsibility, social accountability, health professional education, community-based participatory action research

Community service-learning (CSL) in health and human services education has lagged behind developments in other disciplines. In health professional programs, it is often narrowly conceptualized, viewed largely from the perspective of the university, and focused on service delivery. This focus on health care delivery fits with the service-orientation of the health professions. The opportunities CSL presents to build competencies that students need, through hands-on experience, are powerful factors that have shaped the development of CSL in health professional education.

In a systematic review of service-learning and community-based medical education, Hunt, Bonham and Jones (2011) found that engagement with community is almost entirely

conceptualized as service or outreach, whereby students provide clinical care and/or health education to the community, not as a collaborative partnership with the community characterized by reciprocal knowledge exchange. The United States (U.S.) experience has been a model for Canada despite very different health care systems. As in the U.S., CSL in the Canadian context is often about students providing health services to marginalized, vulnerable, or underserved populations (Dharamsi et al., 2010; Gillis & Mac Lellan, 2013; Harrison, MacNab, Duffy, & Benton, 2006; Kabli, Liu, Seifert, & Arnot, 2013).

Behind many programs is the belief that these settings teach students about health disparities, barriers to health care, and the social determinants of health (Hunt, Bonham, & Jones, 2011). This problem-based approach holds a deficit view of the community in which fixing problems is the focus of student learning rather than community strengths, expertise, and assets. It places students (who are often privileged) in a position of power that can reinforce stereotypes and sustain power disparities (Mitchell, 2008). These approaches uphold power inequalities that are counter to important shifts in health care practice such as patient-centred care (Montague et al., 2017) and shared decision-making (Légaré, Stacey, & Forest, 2007).

While interest in critical approaches to CSL and other types of community-engaged learning has been growing among educators, movement beyond server-served relationships has not taken hold in health professional education. Scholars have proposed changes to CSL practice that emphasize relationships and attend to issues of power (Bruce, 2013; Butin, 2015; Steinman, 2011), but sharing power with “Others” outside the university is risky, especially for health professionals who benefit from existing power structures that privilege the academy over the community. A move beyond a focus on health care services would consider engagement more widely and identify the supports required for bidirectional relationships between university and community.

The University of British Columbia (UBC) is the major educator of health professionals for the province. There are 15 health and human service programs: audiology and speech sciences, counselling psychology, dental hygiene, dentistry, dietetics, genetic counselling, kinesiology, medicine, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy, pharmaceutical sciences, physical therapy, population and public health, and social work. Our project team included health education scholars from Patient & Community Partnership for Education in UBC Health and community leaders from PeerNetBC and the Social Planning and Research Council of BC. We conducted a community-based participatory action research project to co-develop a mechanism for patient and community engagement in health professional education and make way for diverse community organizations and populations to engage with UBC in ways that are valid for the community.

Trends in health care, such as consumerism, the increased need for chronic care, and more involvement of patients in decision-making, provide powerful reasons to involve patients in education (Towle et al., 2010). In order for students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to put patient-centred care into practice, patients and their families must become a core part of the education of future health professionals. This idea is intrinsically attractive to communities. However, most patient and community involvement in health professional

education at UBC, as elsewhere, is small-scale, episodic, and largely dependent upon the efforts of individual faculty members to make it happen. Guest speakers, standardized patients (healthy individuals who are trained to simulate real patients in a realistic and reliable manner), and CSL occur in most programs. There are few examples of involvement in student assessment, curriculum development or institutional decision-making, and coordinated involvement across the continuum of education does not exist. Some programs, such as the four-year Entry-to-Practice Doctor of Pharmacy degree (PharmD) program, have dedicated CSL courses. These usually occur during pre-clinical training to give students community experiences prior to clinical or practicum placements. Our study aimed to find ways to move beyond approaches to CSL and community engagement in which the community is simply a venue for student learning. It sought to expand the role of community in health professional education and make way for public input in university programs.

The benefits of active involvement of patients and community members in educational programs include improved student learning and patients' satisfaction in contributing to the education of future health professionals (Towle et al., 2010). But most involvement is episodic, occurring when people from various groups are invited into the classroom to talk about their experiences. Towle et al. (2010) suggest that "if education is to promote partnerships with patients as the basis for health care, we must move from isolated initiatives to coordinated and sustained programmes that develop patient involvement curricula and authentic partnerships at an institutional level" (p. 71). However, research has identified major institutional barriers to authentic involvement of community members in higher education, including power imbalances, stigma, differences in faculty and community members' theories of learning, and the dominance of biomedical knowledge over patients' lived experience (Bacon 2002; Basset, Campbell, & Anderson, 2006; Caron-Flinterman, Broerse, & Bunders, 2005; Towle & Godolphin, 2011). These barriers marginalize community voices in community-university collaborations.

Despite such barriers, schools training students in the health and human service professions are preparing students for a special relationship with the community, that of safeguarding health and well-being (Quinn, Gamble, & Denham, 2001), and many institutions now recognize their responsibility to improve engagement with the communities they serve. This is particularly significant in medicine since the World Health Organization defined the social accountability of medical schools as "the obligation to direct their education, research and service activities towards addressing the priority health concerns of the community, region, and/or nation they have a mandate to serve. The priority health concerns are to be identified jointly by governments, health care organizations, health professionals and the public" (Boelen & Heck, 1995, p. 3). The Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (2010) provided leadership at a national level in this regard by setting out recommendations for the Future of Medical Education in Canada that clearly position social responsibility and accountability as foundational to medical practice and education. The vision states that community participation is critical to achieve social accountability.

Through a community-based participatory action research project, we set out to

develop a model for community participation in health professional education that would lead to communities' sustained influence on and engagement with the university (i.e., the institutionalization of community engagement). Our project envisions reciprocal sharing of resources between the university and the community, each having different assets and social capital. Our strategy involved professionals, educators, community organizations, and end-users of the health system in a process to explore innovative approaches to improving the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of health professionals who work with vulnerable people. This paper summarizes the process and outcomes of this project, which looked to develop: 1) a mechanism for mutually beneficial engagement between communities and the university; and 2) a sustainable educational model for community involvement in health professional education. The research should lead to diverse end-users of the health care system having a mechanism and the power to have sustained influence on the education of health professionals.

## Methods

### *Conceptual framework*

We used a “knowledge interaction” approach (Davies, Nutley, & Walter, 2008) to influence educational policy and practice based on a facilitated two-way exchange of knowledge between multiple stakeholders with diverse sources of knowledge, particularly the university faculty and community. The project engaged both university and community (i.e., patients and civil society organizations) as co-producers and users of knowledge. It is predicated on an understanding of using research that is “interactive, iterative and contextual... [and that] emphasizes social, dialogical and interpretive ways of knowing in an ongoing creative and unfolding process” (Davies, Nutley, & Walter, 2008, p. 190). We utilized Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) methodology, a collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process. CBPR recognizes the unique strengths that everyone brings, with the aim of combining knowledge and action for social change to improve community health and reduce health disparities (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). A core project team of university and community members led the project in consultation with a Research Advisory Committee (RAC) of representatives from community organizations and the university. Guided by CBPR principles, the project utilized a mixture of established research methods for data collection and analysis. Ethics approval was obtained from the university research ethics board.

Key informant interviews and a group dialogue (Israel, Eng, Schultz, & Parker, 2005) with leaders of community-based organizations generated the data. Research is often the domain of the academy and research agendas are usually driven by academic priorities. Community input is most often gathered after the fact, if at all. Thus, we began our investigation in the community. The study was guided by five over-arching questions: 1) What are the characteristics of a partnership between university and community for the purpose of health professional education? 2) What does the process of bilateral engagement and dialogue look like? 3) How can barriers to authentic participation of vulnerable populations be addressed? 4) What kind of educational models can facilitate on-going and authentic involvement of patients/citizens

in health professional education? and 5) What are the benefits to the community?

### ***Participants***

Informant selection and recruitment began with the key informant interviews. The core project team developed a list of approximately 60 contacts within community-based organizations known to work with vulnerable/marginalized populations in British Columbia. From this reference group, we created a short-list of 30 contacts known to be involved in education and thought to be potential educational partners who could contribute to health professional education. In consultation with the RAC, we further refined this list to identify key informants who are well-connected in the community.

We emailed an invitation letter to 20 key informants (e.g., Executive Directors, CEOs) of shortlisted organizations that serve vulnerable populations including Aboriginal people, immigrants, refugees, women, seniors, youth and families, people with chronic disease/disabilities, mental health conditions, HIV/AIDS, and Alzheimer's. We invited them to take part in an interview to explore their ideas about how to involve community organizations and individual patients/clients in the education of health professionals at UBC. Seventeen key informants were interviewed.

Following the interviews, informants, community representatives, and members of the RAC gathered in a dialogue to check and confirm findings from the interviews, get input on process through identification of action items and next steps, and build connections and collective commitment to take the work forward. We invited all those who participated in the key informant interviews to the dialogue, as well as representatives of organizations who had been contacted for interviews but were either unable to take part or did not respond to the initial invitation. Key informants were also invited to bring a colleague from their organization. Twenty-six participants, including members of the RAC and project team, attended the dialogue. In total, 35 individuals took part in the interviews and/or community dialogue. Participants included representatives from 18 community organizations, the RAC, the core project team, and the interviewers. Community organizations represented the following sectors: chronic disease (3); disabilities (3); immigrants (3); mental health (2); HIV/AIDS (2); sexual health (2); seniors (1); non-specific (2). Some of the organizations are local or provincial chapters of well-known national organizations.

### ***Key informant interviews***

*Interview design.* The project team developed the interview protocol and revised it after consultation with the RAC and pilot testing. Questions led participants from describing concrete aspects of their work (e.g., their organization's educational activities, philosophy, etc.) to their ideas about how health professionals should behave differently. The questions concluded with more abstract thinking about processes and structures that would be required to involve vulnerable people in health professional education at UBC. We e-mailed in advance an information sheet outlining a spectrum of involvement containing examples from the literature of patient/community roles in health professional education in six categories (Appendix 1). During

the interviews, this spectrum helped participants identify aspects of patient involvement in education that were of most interest or relevance to them. Subsequent questioning focused on the supports, barriers, processes, and structures required for authentic participation of patients in health professional education. Interviews were conducted by a member of the core team and two individuals with prior interview experience and/or experience working in a community-based organization serving vulnerable populations. Interviewers received two half-day training sessions to familiarize themselves with the interview protocol and techniques. The training included a video-taped practice interview with a volunteer from a community-based organization.

*Interview analysis.* Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were reviewed to identify key themes for each topic area covered in the interviews. Selections of narrative from the transcripts were organized by themes under each of the following topic areas addressed in the interviews: 1) What educational activities are being done/have been done that can be built upon? 2) How should health professionals behave differently? 3) What kinds of involvement are of most interest/relevance? 4) What needs to happen to support community involvement? 5) What community processes and structures are needed? 6) What university processes/structures are needed? 7) What can patients/citizens teach? 8) What are the benefits to community? The summary report organized key findings by interview topic area, each including a high-level summary of the data and an inventory of relevant narrative organized thematically.



*Photo by:* UBC Patient & Community Partnership for Education

### ***Community dialogue***

*Dialogue process.* We pre-circulated a draft summary report of the key informant interviews to participants. The dialogue session began with a presentation of the overall project and interview findings. Participants then self-selected into one of three dialogue tables, each focused on a cluster of the key findings from the summary report. Each dialogue table was asked to complete these tasks: 1) review the subset of key findings and rank in order of importance; 2) identify issues or disagreements; and 3) suggest action items for each key finding and identify two or three specific next steps to act on the key findings in the subset. The dialogue concluded with presentations of the key points from each group and a summary of next steps, including some modifications to the project process based on ideas emerging from the dialogue tables.

*Data synthesis.* The core team took detailed notes at each dialogue table and the plenary and compiled those into a single document. Two team members extracted key ideas and implications, which were then reviewed and agreed to by the whole team before being compiled into a dialogue report. We sent the draft report to all those who attended with a request for feedback, resulting in small editorial changes.



*Photo by:* UBC Patient & Community Partnership for Education

## Results

We present here a synthesis of the results from the interviews and dialogue. The key findings fell into three clusters: involvement in the education of students; supporting community educators; and engagement between community organizations and the university (See Appendix 2).

### *Involvement in the education of students*

Discussions of how health professionals should behave differently (and therefore what changes were needed in their education) focused on the need for health professionals to work in partnership with patients and other health professionals. Informants indicated that partnership requires health professionals to recognize the expertise of others, understand patients' lived experiences, take a holistic approach, be non-judgmental, and be more sensitive to cultural and language barriers. Dialogue participants identified the following concept as the ultimate long-term goal of the project: if involving people from the community in education works, then health professionals will be better at working in partnership.

Informants thought that the communities they serve have a lot to offer students, including teaching about patients' lived experience, stigma, advocacy, communication skills, and cultural knowledge. They suggested documentation of this expertise would be a good method for the community and university to jointly identify opportunities to work together to address students' educational needs.

Informants identified examples of ways in which members of their organization could participate in education along the spectrum of involvement (see Appendix 1). Creation of learning materials and sharing personal experiences were identified as the most obvious and easiest ways in which community could be involved initially. Dialogue participants raised concerns about differences in language (between university and community), the need for the university to recognize different educational activities as valid (such as experiential learning), and the university's habit of asking the community for input or participation after the fact.

Learning opportunities involving vulnerable citizens will be very different from the ways of learning familiar to students. Informants stressed that students need to be prepared to "get

their hands dirty” and understand the need to respect the opportunity to learn from vulnerable citizens as a privilege not to be taken lightly. Some organizations recounted bad experiences with students who did not see the value in some of the work they were asked to do in a community placement. There was some disagreement at the dialogue about whose job it is to prepare students. Most saw preparation as a university responsibility but they also saw a need to involve community.

### ***Supporting community educators***

In the ranking exercise, dialogue participants identified recognizing and honouring patient expertise as the most important finding in this cluster. Sharing one’s lived experience can be emotionally taxing and risky because of the uncertainty about how one’s story will be received. If people do not feel valued and their contributions are not recognized and rewarded appropriately, they may feel exploited and/or disengage from the process. Thus, both emotional and monetary compensation are important. In our study budget, we built in consultancy fees to pay our community partners and honoraria to hire community interviewers and pay participants. But securing long-term, sustainable funding to compensate patients for their expertise and contributions to health professional education will no doubt be a challenge. For many community-based organizations, education is part of their mandate and health professional education could be included as part of their operations. Of course, there are limitations to the community’s ability to pay, and larger organizations may have more capacity than smaller ones. Sharing responsibility and accountability for health professional education requires a reciprocal sharing of resources between the university and community, recognizing that each will have different assets and capital to contribute to the partnership. Systems of acknowledgement and recognition need to be developed that are commensurate with community educator contributions and guided by principles co-created by community and university.

Informants were united in the view that students would have to come to the community



*Photo by:* UBC Patient & Community Partnership for Education

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in order to appreciate and learn from people who are marginalized. Although many liked the idea of creating opportunities for their members to come to campus, the university seems inaccessible to people who are most vulnerable and marginalized. The most authentic learning about people’s lived experiences would take place in the community. Dialogue participants identified a number of factors to address in order to include vulnerable populations from the community, including appropriate meeting spaces,

meeting times, and important etiquettes.

Vulnerable people and those with chronic conditions or disabilities have significant challenges that will compete with their ability to participate in education. Educators need to create conditions to facilitate these people's involvement when they are ready and able, and account for times when they will be unable to take part. The issues of power, confidence, self-efficacy, varying levels of literacy, level of personal comfort, and individual circumstances also need to be addressed. Dialogue participants identified the need for guiding principles, including understanding of the intersection of vulnerabilities and identities and the importance of a strengths-based approach. They also thought that the university should encourage opportunities for students to explore their own vulnerabilities rather than seeing themselves as "fix it" persons. The group noted that there are also vulnerable populations on campus.

Many individuals will need training and support to acquire the skills and confidence to be effective teachers. For example, training should be offered to vulnerable people about how to tell their stories in ways that are helpful to students. Informants thought that few people would initially have the skills and confidence for involvement in assessing students, curriculum development, or decision-making at the institutional level. The gradual entry of such people into the education process could begin with preparation in the community by their community organizations, leading to involvement beyond curriculum delivery. Some types of involvement would require mentorship from the university.

### ***Engagement between community organizations and the university***

The findings in this cluster were all interlinked according to dialogue participants. Through the ranking exercise at the dialogue, the idea of building reciprocal, long-term, respectful relationships with people and organizations emerged as most important. Long-term buy-in from the community and effecting long-term change requires deep commitment to building ongoing partnerships. In contrast to this approach, one informant characterized the current revolving door of students and university projects that flow in and out of her organization as "academic projectitis." While they see the obligations as important, these relationships are taxing for community organizations.

On-the-ground staff members within community organizations are best situated to recruit and support patient and community educators. They have established trusting relationships in the community and they know their members' skills and abilities, special needs, individual circumstances, readiness to participate, etc. A dedicated staff member within the community organization would also help to create and sustain institutional commitment within the organization.

Informants identified the need for a mechanism for efficient information sharing, reporting, and problem-solving between community and university. Such a mechanism requires liaisons from both groups who can work effectively to resolve issues in a timely manner. The dialogue group also confirmed the need for a single agency in the community ("a vessel or container

that keeps all the groups together”).<sup>1</sup> Each organization has different assets and needs, so they need to create unity of purpose. Dialogue participants warned that we must not underestimate the amount of time this will take, given the complexity of the issues.

Community participants saw a community-university partnership offering both short- and long-term benefits for the community. In the short term, it would validate the work of community organizations, be seen favorably by funders, and have direct benefits for participating community members (e.g., personal growth, empowerment). In the long term, key informants envisioned better health care provided by health professionals who are more responsive to community needs. Although organizations see the benefit of collaborating with the university, practical considerations, such as funding and time, need to be addressed. Dialogue participants noted how under-funded and under-resourced community organizations are when it comes to planning a large-scale educational activity.

Dialogue participants knew how community organizations work and how to get things done (e.g., what information would be needed by Boards and for memoranda of understanding (MOUs)). They identified the need for community and university partners to create a common vision, perhaps through linking community involvement in health professional education to trends like involving patients as partners in health care. Participants believed that the foundations for MOUs would require a set of facilitated conversations through which some of the big issues such as language, power differences, and reciprocity could be addressed.

## **Discussion**

Our study reveals a number of promising ideas to enhance university-community engagement for student learning and health equity. Although our study was done in the context of health professional education, many of the issues and solutions have general applicability to higher education in Canada. The study identifies two fundamental barriers to embedding community expertise in education: 1) getting the community and university to work together as peers; and 2) building long-term, reciprocal partnerships between the university and community. Below, we provide a list of best practices for addressing these barriers. Although similar lists have been generated by previous research, in the context of community service-learning in the health professions, our community participants confirm that they are far from being established practice.

### ***The community and university should work together as peers***

The concept of patient involvement in the education of health professionals, flowing from a partnership between community and university, was a new idea for most of the community organizations in this study. Their previous experience was reactive, responding to requests from the university. Indeed, power imbalances between university and community organizations permeated many of the conversations. The university was seen as “all knowing,” the leader in the relationship, and the community as reactive, following the university’s lead. This is

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<sup>1</sup> See Briggs (this issue) for more on the idea of hub organizations.

consistent with Bacon's (2002) finding that community partners tend to view expert knowledge as residing in the university. Through our study, the following ideas emerged that could help overcome the long-standing notion that institutions of higher education have the answers and solutions *for* communities, who are seen as passive beneficiaries of university expertise.

### ***Document community expertise***

Community members have a variety of expertise to share with health professionals. A good starting place for partnership would be to identify, through an asset-based approach, areas that are of mutual interest but difficult to teach in academic or clinical settings. For example, advocacy, communication skills, and cultural and experiential knowledge were identified as relevant areas of community expertise. These topics are not easily taught in the same ways as biomedical knowledge, and sharing this expertise offers a way to put power in the hands of the community.

### ***Develop the role of community as partners in education***

Authentic community engagement at an institutional level will require a shift to engaging with the community as partners in education. Co-creation of educational materials and co-teaching could lead to community involvement in other educational processes such as assessment, curriculum development, and institutional decision-making. Worall (2007) found that community-based organizations' perceptions of themselves as educational partners developed over time. This suggests an approach whereby community partners incrementally develop their role as educators. Engaging community in the design and delivery of orientation activities for community-based learning is a logical way to begin to partner with community members in curriculum development and decision-making.

### ***Learning activities that involve vulnerable citizens should be in the community***

Due to the inherent power imbalance between the university and vulnerable citizens, learning from these community members must take place in the community. Guiding principles for engagement must emphasize students' roles as "learners," not "fixers." Different types of meeting spaces are important not just as locations for meeting people from the community, but as learning environments different from the university classroom or clinical settings.

### ***Develop a unified entity in the community***

To develop the idea of community-university collaboration, coalition, or networking, community needs to have a collective voice to engage with the university. Participants recommended staff liaisons in community organizations to broker relationships with the university and create institutional commitment in the organization. Weerts and Sandman (2010) identified boundary-spanning roles played by university staff and faculty in community-university engagement at research-intensive universities. Boundary-spanning involves building bridges from campus to community and relies on key players whose roles are to work inside and outside the university to help campuses engage with communities. Our findings suggest a

need for designated community equivalents to university boundary-spanners. This community organizing work will help shift power and make way for the community and university to work together as peers. We have made progress to this end by supporting the development of Patients in Education, an independent organization in the community whose members are representatives of community organizations and individuals who wish to advance patient/community involvement in the education of health professionals.

### ***Build long-term, reciprocal relationships***

The central theme of long-term, reciprocal relationships contrasts with how community organizations in this study have been engaged by higher learning institutions. The metaphor of “academic projectitis” emerged here. Informants characterized their prior involvement with the university as excluding and lacking partnership values, a finding documented in the literature (Hunt, Bonham, & Jones, 2011). Language, power differences, and reciprocal relationships need to be addressed in order to move towards a shared vision and the eventual co-creation of MOUs, important foundations for institutionalized community involvement. Dostilio, Brackmann, Edwards, Harrison, Kliewer, & Clayton (2012) call this approach generativity-oriented reciprocity, wherein participants develop identities as co-creators and generate new ways of knowing and being that allow for new ways of engaging. Through our research, the following practical ideas emerged that could help to build more equitable community-university partnerships and expand community engagement in health professional education.

### ***Develop a shared vision focused on student learning***

Many community organizations’ missions, including many of those in the present study, seek to educate the next generation of professionals, citizens, board members, policy makers, and funders. Studies of long-standing CSL partnerships have found that community organizations see a shared responsibility to shape future professionals and will invest their own resources in student learning (Gelmon, Holland, Seifer, Shinnamon, & Connors, 1998).<sup>2</sup> Advancing this shared mission promises more equitable, transformative (for students, community, and the university), and mutually beneficial community-university partnerships.

### ***Address language and terminology barriers***

Community organizations may be uncomfortable with words that are used commonly in health professional education. For example, “patient” can be a major trigger for heated debate, but without leading to agreement on an alternative word based on shared understanding. The term “patient” is particularly fraught because it reflects power disparities inherent in the doctor-patient relationship. To overcome these barriers, community and university must explicitly acknowledge disparities in power and privilege and focus on their common interests in educating students. Community partners elsewhere have recommended frank discussions

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<sup>2</sup> See also Hitchings, Johnson, and Tu’Inukuafe, this issue.

between university and community partners about racial, ethnic, and economic inequalities and their causes as a requirement for establishing good community-university partnerships (Leiderman, Furco, Zapf, & Goss, 2007). These discussions, especially about language, need to be frequently revisited.

### ***Establish mechanisms for two-way communication***

Partnerships require ongoing dialogue and consistent attention and support. For the informants, communication problems were at the heart of their previous experiences with community-university partnerships. Informants also expressed the need for community organizations to be informed about outcomes. Poor communication about students' learning objectives and a need for greater faculty involvement in the relationship have been identified by community partners in other studies (Gelmon, Holland, Seifer, Shinnamon, & Connors, 1998; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Vernon & Ward, 1999). Mechanisms for two-way communication are critical; community organizations want to know whether or not their efforts make a difference to students.

### ***Recognize and honour patient and community expertise***

Mechanisms to acknowledge and recognize community expertise must be put in place—for example, a collaboratively developed framework with guiding principles (possibly through a joint community-university working group). A range of options within those mechanisms is necessary to ensure broad participation from the community. Communities should be involved in creating guiding principles that take into account the type of participation and population.

### **Limitations**

The findings are based on the views of representatives of 18 community-based organizations in the Metro Vancouver area. Although some of the organizations are local branches of national organizations, we do not know if the views are generalizable to organizations elsewhere. We were unsuccessful in engaging Indigenous groups, and this is an important gap (but see Bain, this issue, for an example of Indigenous community-university engagement). The next phase of the project is an equivalent study with key stakeholders in the university.

### **Conclusions**

Our study of how individuals and organizations could be more involved in health professional education, from a community point of view, supports a number of promising directions for community-university engagement that go beyond outreach and service and could begin to address some of the limitations of episodic involvement in curriculum delivery and one-off CSL projects. Many community organizations share a common interest in student education. Communities have a great deal of expertise to share with students and the university. By working together as peers and building long-term reciprocal relationships, people from the community and the university can be co-teachers and partners in education. Re-orienting CSL practice in health professional education to focus not only on the expertise that the university

can bring to the community but also the expertise the community can share with the university will make for more equitable partnerships that can be more transformative and begin to speak truth to power. Deeper, more systemic involvement of patients and community in health professional education should lead to health professionals who are better able to work in partnership to meet community needs. Community-university partnerships at an institutional level will help universities and health professional schools be more socially responsive and accountable to the communities they serve.

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## **Appendix 1: Spectrum of Involvement**

1. Patients involved in creating learning materials used by faculty (paper-based or electronic case or scenario; course materials; videos). Examples: real patient problems as basis for case-based learning; virtual patient cases (may involve video of patient); use of patient narratives.
2. Standardized or volunteer patient in a clinical setting. Examples: standardized patients are widely used to teach and assess communication and clinical skills; clinical teachers may encourage volunteer patients to teach and give feedback; students write up patients' stories.
3. Patient shares his/her experience with students within a faculty-directed curriculum. Examples: patients invited into the classroom to share experiences of chronic illness, disability etc.; community-based patient / family attachment programs; Senior mentor programs.
4. Patient-teacher(s) are involved in teaching or evaluating students. Examples: Teaching associates trained to teach and assess specific clinical skills (e.g., pelvic or breast exam); patients give feedback to students on communication skills.
5. Patient-teacher(s) as equal partners in student education, evaluation, and curriculum development. Examples: patient-educators involved in multiple program areas. Patient educators collaborate in educational decision-making (e.g., curriculum objectives, assessment criteria).
6. Patients involved at institutional level in addition to sustained involvement as patient-teacher(s) in education, evaluation, and curriculum development. Examples: Patients given a formal position in the institution (e.g., Consumer Academic). Patients involved in institutional decision-making (e.g., student selection, reviewing funding applications).

## **Appendix 2: Key findings from the community interviews and dialogue**

Involvement in the education of students

Health professionals need to be better at working in partnership

People from the community have a variety of expertise to share with health professionals

Patients and community members could be involved in many different educational activities

Students need to be prepared for a different kind of learning

Supporting community educators

Recognize and honour patient and community expertise

Learning activities that involve vulnerable citizens need to be based in the community

Develop mechanisms to accommodate special needs and vulnerabilities of community educators

Provide appropriate training and support for community educators

Additional training and mentorship are needed for levels of involvement that involve decision-making

Engagement between community organizations and the university

Avoid 'academic projectitis' and invite on-going, mutually beneficial relationships with community organizations and their members that support their involvement in educating students

Develop staff liaisons based in community organizations to broker relationships between the university and community educators

Create a mechanism for the community to communicate with the university

A partnership with the university is beneficial to the community

## A Study of Limits, Ignorance, and Reading Practices: Community Service-Learning as an Exercise in the Vision of Queer Pedagogy

Jordan Sifeldeen

**ABSTRACT** Theories and practices of community service-learning (CSL) have implicated it in a broad project of confronting the unthinkable of privilege and difference, the culturally situated, political nature of knowledge, and the dialogical, transformative potential of reading. I argue that this understanding of CSL largely aligns in vision, directives, and prospects with an exercise in queer pedagogy. With its critical inquiry into pedagogical practice informed by queer theory, Deborah Britzman's triangulated queer pedagogy not only shares productive theoretical ground with CSL, but can also be seen to inform, enhance, and develop the academic role of service-learning as a methodology of teaching and learning. Through its development in academic institutions in Canada, CSL should look to queer theory's established lexicon in order to take up precise, thickly descriptive, exoteric language which reflects the two fields' productive commonalities. Furthermore, where CSL literature often identifies as volunteerism, internship, and experiential learning, queer pedagogy ascribes deep transformative potential to its approach—a perspective and a potential often undervalued by practitioners of CSL. Finally, a bringing together of community service-learning and queer pedagogy illustrates the need in service-learning literature for an approach to systematic archiving which more closely adheres to the field's emphasis on the creation of deeply reflective and creative academic work.

**KEYWORDS** community service-learning; queer pedagogy; queer theory; archiving

*"... and I suddenly became aware of myself as the victim of a prettified education. I had been taught that knowledge is simple and uncertainty is complicated; that simple truths were safe and felt good."*

-Anonymous

In its project to question, reimagine, and reappropriate traditional teaching and learning practices, queer pedagogy has established a young, evolving, diverse archive of theoretical literature. Deborah Britzman (1995) articulates a triangulated queer pedagogy that is centrally grounded in a study of limits, a study of ignorance, and a study of reading practices. Britzman's queer pedagogy is one which consistently confronts the unthinkable of difference, the complexity and situated-ness of knowledge, and the dialogical nature of reading. In this way, it mirrors both the directives and the potentialities of community service-learning. Shared

between a vision of service-learning and a vision of queer pedagogy is an understanding of identities as constantly constructed, truth as complex/ambiguous, and reading and reflecting as having transformative potential for individuals and their beliefs. Furthermore, both disciplines take interrogating and resisting the politics of traditional educational paradigms (i.e., power-disparate consumer models which posit teaching and learning as the exclusive and mutually distinct work of teachers and students, respectively) as central to both their educational content and method. I maintain not only that queer pedagogy and community service-learning largely align in their goals, vision, and project, but also that existing literature on queer pedagogy can inform and enhance understandings of the academic and methodological value of community service-learning in the future. In this paper, I will argue that community service-learning, as a pedagogical method grounded in theory, can and should look to queer pedagogy's lexicon, discourses of self-identification, and potential for archiving with the aim of both expanding its theoretical foundations and developing as a methodology.

In discussing and explicating a queer pedagogy, it is important to draw a distinction between a pedagogy of queer inclusion/tolerance and a queering of *pedagogy itself*, fundamentally a distinction between content and methodology, respectively. A pedagogy of queer inclusion and tolerance is a largely politically grounded project which aims to promote specifically queer- or gender-themed content in education. Pedagogies of queer inclusion establish LGBT visibility and representation in education as central. This approach, however, can broadly be seen to actually work *against* the project of queer pedagogy by propagating the "normative tolerant" and the "tolerated other" as the only available subject positions (Britzman, 1995). Incorporating queer/LGBT content simply for the goal of inclusion or to validate and catalogue identities may satisfy a discourse of tolerance or political tokenism, but it does not entail the reappropriation of teaching and learning practices themselves for which a queer pedagogy advocates. For Britzman (1995), pedagogical systems aimed at promoting tolerance of queer content and individuals fail to facilitate conceptions of identities as products of identifications; Britzman instead aims to promote a refashioning of identity "as more than a limit of attitude" (p. 160). Counter to their aims, pedagogies of inclusion can work on a deeper level to instead propagate new forms of exclusivity (Britzman, 1995, p. 160).

In contrast, queer pedagogy as a methodological project seeks not to incorporate queer/LGBT content into contemporary teaching practices and curricula; instead, it aims to take up teaching practices themselves from a perspective of queer theory, questioning their structure and function as manufacturers of normalcy (Luhmann, 1998). Queer pedagogy refers to a theory and practice of teaching that reimagines the experience of learning, questions taken-for-granted assumptions about knowledge acquisition, and works to subvert political and ideological systems of oppression (Berlant et al., 1994). While it arises from inquiries into education by queer theorists, centrally, a queer pedagogy need not relate to issues of queerness, gender studies, or even the social sciences. Queer does not implicate the identity of the theorist nor the reader; rather, it predicts the precariousness of the theorized and the read (Britzman, 1995). As such, it is possible to reimagine the teaching of any discipline, skill, or system of thought in a queer way, from women's studies to biology to blacksmithing.

### On the Study of Limits

When referring to a study of limits, Britzman (1995) refers to a move in queer pedagogy to actively explore “where thought stops”—an attempt to deconstruct the discourses and ideologies that allow certain ideas to be valorized as cultural imperatives that are intrinsically factual, while allowing others to be dismissed as irrelevant. Britzman (1995) argues that “queer theory proposes to examine differential responses to the conditions of identities on terms that place as a problem the production of normalcy and on terms that confound the intelligibility that produces the normal as the proper subject” (p. 160). A fundamental pillar of queer pedagogy is an understanding that the unthinkable, unintelligible “other” both instantiates the possibility for self-identification and serves a pedagogical role in the production of normalcy. In other words, our identities are formed, in part, upon a legacy of pedagogical processes in which we learn about what we are not. The ideologically unproblematic self rests precariously upon unthinkably problematic “others.” In elaborating the interrelated nature of queer pedagogy and community service-learning, unthinkability illuminates new, deeper complexity in literature addressing privilege, specifically as unforeseen understandings of privilege have been shown to come out of experiential learning in service-learning placements (Dunlap et al., 2007).

For Peggy McIntosh (1998), institutionalized privilege is unthinkable to those who benefit from it. From the perspective of queer pedagogy, this unthinkability comes out of the struggle of confronting that which we “cannot bear to know” (Britzman, 1995, p. 156), or the “unmarked criteria” of relevance that have shaped what our societies and subjects have shut out or ignored in order to be able to think the way they do (1995, p. 156). By systematically working to establish whiteness, maleness, and heterosexuality as normative subject positions, traditional education systems (i.e., those explicitly and implicitly uncritical of systemic privilege) teach whites, males, and heterosexuals to be oblivious to their own privilege, and furthermore imbue these subject positions with a degree of ideological and political neutrality and objectivity (McIntosh, 1988).

Dominant pedagogies tend to communicate racism and sexism as disadvantaging features of society that negatively discriminate against minorities, but the concept of unthinkability becomes salient when we frame racism and sexism simultaneously as systems of privilege for those who benefit. McIntosh (1988) describes in detail the ways in which her male colleagues in a Women’s Studies department rationalized their positions when presented with the previously unthinkable concept of male privilege: even when conceding that broader systems of privilege exist that advantage men over women, they tended to deny that these systems had any effect on their personal lives or careers (p. 3). Still others accepted that, while some individual theorists may have been male-oriented or misogynistic, broader cultural discourses are more likely to put the sexes on equal footing (McIntosh, 1988, p. 3), or at least that the privileging role of sexism only *partially* accounts for the disparate power relations between the sexes throughout history (McIntosh 1988, p. 3). Though separated from theoretical work explicitly grounded in queer pedagogy, McIntosh’s theorizing of white privilege and male privilege directly ties to queer theories of teaching which address the production of normalcy, the process of

fashioning “normal” as an embodied subject position, and the nature of privilege (specifically as propagated by the ignorance of the privileged) (Smith, 2013; Britzman, 1995; Whitlock, 2010).

Centrally, McIntosh’s theory of privilege, though canonical in community service-learning literature, can be deconstructed and analyzed productively using the established lexicon of queer theory. By understanding white privilege and male privilege as universalizing discourses which confront collective limits to thought, McIntosh can be seen as a theorist who makes “thinkable” the socially and institutionally unidentified truth of privilege; in our reading of McIntosh, we can gain precise language through which the process of knowing becomes real. As mentioned earlier, a central and vital pedagogical benefit of community service-learning is its ability to make students aware of the privileges they have enjoyed but have been trained to disregard throughout their lives. This realization, coming out of experiential learning, segues and is supplemented by deep and diverse literature on male privilege, white privilege, and heterosexual privilege coming out of queer theory. Where community service-learning thrives (giving students a jarring, pedagogically-significant experience that illuminates their privilege), queer theory supplements, expounds, and particularizes (naming this privilege and giving it a theoretical library and lexicon).

On a larger scale, the points of congruence that community service-learning shares with queer pedagogy can allow CSL to expand and develop its lexicon. In their communal project to question teaching practices, uproot and undermine presumed claims to certainty, and embrace the learning process as unclear, complicated, and always mediated, queer pedagogy and community service-learning have deep theoretical ties that can engage with each other dialogically to establish productive common lexical ground.

### **On the Study of Ignorance**

As a study of ignorance, queer pedagogy brings to light the theoretical pitfalls of traditional teaching and learning systems with which community service-learning consistently negotiates, particularly in its self-proclaimed “underside” (Jones, 2002). Specifically, where service-learning notes the inability of some students to “get it” (Jones, 2002, p. 14), queer pedagogy critically unpacks the experiences of learning such that the existence of a singular, uncomplicated “it” to “get” becomes problematic in its own right. Community service-learning, in turn, provides its own set of academically rich, thick experiences particularly conducive to the sorts of critical analysis and ways of thinking that are central to queer pedagogy.

For the purposes of comparing community service-learning and queer pedagogy, ignorance here refers to both the ignorance entailed by a conception of knowledge as static, unmediated, and unambiguous, as well as a conception of knowledge as intrinsically anti-discriminatory and positively correlated with (if not directly predicative of) particular positive outcomes on an individual and societal level (Kirk, 2008).

Broader discourses of queer theory have largely informed understandings of knowledge and learning within the theoretical realm of queer pedagogy. The queer theory movement has demonstrated itself not only to be tolerant of ambiguity, contradiction, and disagreement,

but also to see these instances as sites of productive meaning making. On the whole, queer pedagogy and queer theory tend to differentiate themselves in their desire to unsettle taken-for-granted conventions and systems of knowledge by always understanding them as situated within the societal production of normalcy, and by conceptualizing knowledge and ignorance not as opposites, but as mutually informing and implicating one another (Britzman, 1995; Hall, 2007). For theorists of queer pedagogy, knowledge is always cultural, textual, and ambiguous (Britzman, 1995). Where traditional educational systems tend to see these features as unthinkable, unteachable, or problematic, queer pedagogical theory takes up ambiguity and bias as productive in revealing the creation of truths through discourse.

Canadian universities have taken up similar understandings of learning in their own community service-learning literature, citing the importance of “critical thinking. . . in an increasingly complex world” (Queen’s University, 2014), and improving “ability to handle ambiguity” as a specific program goal (University of Alberta, 2014). In many ways, this mirrors the broader theory and objectives of service-learning programs and ideals. For some community service-learning theorists, an ideal service-learning experience embodies many of the theoretical features of queer pedagogy, including an “uprooting of certainty” (Rutherford, 1990) and an “agitated pedagogy” (Himley, 2004). Himley’s agitated pedagogy takes up ambiguity and theoretical “noise” (p. 434) as crucial, valuable, and distinctive to service-learning in a similar manner to queer pedagogy and Canadian universities on the whole.

Furthermore, Butin’s (2010) exploration of the antifoundational approach to service-learning embraces the ambiguity and situated-ness of truths previously explicated by theorists of queer pedagogy, including the desire “to foster doubt concerning the normalcy and neutrality of our seemingly commonsensical view of the world,” the acceptance that “there is no neutral, objective, or contentless ‘foundation’ by which we can ever know the ‘truth’ unmediated by our particular condition” (p. 12), and the awareness of “the always contingent character of our assumptions and truths” (p. 13). Moving further, Butin (2010) even argues that the role of antifoundational service-learning, much like the role of a queer pedagogy, is “committed to denying us the (seeming) firmness of our commonsensical assumptions” (p. 13). For Butin, the end goal of an antifoundational service-learning experience should not be to close off a discussion with the assumption of knowledge, but to have the discussion remain contentious, problematic, and open to a long-form learning experience.

Britzman (1995) argues in her theory of queer pedagogy that, in order to truly retain a queer understanding of learning, one must detach from the idea that “information discourse, in and of itself, is anti-discriminatory”—that knowledge necessarily correlates with proper behavior in subjects (p. 160). Particularly from an antifoundational perspective, community service-learning, in bringing together theoretical work and lived experience, also grapples with the assumption that “good knowledge leads to good conduct and that receiving information is no problem for the learner” (Britzman, 1995, p. 160). Jones (2002) discusses this issue directly in relation to community service-learning material, acknowledging the various ways in which seemingly anti-discriminatory pedagogy worked instead to alienate students from the theoretical perspectives with which they engaged. For Jones (2002), “the underside of service

learning is not just about students' inability to 'get it' . . . or to process new experience, but also about our [instructors'] inability to anticipate comments, understand where students are in their developmental process, and acknowledge complex issues" (p. 14). In other words, to the extent that service-learning is an embodied experience rich with ambiguities and sites of tension, it is also an experience which brings to light our ignorance as participants. It is not necessarily possible for service-learning (or queer) pedagogies to assume that students will act with proper tolerance or open-mindedness simply by providing them with information, or even with experiences.

The ways in which knowledge, ignorance, and learning are conceptualized within community service-learning mirror not only the structures of queer pedagogy, but also the transformative potential. However, where theorists of queer pedagogy have identified their movement as one of world-building, revolution, and a reimagining and restructuring of the academy, community service-learning, despite equally vast potential to promote change, has self-identified variously as volunteerism, work experience, internship, or community building. Reading community service-learning as a supplement to traditional learning grounded in volunteerism, though *ostensibly* positive, is too limiting; a movement need only be limited by its vision, and where the discourses of queer theory have tended to be expansive, ambitious, and radical, much discourse in community service-learning has been restricted. Community service-learning is not "your learning but better"—it is an entirely new way of imagining how learning might work. Community service-learning, while academic, is also revolutionary.

### **On the Study of Reading Practices**

As a study of reading practices, queer pedagogy illuminates and informs the ways in which community service-learning students engage in critical readings of both academic texts and their experiences of service. Through critical reflection on theoretical texts and experiential learning, service-learning students must (and in many ways, already do) question how identity and identification are influenced and made by investment in the service experience *as an academic text*. The experience of service can be understood as a text in this case in that it is a theoretically rich, academic "work" (or set of works) valued for its content and brought into conversation with other works. In the experience of learning through queer or service-learning methods, students are consistently faced with the knowledge that their identifications of selfhood and readings of texts/experiences are in flux, mediated, and transformed by their learning process—indeed, for Britzman (1995), "reading practices might well read all categories as unstable, all experiences as constructed, all reality as having to be imagined, all knowledge as provoking uncertainties, misrecognitions, ignorance, and silences" (p. 164). Theories of queer pedagogy prompt learners to contend with the ways in which they are being fundamentally transformed through the reading process, or becoming implicated in knowledge. Given the strong connection between service-learning theory and queer pedagogy, the idea of reading texts and experiences as "provoking a dialogue" (Britzman, 1995, p. 163) should be used to inform the structure of community service-learning courses: where instructors encourage individual reflection and inquiry, so too should they facilitate *community* inquiry of

texts. Because most service-learning courses place students in situations in which their analysis of the service-learning text is a communal one (in that the features of the text come out of interactions with community members, classmates partners, etc.), reflecting on and analyzing these texts in a community environment (such as the classroom) allows for a richer, deeper engagement with both experiential as well as theoretical texts.<sup>1</sup>

In a similar vein, the emphasis on reflection present in both community service-learning and queer pedagogy lends itself strongly to archiving. While queer theory has established a theoretical archive and canon, community service-learning, as a younger field, has not yet done so to the same extent. In order to strengthen and diversify community service-learning as a movement and method, techniques of archiving and dialogical reflection should be borrowed from queer theory as a successful revolutionary movement in academic thought. Where queer theory embraces storytelling and reflection as not only valuable, but also academic and theoretical, so too should CSL understand its reflective works (including reflective journal writing and other student-produced works of casual, non-graded reflection) as worthy not only of use within the course, but also of archiving. Such archiving would prevent instructors and learners from repeatedly “reinventing the wheel,” provide a temporality and evolution of thought to the discipline as a whole, and allow dialogical engagement with the work of others. While several Canadian universities have chosen to use student-created e-portfolios as double-duty archiving/reflective projects (Taylor et al., 2014; University of Ottawa, 2014), the lack of dialogical engagement and critical reading among students, low degree of theoretical legitimation, and relative obscurity and low-traffic of e-portfolio web pages means that even intellectual breakthroughs rarely last beyond the timeline of a semestered class or service placement. In other words, reflective works such as portfolios or journals often serve as a framework for community service-learning courses, but (from experience writing, reading, and researching these works) they rarely receive the focused, rigorous attention and analysis they warrant. A possible solution to this disconnect lies in the archiving of discourses present in queer theory circles; by valorizing high-quality reflective and creative works as legitimately academic, queer theory has established an archive whose structure mirrors its principal theoretical underpinnings.

### **Problems & Prospects**

Overall, there is a strong, consistent connection between the goals and effects of community service-learning and queer pedagogy. As a result, existing bodies of queer theory and queer pedagogy can inform, enhance, and deepen understandings of the value of service-learning in academic and theoretical contexts. Explicating queer pedagogy as a methodological study of limits, ignorance, and reading practices allows these connections to become more visible, and the experience of community service-learning can become grounded in a theoretical language that speaks to the specific struggles and features of the service-learning experience. As a study

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<sup>1</sup>As an example of community inquiry of texts, see *Philosophy for Children/Engaged Inquiry* literature: Barrow, 2015; Johnson, 1984; Lipman & Sharp, 1978; Topping & Trickey, 2014.

of limits, queer pedagogy is shown to bring light to “what we cannot bear to know,” particularly in the case of community service-learning, the unthinkability of our own privilege and our own roles as propagators of privilege and cultural normalcy. As the study of ignorance, queer pedagogy mirrors service-learning through its acknowledgement that there can be a disconnect between conceptions of truth and claims to objectivity or neutrality, as well as the enactment of good conduct through good information. By claiming ambiguity, contention, and an agitated, long-form learning process as sites of productivity in theory, queer/service-learning pedagogies distinguish themselves from other modes of thought but draw a connection to one another. Finally, as a study of reading practices, queer theory understands reading as dialogical, reflective, and transformative—a step which service-learning has, in some ways, embodied in its pedagogical practice, but from which it can continue to develop a dynamic, complex, appropriately “queer” system of teaching and learning.

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# Teaching Activism: Reflections on Developing “Leaders of Tomorrow” through Activist Approaches to Community Service-Learning

Brad Wuetherick

**ABSTRACT** “Educating leaders of tomorrow” is a common refrain for many in higher education around the world, but what does it mean to educate leaders of tomorrow? What would a curriculum designed to educate leaders look like across disciplines? This article explores leadership, conceptualized as the capacities (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) required for students to act as positive change agents in society, as an attribute we aim to develop in all students. It also calls on educators to consider how community service-learning grounded in activist pedagogies might provide exceptional opportunities to develop students’ capacities to be leaders across the disciplines.

**KEYWORDS** leadership studies, teaching leadership, community service-learning, activist pedagogies

*“Here at the University of XX<sup>1</sup>, we educate the leaders of tomorrow.”*

The image of a senior administrator addressing a large crowd of students, staff, faculty, or the general public with these or similar words is probably familiar to many in higher education. On its surface it is hard to find fault with this statement. Many post-secondary graduates have gone on to accomplish great things in their professional lives, and many of our current students are capable of accomplishing great things in the future. Of all the institutions that have made this claim, however, few have really explored what it means to educate “leaders of tomorrow,” even as there are increased calls for leadership skills as an important educational outcome across higher education (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Komives et al., 2007; Wagner & Pigza, 2016). What would a curriculum designed to educate leaders look like across the disciplines? When one scratches under the surface of a phrase like “leaders of tomorrow,” particularly in the context of what individual academics, departments, and faculties are currently doing to achieve this goal, the simplicity of this concept begins to evaporate. In a rapidly changing higher education context, particularly arising from increasingly neoliberal accountability mechanisms, how is the education of “leaders of tomorrow” realized within higher education?

Rarely are statements about educating leaders of tomorrow followed by any meaningful

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<sup>1</sup> Here ‘XX’ could symbolize any university or college in Canada or around the Western world.

exploration of what is meant by leadership. This mirrors a common critique within the field of leadership studies, where it has been argued that the majority of publications do not attempt to define the concept of leadership even as they stress the importance of such definitions to advancing the development of leadership capacities (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Nor have we collectively developed a comprehensive vision of what type of leader we are attempting to educate, or what outcomes might be developed if leadership were a universal graduate attribute for all disciplines. And almost no discussion has occurred within higher education around what the best pedagogies might be to develop such attributes.

What limited institutional discussion has occurred around leadership (particularly as represented by institutional academic plans) is usually couched in language around “global citizenship” and “educating for democracy,” both of which are valid goals of higher education and have been explored extensively within the literature, but are not synonymous with leadership as an aim within, and outcome for, higher education. Even when leadership is mentioned as a learning outcome within an institution, rarely is the question asked—to what end and for what purpose? In considering these questions, it is crucial to make explicit the values of the individual academic, the institution, and the broader community as they relate to educating for leadership. As well, we must begin to make explicit why we use the pedagogical approaches we do in relation to the development of leadership attributes.

Informed by research in the field of leadership studies, this paper will explore conceptions of leadership as a universal graduate attribute across the disciplines, in order to consider how we might educate leaders in higher education. In doing so, I argue for a move towards a more activist approach to community service-learning that provides better opportunities for students to engage in reflective practices about their disciplinary learning, the broader needs of the community, and their development of leadership attributes. The goal is to demonstrate that by breaking down barriers (perceived or real) to using activist pedagogies, it is possible to provide meaningful learning experiences to develop authentic leadership capacities through activist community service-learning.

### **Educating Leaders of Tomorrow**

Barnett (2000) argues that the challenges faced in our 21<sup>st</sup> century society are “super-complex” by nature. These challenges require students and graduates to be able to traverse, indeed to thrive in, the super-complexity arising from disciplinary, interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary, and trans-disciplinary ways of thinking, understanding, acting, and being in the world (Barnett, 2010). How, then, do we shape our educational experiences to develop future leaders, or is it enough that it is an exciting side effect of educating the best and brightest? And is the goal of educating “leaders of tomorrow” an intended outcome for the best of our students, or is it meant to be a goal for all of our students? The problem begins with the realization that the vast majority of universities and colleges who use phrases like “educating leaders of tomorrow” have left unsaid what they mean by leader or by leadership.

There is an implicit understanding that future alumni will become accomplished researchers and educators, successful community and business leaders, or elected officials of local to

national governments. The University of Alberta in Canada, to give one example, often celebrates a former Canadian prime minister, a chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, well-known actors or media personalities, and Nobel laureates whom they count among their alumni. The discussion of educating leaders of tomorrow, however, is dependent on what is meant by the word leadership. If you were to ask a number of people, particularly among academics, what leadership is or to describe a “leader,” you would likely receive back just as many different answers.

As part of a research project on leadership, I gathered over fifty open-ended qualitative responses from workshop participants about what “educating leaders of tomorrow” means to them in higher education (Wuetherick, 2007). The participants gave informed consent for their responses to be used as part of an ongoing research project on leadership as a graduate attribute across the disciplines. The responses received from these participants can be grouped into three broad themes. First (and by far the most common), the responses articulate a vision of students becoming effective, global citizens. A representative example is: “Students should graduate ready to contribute to society as global citizens.” Second, the responses articulated the types of attributes or skills “leaders” might need, including such things as conflict resolution, communication, and problem-solving. A representative example is:

[Higher education should] help students acquire the skills needed to be effective citizens and members of a community—critical thinking, analytical skills, communication skills, problem solving skills, comfort with risk, active listening skills, learning skills, persistence, moral judgment skills, team building skills, [and] pattern recognition skills.

Third (and least common), the responses saw students as moral, critical, and socially aware change agents, particularly related to issues of social justice. A representative example is: “[Students] will be change agents, be socially and morally aware, take critical action, . . . [be] aware of and sensitive to issues of social justice and have the confidence and skills to make a positive difference.”

While exploring the different ways of defining and conceptualizing leadership in the literature would be a major piece of scholarly work on its own, it is critical to explore some of the ways in which leadership is understood in the context of higher education. When asked to consider one’s vision of leadership, it is often difficult to disassociate the concept of leadership from the individual conception of the positional leader—a person with some form of title or in a position of authority in some way (Komives et al., 2007). An emphasis on positional leaders frequently promotes a passive approach to followers, and emphasizes a traditional, hierarchical, command-and-control approach to leadership.

Within the leadership studies literature, there have been three common approaches to exploring leadership (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Wagner & Pigza, 2016). The first is a functionalist approach, where leadership is understood as a stable object of study, with a focus on exploring the traits correlated with leadership or different task-centric or people-centric leadership behaviours (including formulating visions or transforming followers). The second is an interpretivist approach, where leadership is understood as a socially constructed phenomenon developed through processes of inter-subjective and value-laden understandings

and interpretations, the study of which is aimed at increasing shared meaning. And the third is a critical approach, where leadership is not just understood as being socially constructed, but also as a domain influenced by patterns of power and domination subject to broader ideological and institutional conditions (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012).

There are a few leadership models that have had a significant influence on the development of leadership education within universities and colleges. Kouzes and Posner (2007), for example, argue that “good leadership is an understandable and universal process” (p. xiii). They go on to argue that there are “shared patterns to the practice of leadership. And these practices can be learned” in the context of higher education (p. xiii). The authors spend a significant majority of their work focused on the characteristics of admired leaders and how individual leaders interact with and motivate those they are working with. By articulating what they call the “practices” for great leaders, Kouzes and Posner (2007) argue that “[i]t’s not the absence of leadership potential that inhibits the development of more leaders, it’s the persistence of the myth that leadership can’t be learned. . . . It’s our collective task to liberate the leader in each and every one of us” (p. 340-41).

“Transformational leadership” is another common way of conceptualizing leadership. Denning (2007) describes transformational leadership as that which is focused on:

- Changing the world by generating enduring enthusiasm for a common cause
- Presenting innovative solutions to solve significant problems
- Catalyzing shifts in values and ideologies
- Demonstrating willingness to sacrifice personal interests
- Helping others get through critical moments of crisis
- Inspiring people to want change
- Recognizing the importance of the followers becoming the next leaders

The literature on transformational leadership usually implies or assumes a moral purpose, often related to order, equality, liberty, freedom, and justice, but rarely makes such purposes explicit (Komives et al., 2007).

Many of the global challenges facing our society, which higher education graduates will grapple with over their lifetimes, require a social justice orientation. Indeed, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2002) articulated just such a vision of higher education fifteen years ago:

[I]nstitutions should foster intellectual honesty, responsibility for society’s moral health and for social justice, active participation as a citizen of a diverse democracy, discernment of the ethical consequences of decisions and action, and a deep understanding of one’s self and respect for the complex identities of others, their histories and their cultures. (p. xii)

If higher education institutions are truly interested in moving forward with an agenda of educating “leaders of tomorrow,” then we must explore how we might move beyond these

two functionalist conceptualizations of leadership in higher education.

Ryan's (2006) vision of critical, emancipatory, and inclusive leadership, for example, argues that leadership needs to be re-conceptualized as an intentionally inclusive practice that values individuals and communities without prejudice based on culture, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or any other form of discrimination experienced in society. Inclusive leadership is based on critical and emancipatory notions that everyone is included, not just in educational processes, but in all social, cultural, economic and political institutions. In this conceptualization, leaders must embrace inclusive practices in all aspects of work and life and ensure that they are not unintentionally being exclusionary.<sup>2</sup>

To make inclusive leadership work in the context of higher education involves making inclusion a non-negotiable reality. In doing so, we create a sense of urgency about inclusion that ensures as much as possible exclusive practices are exposed and mitigated, from pre-admission to convocation and beyond, and from first-year students to senior administrators. An inclusive leadership model for higher education would involve educating participants (students, staff, and faculty) about roles and responsibilities in inclusive leadership processes in all disciplines, developing a critical consciousness about inclusion in society (that confronts, for example, the reality of who is privileged to attend institutions of higher learning), developing the complementary attributes that make inclusive leadership possible (empathy, communication, ethical and social understanding), and promoting dialogue and adopting inclusive processes at the institution and beyond (Ryan, 2006).

A similar way of conceptualizing leadership is articulated by Komives et al. (2007) as a relational model of leadership—where leadership is defined as “a relational and ethical process of people coming together attempting to accomplish positive change” (p. 29). This relational model of leadership is purposeful, inclusive, empowering, ethical, and process-oriented. It ties the inclusive and critical nature of Ryan's model to a sense of leadership for a social justice purpose, as well as to a sense of how the individual can function as a change agent within an organization or society (Komives et al., 2007; Ryan, 2006). It is critical that higher education institutions conceptualize leadership as an outcome of higher education in the context of relational and ethical practices that foster positive change, and the attributes that enable such an inclusive model of leadership ought to be the focus of academic programs across the disciplines.

So how do we best mobilize a campus community around developing leadership attributes that foster an inclusive, relational leadership practice? The University of Alberta, where I am an alumnus, is just one of a few thousand universities in North America alone, and has over 275,000 living alumni. Are they all leaders, or are there only a select few? Looking at the entire group of living alumni at that one institution, has the institution failed or succeeded

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<sup>2</sup> Of course, there are important nuances within the term “inclusion” and limitations to the use of inclusion as an institutional goal. Inclusive leadership must still anchor itself in a critical interrogation of the structural reasons underlying inequality and injustice, and it must remain attentive to how the value of inclusion is legitimately contested. Jordan Sifeldeen (this issue), for example, cautions against the idea of inclusivity, seeing it as a mechanism for normalizing or “tolerating” difference.

to deliver on a belief that they educate “leaders of tomorrow”? How would one evaluate it? How would academic programs need to change? What about individual courses? What is the most appropriate pedagogy for engaging in this type of learning? How do universities provide students opportunities to develop leadership skills, and to engage as leaders in their community?

Much like the literature on undergraduate research and inquiry argues that research and inquiry skills are graduate attributes *all* students should develop across *all* disciplines, it can be argued that leadership attributes are equally important for *all* students across higher education (Healey & Jenkins, 2009; Wuetherick & McLaughlin, 2011). To achieve this aim, institutions need to focus on pedagogical and curricular approaches known to develop leadership attributes. The intersectionality of leadership development and service-learning is well-developed in the literature (Mayhew & DeLuca Fernandez, 2007; Owen, 2016; Seemiller, 2016; Wagner & Pigza, 2016). It has been argued that “the theory and practice of leadership and of service-learning share common elements that make service-learning a fitting pedagogical choice for those who teach and facilitate leadership education” (Wagner & Pigza, 2016, p. 11). When leadership attributes are framed with a social justice orientation, Wagner & Pigza (2016) argue that we must take an approach to service-learning grounded in six critical values: awareness of context, reciprocal participation, critical examination of power and privilege, reflective practices, sustained engagement, and a commitment to change and justice. Indeed, critical reflection has been identified as the key differentiator for moving from a service to a social justice paradigm in leadership education, which enables a move towards critical discourse and action (Owen, 2016). Therefore, I argue for an activist pedagogical approach to higher education, grounded in critical community service-learning, as an important component of developing inclusive, relational leadership attributes for all students across all disciplines.

### **Activist Pedagogy**

Before we further explore how we might embed leadership as a graduate attribute through activist pedagogical approaches, it is important to unpack what is meant by activist pedagogy. While that term—activist pedagogy—has been used in educational literature for a number of years, there is some variability in the ways activist pedagogy is applied, due primarily to the variability in how people conceptualize the word “activist” or “activism.” Building on those various conceptualizations, I define activism as *the use of direct action to achieve a (political, economic, cultural, or social) goal*. Such a definition of activism complements a definition of leadership as a relational and ethical process seeking positive change. This allows us to envision a way in which instructors might encourage students to identify projects through which they can tap into their disciplinary course content, as well as the general and discipline-specific attributes they are developing through their learning experiences, to seek positive change in the world (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002). Indeed, “by exploring students’ rationales for activism projects, we might also help students to recognize and claim their own assumptions and ideologies” (Bickford & Reynolds, p. 245). Fisher (2009) argues further that activism is healthiest when it embraces its diversity—when a variety of individuals and organizations come together over

the same problem from a variety of angles.

While there are a variety of ways in which such a pedagogical approach might manifest, one approach that might prove particularly effective at embracing such an activist approach to developing leadership is critical community service-learning (CSL). An activist CSL approach can result in powerful experiences where students collectively engage in solving community-identified social problems at a systemic level, with the intention of challenging students to develop an understanding of the structural and systemic forces that shape social environments, while assuming an “activist-orientation” to addressing said problems (Britt, 2009). Adopting a broad definition of activism allows a greater diversity of student perspectives to engage, but also raises some challenges for academics. We must resist the impulse to criticize student activists who might share our goals, but use different tactics, or might not share our goals (Fisher, 2009). This influences how academics might assess student work, and in particular, points to the importance of student self-reflection (of experiences, as well as assumptions and values underpinning those experiences).

### ***Roots of activist pedagogy in community service-learning***

Community service-learning has been seen as an increasingly important way to overcome the barrier (real or perceived) between higher education institutions and community (Speck, 2001). Building upon the progressive educational philosophy of Dewey (and others), service-learning, along with other forms of experiential learning, provides opportunities for students to gain practical experience employing the knowledge and skills they develop through their post-secondary education. For Dewey, pedagogy and epistemology were related, and his theory of knowledge related to and derived from his notions of citizenship and democracy (Giles & Eyler, 1994). Experiential learning opportunities, such as CSL, involve a continuous reflective cycle, where students engage in abstract conceptualization, active experimentation, concrete experience, and reflective observation (Kolb, 1984). This cycle is similar to Dewey’s notion of liberal praxis where students move through the cycle of suggestion, intellectualization, hypothesis generation, reasoning, and testing the hypothesis in action (Giles & Eyler, 1994).

In particular, CSL is seen as a significant way to improve students’ skill development, as well as sense of civic responsibility (Speck, 2001; Britt, 2009). There have been many explorations of how CSL can be implemented across the disciplines, and that demonstrate the impact that CSL can have on student learning (Howard, 2001; Schoenfeld, 2004; Speck, 2001;). Unfortunately, it is possible for CSL to focus solely on the learner’s own development through volunteerism, rather than on a bi-directional development of both the individual student and the community. These “traditional” CSL experiences, as they have been termed in the literature, can be highly problematic when students (and the faculty facilitating the CSL experiences) ignore the structural reasons underlining inequality and injustice (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002; Butin, 2003; Mitchell, 2008). They can also entrench social and cultural biases by reinforcing “otherness” and the presumption of knowledge that can be more damaging than ignorance (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002).

Activist approaches to community service-learning transcend the progressivist notions of

civic engagement and responsibility and move towards tackling systemic social problems by encouraging students to explore the problems' root causes as well as how their own actions can contribute to overcoming those social problems. They move towards what Butin (2003) calls political and anti-foundational service-learning. In political conceptualizations of service-learning, "issues are manifest through power (im)balances, questions of legitimacy, allowed or silenced perspectives, and negotiations over neutrality/objectivity" (p. 1681), while in anti-foundational (or post-structural) conceptualizations, the service-learning experience acts as a "site of identity construction, destruction, and reconstruction" where learners are "concerned with how an innovation constructs, reinforces, or disrupts particular unarticulated societal norms of being and thinking" (p. 1683-84).

### ***Activist pedagogies' roots in critical pedagogy***

Activist pedagogies, and activist approaches to community service-learning, also have their roots in the intellectual tradition of critical pedagogy (Grace, 2006). Critical pedagogy argues for education to be focused on raising the critical consciousness of society (Freire, 2008; Giroux, 2009) and mobilizing action to address the systemic, root causes of social problems. The teaching and learning environment then becomes even more inter-connected with how we guide students' identity formation within an explicitly social context, a process of discovery connected to the struggle against injustice (Fassbinder, 2007).

Critical pedagogies retain the dialectical relationship between theory and practice (Giroux, 2009). They are rooted in the notion of critical praxis, whereby individuals/organizations engage in action, critical reflection, and further critical action to address social problems facing society (Grace, 2006). They are rooted in notions of social justice as well as self and social empowerment, and acknowledge that all knowledge is socially constructed and politically contrived (Grace, 2006). Through critical pedagogies, we also gain a sense "of the consequences for teaching practice, curriculum and program development, educational policy formation, and social learning processes" (Collins, 2006, p. 121).

Critical pedagogies manifest in community service-learning as a counter to traditional, volunteerism-oriented CSL. Mitchell (2008), for example, articulates a vision of "critical community service-learning" where students adopt a social change orientation while working to redistribute power and develop authentic relationships in and with community. She argues that "[c]ritical service-learning pedagogy fosters a critical consciousness, allowing students to combine action and reflection in classroom and community to examine both the historical precedents of the social problems addressed in their service placements and the impact of their personal action/inaction in maintaining and transforming those problems" (p. 54).

Activist pedagogies that embrace a critical praxis—of critical action and reflection—can help avoid what has been termed "mindless activism" (Collins, 2006). Elias and Merriam (1980) argue that "theory without practice leads to an empty idealism, and action without philosophical reflection leads to mindless activism" (p. 4). There are cases where activists (whether in the context of CSL opportunities or not) have mobilized to action without taking the time to think strategically and tactically about how to ensure the community's needs

inform the intended outcome of the action, as well as how the community mobilizes behind the action taken. For example, in a CSL context, students might develop a well-meaning plan to raise awareness of a community issue or need (e.g., refugees coming in large numbers to a community), without understanding the potential backlash to the community that might arise from broader societal misunderstandings of the socio-cultural contexts of that issue (e.g., the readiness of the broader community to address the issue, and the potentially negative and/or violent responses by groups within the community at large).

Effective activist pedagogies work towards helping students think strategically about the development of activist strategies for instigating positive action and change. This can manifest, for example, in students developing and engaging in inclusive and relational leadership processes with and for the community. Examples of effective approaches to activism can be found in Shaw's *The Activist's Handbook* (2013), which argues for a tactical activism where the community's historical and socio-cultural dynamics are well-understood, thus maximizing the potential for greater economic and social justice. Activist pedagogies, rooted in a critical philosophical framework, ensure that action is not privileged over critical thought, "or localized events over a critical understanding of the totality of conditions within which they operate" (Collins, 2006, p. 125).

### ***Advancing activist community service-learning***

Activist community service-learning can be an extremely powerful pedagogical approach in higher education, particularly as it relates to the development of leadership attributes. By combining the beneficial educational impacts of experiential and reflective learning with the development of a critical consciousness (particularly as informed by the needs and perspectives of community), activist CSL allows us to unpack the systemic roots of social problems and move towards positive and lasting social change. It is crucial to facilitate students' reflection about their experiences, what they have learned about themselves and the situations experienced, the role of their own assumptions and values, and the systemic causes of the social issues with which they were involved. Students should be encouraged to translate their values into politically and/or socially-oriented action (Hedley, 2004).

This form of participatory learning can result in the validation of personal experience and the development of individual confidence, the development of socio-political knowledge and an understanding of the place of activism, and the development of critical thinking and open-mindedness (Stake & Hofmann, 2001). In this sense, activist pedagogies can work by guiding students to make connections between course material and the political/social context within which it is embedded, and by helping students to recognize how they can become active agents for positive political and social change (i.e., "leaders of tomorrow") (Stake & Hofmann, 2001). Community service-learning, as an activist pedagogy, must strive for a balance between discipline-related outcomes and activism, critical consciousness, or social change-oriented outcomes, thereby avoiding what might be called the binary of service vs. activism—where community service is considered a laudable act but activism is perceived with negative connotations (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002). Bickford and Reynolds (2002) argue for a nuanced

understanding of CSL that embraces its activist potential, even in light of preconceived (and often negative) connotations of activism amongst some students and instructors that may serve as a barrier to its introduction within a program or institution.

One of the biggest problems identified by academics implementing activist pedagogies is student resistance, particularly because of this perceived binary of service and activism. Several writers have commented on the profound discomfort felt by many students (and other academics) with activism, even while notions of advocacy, service, and civic engagement are embraced (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002; Fixmer-Orain et al., 2009). The determinant for students' successful engagement with and for community through activist pedagogies may be in how they conceptualize activism. If we take a broader definition of activism (discussed above) that allows students to see themselves as activists already working for positive change in society, and if we emphasize that they can choose to be activists related to issues that connect to their personal/scholarly interests and values, as well as to their ongoing development of leadership attributes, then we can encourage a broader range of students to embrace activist pedagogies.

Activist pedagogies face a few key barriers to effective implementation, including the increasingly pervasive experience of students as consumers (Morley, 2003); active or passive student resistance arising from students' inability or unwillingness to engage in the critical reflection necessary to transform their experiences into meaningful and authentic learning (Jones et al., 2005); or neoliberal pressures associated with higher education as a preparatory site for work (Barnett, 1990). Faculty play a key role in helping students broaden their understanding of what activism might include. Astin (1993), for example, found that on campuses where faculty stated that a goal of their institution was to promote student social activism, more positive change was seen in students' interest in, and valuing of, activism. The emphasis placed by faculty on various social issues, particularly in the context of the curriculum, influences student attitudes.

### **Interlude: Modeling the Activist Life**

It is essential to acknowledge the importance of faculty modeling the activist life, especially considering the impact faculty attitudes and actions can have on students. There is an understanding that being an activist academic can result in constant critique from peers, particularly arising from neoliberal pressures placed on academics to "perform" as defined by specific institutional criteria related to faculty evaluation (Cushman, 1999; Derber, 2005; Fisher, 2009; Hay 2001). Performative pressures placed on academics have a serious impact on academic's choices related to "risky" and innovative practices in research, teaching, and service (Ball, 2003). Harland et al. (2010) explore how neoliberal pressures impact the ability of academics to serve as the critic and conscience of society, and in particular how academics enable society at large to be their own critic and conscience.

It has long been argued that academics not give society lessons in morals, even as it is recognized that how they conduct themselves and live their academic values has social implications (Dewey, 1916). Cushman (1999), drawing heavily on Bourdieu, argues that the

“public intellectual” plays a dual and dueling role as part of an autonomous intellectual world as well as in political action informed by the competence and authority acquired within their intellectual field. Being an activist academic does not mean that academics indoctrinate students into their own ideology. Faculty who prepare students for social and political action need not proselytize, but they rather foreground action by what might be described as “problem-posing education” (Fassbinder, 2007). Derber (2005), for example, argues:

The positivist tradition suggests teachers must be objective and are morally obliged not to become preachers, ideologues, or political activists in the classroom. The normative tradition suggests teaching is inevitably value-laden, and that in an increasingly unjust and violent world, teachers have an obligation to help students connect knowledge with action. I have long been in the second camp, but I depart radically from the view that professors should preach or indoctrinate. The best way to practice normative teaching is to recognize that students are most likely to act with enduring commitment in the world when they decide for themselves whether and how to translate critical thought into activism. (p.1)

This observation ties into the dual tension universities face, as sites of both contestation and compliance—serving social/economic/political needs and perpetuating the norms of individual disciplines, while also critiquing existing knowledge and contesting the assumptions and the social forces that shape ways of thinking (Rowland, 2003). Rowland (2003) argues that “it is through reason, careful observation, and critical analysis that universities (through their academic and student bodies) contribute to freeing society from forces of unreason and prejudice” (p. 15). This suggests an academic community that is active, critical, reflective, and imaginative, whose contribution is acknowledged to be open to question different interpretations, including from the broader community beyond the academy (Rowland, 2003). Giroux argues that this type of activist pedagogical practice will make our jobs harder and more uncomfortable, which will impact how individual academics negotiate the performative pressures our institutions place on us (Giroux, 2009; Hay, 2001).

### **Conclusion: Embracing Activist Pedagogies in to Develop Leadership Attributes**

Komives et al. (2007) explore different ways in which leadership attributes might be developed on campus, as well as some of the barriers that may impact success in this endeavour. Developing student leaders across the disciplines can be facilitated institutionally when students are viewed as major stakeholders in their learning, and when students are viewed as partners and change agents (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten 2014; Kay, Dunne, & Hitchinson 2010). It is also facilitated when faculty are the stewards of the institution, when *everyone* in the institution contributes directly to student development, when there is an institutional recognition that change initiatives can start with anyone, and when there is a recognition that we make change through collective action (Komives et al., 2007). Such collective action is particularly powerful when facilitated through activist CSL that meaningfully engages community in determining the change sought from that action and defining the way in which relational and inclusive

leadership attributes and practices might be developed. Komives et al. (2007) further identify that there are a number of internal beliefs within higher education that constrain the ability to develop leadership among the student body, including the following perceptions:

- that the campus doesn't care about students;
- that students do not have enough experience to lead major campus-change efforts;
- that faculty expertise is not valued in running the institution;
- that nothing can be changed because of administrative attitudes;
- that faculty and administration could never work together; and
- that all learning occurs in the classroom.

A move towards a more activist pedagogy, which in turn provides better opportunities for students to engage in reflective practice both in their disciplinary learning as well as in their development of leadership attributes, can result in a profound transformation of the type of educational experience available to students in higher education. This can have significant consequences on their preparedness for the world in which they will find themselves upon graduation. Possible barriers to using activist pedagogies in higher education can be overcome by conceptualizing activism broadly in a manner that focuses on positive social change and makes it inclusive for all students. Even then, we might still need to address any potentially negative connotations students might have regarding what is meant by activism, as well as limitations arising from potentially narrow conceptions of leadership. It is not only possible to have, but important to provide, experiences that go far beyond traditional volunteerism and service “to” community, where students instead participate in activist CSL opportunities that meaningfully engage “with” and “for” community with the goal of both positive social change and the development of students' leadership attributes.

### **About the Author**

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# Community-University Engagement: Case Study of a Partnership on Coast Salish Territory in British Columbia

Margaret (Mali) Bain

**ABSTRACT** In the context of expanding community engagement efforts by universities and growing awareness of the past and current impacts of settler-colonialism in Canada, this study explores one Indigenous-settler, community-university partnership. Building on a framework of community-university engagement and decolonization, this case study explores a partnership between Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society (Xyolhemeylh) and the Division of Health Care Communication at the University of British Columbia (UBC-DHCC). This partnership, called the “Community as Teacher” program, began in 2006 and engages groups of UBC health professional students in three-day cultural summer camps.

This qualitative case study draws on analysis of program documents and interviews with Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC participants. The findings of the study are framed within “Four Rs”—relevance, risk-taking, respect, and relationship-building—which extend existing frameworks of Indigenous community-university engagement (Butin, 2010; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Committed to a foundation of mutual relevance to their missions, both community and university partners undertook risk-taking, based on their respective contexts, in establishing and investing in the relationship. Respect, expressed as working “in a good way,” likewise formed the basis for interpersonal relationship-building. By outlining the findings in relation to these four themes, this study provides a potential framework for practitioners and researchers in Indigenous-university partnerships.

**KEYWORDS** community engagement, decolonization, community-university engagement, Community as Teacher, relationship-building

This paper brings a decolonizing lens to research about a community-university partnership between a Stó:lō community services agency—the Fraser Valley Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society, called Xyolhemeylh (“hyoth-meeth” or “yoth-meeth”)—and a unit at the University of British Columbia—the Division of Health Care Communication (UBC-DHCC).<sup>1</sup> Established in 2005, the “Community as Teacher” program creates an opportunity for UBC health professional students to learn about and engage with Indigenous culture by immersing them in community-led youth cultural camps for three to four days and nights. Existing qualitative research indicates that the program has an impact on students’ later practice as

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a revised portion of my M.A. thesis.

physicians because they learn about cultural differences, build self-awareness of values and stereotypes, and consider ways to improve communication (Kline, Godolphin, Chhina, & Towle, 2013). This paper adds to the study of the program by providing insight into the ways in which the UBC unit and the Stó:lō community agency interacted during their eight-year partnership, thus contributing to an understanding of how to build successful, respectful, and mutually beneficial Indigenous-university relationships. The research questions were as follows:

1. How did the relationship between Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC come into being and how has it changed over time?
2. How do the partners describe this relationship, its purpose and objectives?
3. How do partners consider and engage with notions of Indigenous-settler relationships?
4. What are the implications of this program for undertaking respectful community engagement between universities and Indigenous communities?

### **Decolonizing Approach**

This paper takes a decolonizing approach to a case study of community-university engagement. Conversations around decolonizing research owe much to Linda Tuhiwei Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), which challenges researchers "to demystify, to decolonize" (p. 16). Smith, a Maori scholar, takes a clear look at the ways in which imperial thought and colonial realities are implicated in research methodologies, and how the very acts of writing history and building theory tend to silence Indigenous voices. Decolonization, according to Smith (1999), is a process that takes "a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices" (p. 20).

Building upon the work of Smith among others, Paulette Regan (2010), a white settler Canadian, describes her personal path toward decolonization. She advocates for the importance of "truth-telling" by debunking the myth that Canada's history of relations with Indigenous peoples has been peaceful or benevolent. In her view, settler-allies have the important role of educating themselves about settler-colonialism and the histories of settlers and Indigenous peoples in Canada: "As allies, we learn to listen with humility and vulnerability to the history of dispossession, racism, and oppression that is still alive. We critically reflect on those stories as a catalyst for action" (p. 230). Following Regan, I kept an open ear throughout this study in order to hear the ways in which settler-colonial practices and assumptions shape contemporary relationships.

Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005) stress the importance of taking time to "understand Native worldviews and ways of knowing as constituting knowledge systems in their own right" (p. 9). Awareness of and connection with Indigenous Knowledges is important not just because all communities live as, or in relation to, Indigenous communities (Findlay, 2000, p. 308), but because Indigenous Knowledges provide a lens through which to understand the world. As Battiste (2002) puts it, "Indigenous Knowledge benchmarks the limitations of Eurocentric theory—its methodology, evidence, and conclusions" (as cited in Barnhardt & Kawagley,

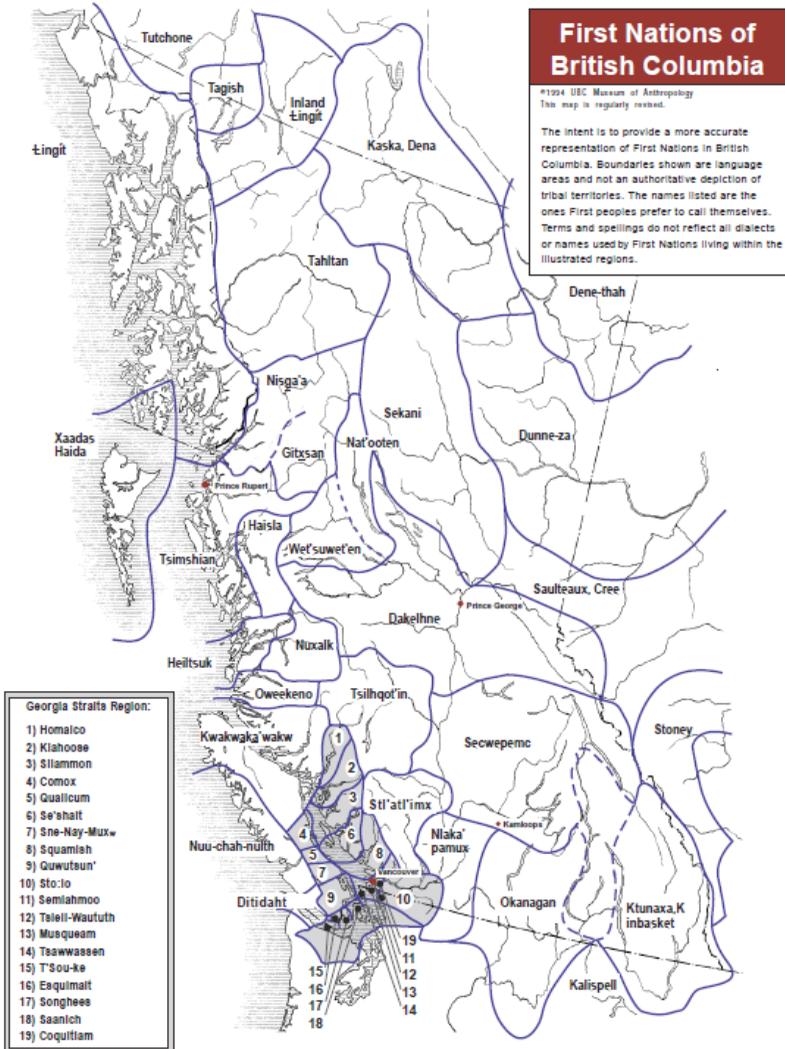
2005, p. 16). Given my own complete “marination” in colonial ways of thinking (Battiste, 2012), I acknowledge that I can begin to learn from Indigenous Knowledges but cannot claim to centre my research within that realm. I seek to work in solidarity with Indigenous practices and to contribute to decolonization efforts. As a non-Indigenous researcher, I remind myself that a significant part of decolonizing research involves the examination of my own settler-colonial assumptions.

A decolonizing framework can contribute significantly to both the study of interactions between Indigenous and settler-colonial peoples, and to community engagement work on Indigenous lands.<sup>2</sup> A decolonizing approach acknowledges place and history (Reagan, 2010), recognizing colonialism “as an ongoing process...in Canada and other ‘former’ colonies across the globe” (Haig-Brown & Nock, 2006, p. 6). The partners in my case study are located on Stó:lō territory in the Fraser Valley and at UBC’s Vancouver campus, which is on the traditional, unceded, and ancestral territory of the Musqueam people (“About UBC’s Vancouver Campus,” 2013). Historian Cole Harris (2004) refers to British Columbia, depicted in Figure 1, as the “edge of empire” (p. 167), the furthest extent of imperial reach. Coast Salish land, like so many other non-European lands, has been dominated by settlers only in the last few centuries, a settlement that has been “justified” by the colonial construction of Indigenous lands as *terra nullius*, “empty land” (Haig-Brown & Nock, 2006). In Canada, federal and provincial governments dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their land, without or in spite of treaties, and subjected autonomous peoples to racist policies such as those enshrined in the Indian Act (Lawrence 2004).

Colonization has had and continues to have significant impacts on settlers and Indigenous peoples on Coast Salish territory, in particular in relation to education. Indigenous children were often coerced into attending residential schooling away from their homes and communities. Residential schools were framed by some as part of the duty of white people to “raise [Indigenous peoples] to the level of civilization” (Furniss & Cariboo Tribal Council, 1995, p. 107). However, residential schools did not provide an adequate basic education, and they were designed based on the paternalistic, racist assumption that Indigenous peoples were inferior. Given this history of Indigenous-settler relations in British Columbia, it is important to carefully examine the ways that university units engage with Indigenous communities.

In keeping with the work of Haig-Brown (2006) and Reagan (2010), which suggests that scholars looking to do decolonial work must reflect on their personal historical and present-day connections to Indigenous peoples, a significant part of this research has involved developing a personal understanding of myself as a settler living on Indigenous land. This process has literally been “unsettling”—it has challenged the ways that I see myself, my family, and my place as a resident on the traditional, unceded, and ancestral lands of the Musqueam (x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm), Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh) peoples.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term Indigenous, as used by the global movement for Indigenous rights, and the term “settler,” in keeping with Reagan’s (2010) call for Canadians of non-Indigenous descent to acknowledge the destructiveness of settler-colonialism.



**Figure 1. First Nations of British Columbia. Reproduced courtesy of the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia.**

Like Freeman (2000), when I began the work of personal and family research, I had an unspoken sense that my “ancestors were essentially decent and well-intentioned people... [and] had simply inherited the aftermath of an already accomplished dispossession” (p. xvi). As part of my research I began to ask questions of my family members about family connections with Indigenous peoples and land; I read or re-read books related to my family history (Bain, 2006; Palmer, 1998), Coast Salish history (Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 2001), and B.C. History (Barman, 1996, 2005; Furniss & Cariboo Tribal Council, 1995).

On my mother's side, the Jelly family, my great-great-grandparents Harry and Mary-Anne Foote<sup>3</sup> moved to Vancouver and purchased several islands off of the Sunshine Coast<sup>4</sup> soon after the land was first given as a Crown Land Grant in 1885. The land was "owned" by a government which did not have the legal right to sell that land—Indigenous land that had never been ceded to the British crown or the Canadian government. Indigenous peoples' residency on, stewardship of, and relationship with the land was invalidated by their status as less than fully human, as prescribed by the Indian Act (Lawrence, 2004); at the time my ancestors purchased the lands, Indigenous peoples were unable to purchase or occupy those lands.

On the other side of my family, my great-great-grandfather Jacob Bain moved to British Columbia in the 1920s. He settled first in Vancouver, and then moved to purchase a home on unceded Stó:lō territory in Fort Langley. In the course of my research, my grandmother shared with me a letter from Jacob Bain containing this passage: "The lumber mills are dispensing with their Oriental labour and taking on white men, they say that white men are more satisfactory although their wages higher and it is a good thing for the labouring man" (Letter from Jacob Bain to Will Bain, 1920s). The "labouring man," from Jacob's perspective, was a white man, not an "Oriental" man, revealing the deep racism of the time and the ways that it shaped the lived economic realities of my family at the expense of other families. While the institutionalized racism of the past can seem distant, reading this letter helped me recognize my personal connection to my family's privilege as settlers.

Colonialism is not a "legacy" of the past—it is an undeniable present-day reality for all those who reside in what is called Canada. I have benefitted and continue to benefit from settler-colonial occupation of Coast Salish territory. It is my hope that by connecting my research to my own and my family's identity, I might be able to move beyond an essentially colonial exploration of the "Other" to a meaningful, self-reflexive study of settler-Indigenous relationships here on Coast Salish lands. Decolonizing approaches implicitly recognize the violent and racist systems of colonial power and eschew the idea of an "Indigenous problem," focusing instead on seeing a broader set of problems, which includes a "settler problem" (Regan, 2010), or "the problem of settler-colonialism."

### **Community-University Engagement and Community Service-Learning**

Although universities' commitment to serving communities is not a new topic or concern, in the past twenty years, universities have increasingly sought to engage with community. Ernest Boyer (1996) popularized the term "engagement," defined as "connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems" (p. 32–33). Weerts and Sandmann (2008) review ten years of engagement literature emerging after Boyer's call for universities to renew their civic mission. They suggest that enablers of community-university engagement include strong interpersonal relationships, flexible and shared governance

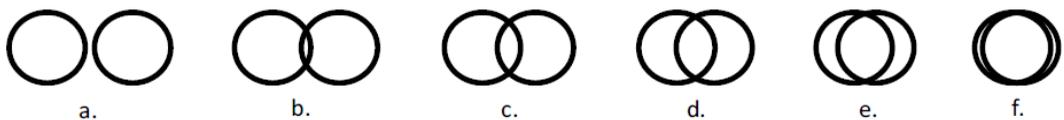
<sup>3</sup> Harry Foote was born in London, England; Marry-Anne Brook was born in Straford and grew up in Portage La Prairie.

<sup>4</sup> Jedediah, Bull, Rabbit, Round and Sheer Islands.

structures, institutional commitment to engagement, and institutional culture and mission. Weerts and Sandmann's later work (2010) introduces the concept of "boundary-spanners." They suggest that, among other things, boundary-spanning individuals play key roles in building interpersonal relationships between university and community and translating knowledge and ideas.

One aspect of community engagement is service-learning or community service-learning (CSL), a credit-bearing activity which combines organized community volunteering and course-based reflection (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995). Recent research into community partner perspectives has shown that community partners benefit through fostering positive relationships with post-secondary institutions, increasing capacity to fulfill their missions, and expanding existing services or programs (Blouin & Perry, 2009). There can be costs of service-learning for partners, however, including wasted time, inadequate student commitment, and requirement of supervision and project management (Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009; Hitchings, Johnson and Tu'Inukuafe, this issue; Kline et al., this issue). Some suggest that service-learning is a service provided by communities to the university, not solely the reverse (Mitchell & Hennig, 2012; Stoecker et al., 2009). Other studies show that service-learning can reinforce existing cultural and social biases or stereotypes (Dunn-Kenney, 2010), and critiques of non-reflexive forms of community engagement have led some to disassociate themselves from CSL.

Clayton et al. (2010) developed a scale of community-university relationships, ranging from "transactional" relationships, where each partner benefits, to "transformational" relationships, where each partner grows. From that scale, they developed a series of Venn diagrams (see Figure 2 below), which provide a "short, nonverbal, and user-friendly" representation of closeness (Clayton et al., 2010, p. 15). This series was used during interviews, as described later in this article.



**Figure 2.** Venn depiction of closeness (Machek, Cannady, & Tangey, 2007, as cited in Clayton et al., 2010).

### Decolonizing Community Engagement

There is very little research that explores community engagement or community service-learning with Indigenous communities. John Guffey (2008) brings together four service-learning pillars—commitment, learning, reflective thinking, and reciprocity—with the Lakota Way as described by Joseph Marshall.<sup>5</sup> McNally (2004) lays out several points of connection between Ojibwe pedagogy and service-learning: an emphasis on orality, experience, reflection,

<sup>5</sup> Connected to the CSL pillar of "commitment" are Lakota concepts of love and sacrifice; to "learning," perseverance, honour, and bravery; to "reflective thinking," truth and wisdom; and to "reciprocity," humility, respect, compassion, and generosity (Guffey, 2008).

and responsibility. Steinman (2011) explores the ways in which Indigenous-university collaborations can allow for relationships and ways of knowing that are deeply counter-hegemonic and decolonizing.

In this paper, I discuss the partnership between Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHC in terms of what I call the “Four Rs” of relevance, risk-taking, respect, and relationship-building, which I propose are central principles for Indigenous community-university engagement. This concept builds on existing literature in the fields of decolonization and community-university engagement. Educational theorists Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991), for example, suggest that Indigenous students ask to be treated with “The Four Rs”—relevance, reciprocity, respect, and responsibility. Service-learning scholar Dan Butin (2010) similarly suggests a set of “Four Rs” for service-learning: relevance, reciprocity, respect, and reflection.

My research builds on the above work in several ways, expanding the principle of “respect” to include the idea of “working in a good way,” which stresses the importance of recognizing the voices of community members and respecting protocol, including reciprocity, as will be explored later in this paper. I also expand on the principle of “relevance,” which in existing frameworks is often used to describe how a program or partnership is relevant with respect to community needs. In this study, I unpack how the partnership between Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC was relevant to both partners’ motivations and goals. I add the principle of “risk-taking,” which in its ideal form, happens in an environment of relevance to both partners. In the context of this study, risk-taking refers to how individuals within both Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC took the time and overcame perceived risks in order to prioritize and build their partnership. And finally, I discuss what I call the “hidden R”—relationship-building, which underlies many existing frameworks of community-university engagement, and takes on added significance in the context of Indigenous community-university partnerships.

### **Case Study: Partnership between Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC**

Xyolhemeylh is a child protection agency set up by the provincial government with the mandate of providing “culturally appropriate and holistic services through prevention, community development and child welfare programs” (“FVACFSS,” 2012). Stó:lō elders gave the agency the name Xyolhemeylh, a Halq’eméylem name which describes a relationship based on caring, respect, and love (C-C;<sup>6</sup> FVACFSS brochure). Xyolhemeylh’s summer cultural camp program was started in 1996 by a Stó:lō elder who saw the need for youth to experience and learn Stó:lō culture, history, and ways of being. Cultural camps are one of many cultural programs offered through the agency, intended to “[p]rovide the opportunity to experience many of the healthy and contemporary and traditional lifestyles of Aboriginal Peoples including all aspects of the medicine wheel (spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional)” (FVACFSS camps brochure). Overnight camps, usually three to four days and nights, include a “warrior camp” for young men 12-18 years old, a “natural changes” camp for young women 10-16 years old, a “family spirit camp” for families, and a youth camp offered in its most recent version as

<sup>6</sup> Please note that, throughout this paper, remarks and thoughts of community participants have been assigned an in-text citational code that begins with “C-“ whereas university participants have been assigned the prefix “U-”.

three day trips throughout the summer. The camps are offered free of charge to Aboriginal people and FVACFSS participants (FVACFSS camps brochure) as part of what has been called “prevention services.” The camps, building on Stó:lō traditional practice, include activities such as drum-making, playing traditional games, evening storytelling, shared meals, and early-morning spiritual baths. Xyolhemeylh staff coordinate the cultural camp program in collaboration with Stó:lō community groups.

This paper seeks to understand the intricacies of community-university partnerships within the context of UBC-DHCC’s partnership with Xyolhemeylh. The Community as Teacher program was developed by building on to and extending the audience of the above-described camps; UBC students engaged as participants and learners, along with Indigenous youth, within the Xyolhemeylh-run camps. The program was hosted by the Division of Health Care Communication (DHCC), a unit of the College of Health Disciplines at the University of British Columbia (UBC). UBC-DHCC aims to “train health professionals in effective and efficient ways of helping patients take an informed and shared role in making decisions about their healthcare” (Division of Health Care Communication, 2013).

From a Xyolhemeylh perspective, the Community as Teacher program is the culmination of decades or generations of work by carriers of Indigenous culture and tradition. The desire to partner with non-Indigenous organizations was inspired in part by the work of Dr. Cindy Blackstock,<sup>7</sup> and was seen as part of an overall understanding of the role of Xyolhemeylh as an educator and leader within society. After an initial email was sent by UBC-DHCC staff expressing interest in a partnership of some kind, Xyolhemeylh staff proposed the idea of including UBC students as participants in cultural camps.

From a UBC-DHCC perspective, the Community as Teacher program grew out of a research project funded through the Faculty of Medicine “Special Populations Fund.” Beginning in 2001, initial research involved interviews with doctors, Aboriginal patients,<sup>8</sup> and members of the Aboriginal community. After this initial study, UBC-DHCC researchers went back to Indigenous participants to ask about possible educational interventions and were told that students should “spend time in community” to “get to know them as an individual and as a member of their community” (McConnell Award Attachment, p. 2). In response to a call for assistance with that goal, a partnership emerged between Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC.

While the idea to place UBC students in summer youth camps came from Xyolhemeylh, very quickly UBC-DHCC came to see the ways in which this program was a good fit, allowing students to learn in a pre-existing cultural education program. The Community as Teacher program takes place outside the formal curriculum of health professional students,<sup>9</sup> as part of an inter-professional learning opportunity. Each year UBC students participate in one of four already existing cultural camps. Since 2006, 136 students from 12 health professions have

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<sup>7</sup> Blackstock is a member of the Gitksan Nation and the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada.

<sup>8</sup> While this study uses the term Indigenous, prior research on this program used the term Aboriginal.

<sup>9</sup> Health professional students include students within medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, social work, pharmacy, pre-medicine, midwifery, dietetics, dentistry, land and food systems, and psychology

participated in the program. The costs of the camps, including food, supplies, honoraria, and coordination are covered by Xyolhemeylh. On the UBC-DHCC side, the cost of coordination, student project assistants, staff and student transportation for meetings, and other research costs<sup>10</sup> such as transcription have been funded through the UBC Faculty of Medicine Special Populations Fund.

## The Study

### *Methods*

This study drew upon the perspectives of Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC staff through analysis of 13 documents, interviews with seven participants from both Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC, and field notes from ongoing conversations. Initial interviews included a total of five participants, including a total of four staff from Xyolhemeylh and three UBC-DHCC staff and faculty. Graphic elicitation, in this case the use of a visual to spark dialogue or response, was employed within the interviews; this approach helps expand participants' interpretation of questions and allows participants to "investigate layers of experience that cannot easily be put into words" (Gauntlett, 2007, as cited in Bagnoli, 2009, p. 548). Interviewees were invited to respond to Venn diagrams (illustrated earlier and developed by Clayton et al., 2010) as a way to describe partnership closeness. In addition to interviews, thirteen documents provided by Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC participants were analyzed. These documents included organizational background information, reports, and a collaboratively written award proposal. Field notes and transcript-like notes from interviews and interactions with UBC-DHCC and Xyolhemeylh participants were also generated. While this study began by proposing a simple "interview" process, the process of data generation, interaction, and member-checking led to a dialogic, relational, and active process.<sup>11</sup>

The interviews, follow-up interviews, and member-checks took place from approximately November 2012 to December 2013. Themes from the data emerged in an iterative process throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing. During the first cycle of coding, open codes consisting primarily of action codes and descriptive codes (Saldaña, 2013) were assigned to approximately every 10 words of interview, document, and field note text (Charmaz, 2006). In the beginning of the analysis stage, Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC data were analyzed separately. Additional cycles of coding (Charmaz, 2006) compared codes and confirmed emerging clusters and themes. Using the visual mapping software provided by Atlas.ti 9, I took this smaller group of codes and created a visual map of the connections that I saw between codes. As data analysis and early writing continued, it became apparent that the data should not be treated as separate narratives, but rather as branches that became part of the same stream. I thus merged the data and coding sets from Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC, and worked to tell a complete story including both community and university voices.

The ethical accountability for this study comes from two vastly different epistemological contexts—one institutional, based in settler-colonial society, and one Stó:lō or Indigenous. The study passed the

<sup>10</sup> Note that existing research conducted by UBC-DHCC focuses on what students have learned and the impact of the Community as Teacher program, as reported in Kline et al. (2013).

<sup>11</sup> In some ways, this dialogic process could be seen in keeping with a community-based participatory research approach. In this study, although a participatory process was not an integral part of designing the research, study participants were involved, through multiple conversations and member-checking, throughout the process of data generation, analysis, and writing.

UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) process and was also registered with the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre (SSRMC). The Stó:lō ethical review process aligned with principles known as OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession), which were developed in response to a history of colonial and exploitative research. These principles were developed for “all research, data, or information initiatives that involve First Nations” (First Nations Centre, 2007, p. 2).

### ***Findings***

Four central themes emerged from this study of the partnership between Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC: relevance, risk-taking, respect, and relationship-building—the “Four Rs” mentioned earlier. These constructs developed from the analysis of the data for this study; however, the naming of these themes was inspired, at least in part, by the work of scholars in both decolonization and service-learning, as discussed earlier. Below I discuss each theme, as well as their interconnection, including relevance as a foundation for risk-taking and respect as key to relationship-building.

*Relevance: “Why” partner?* As one Xyolhemeylh participant described it, the partnership was informed by independent “thoughts on each side” (C-B). Xyolhemeylh participants came into the partnership as long-standing educators with an openness to partnership based on prior research, and a goal of finding role models for Indigenous youth. UBC-DHCC participants came with a focus on informed shared decision-making, research into doctor-patient relationships, and a funding opportunity.

Despite these distinct motivations, participants from both groups described a sense that, right from the early meetings, they were able to share a common vision of student learning: “The objective of it in many instances is just . . . how do we engage young students, who are probably non-Aboriginal, right, to come in to an Aboriginal context, which is completely foreign to them, and open themselves up to learning” (C-B). Both partners saw a focus on student teaching and training as a part of the core mandate of their respective organizations. As one Xyolhemeylh participant observed: “It’s good for our agency to be involved with students, and we are involved with students year-round . . . it allows us to remember that we’re also in a teaching role as an agency” (C-A). UBC-DHCC participants had a desire to focus on training health professionals, in particular on teaching “informed shared decision-making” in doctor-patient relationships, and Xyolhemeylh participants spoke to the need for UBC students, health professionals-in-training, to break down their stereotypes of Indigenous peoples: “Even if two of them changed their minds by coming to camp we’ve changed the Aboriginal experience for ever . . . [it] breaks down stereotypes” (C-D).

Each partner saw the program as significantly relevant in that it connected to their past work, was a part of core organizational mission, had ties to prior UBC and Xyolhemeylh research, and fit well with future ambitions. Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC found ways to create and maintain dialogue about shared vision in new and sometimes unexpected ways—in this case, through a shared focus on UBC student learning. In summary, the partnership came into being and persisted because it was relevant to the mission and vision of both Xyolhemeylh



has good intentions” (C-B). The participants shared stories of extreme ignorance, insensitivity, and racism from members of settler society—newly trained social workers, non-Indigenous partner organizations, health professionals, and students. Xyolhemeylh staff thus took a significant risk in establishing a partnership with UBC-DHCC, given the possible stereotyping and imbalance that has typified Indigenous-settler relationships.

UBC-DHCC participants expressed the difficulty of making connections with Indigenous communities and the lack of success in creating partnerships. From a UBC-DHCC perspective, there was a sense that “we were very different people around the table” (U-C) in those early meetings. The original meetings were described as “patchy” (U-C), that it “seemed to take more effort” (U-C). As one interviewee explained, “I wouldn’t say they were difficult conversations, they were really quite interesting, but there was a lot of back and forth because... first of all I guess it took a while for them to even—install a bit of trust in us” (U-B).

UBC-DHCC participants recognized that it took time to build trust between themselves and Xyolhemeylh, but they did not connect that lack of trust to the Indigenous-settler relationship within a settler-colonial context. While UBC-DHCC participants did not identify as settlers or as being a part of past and ongoing settler-colonialism, they were aware of stereotypes held by settler health professional students and medical professionals through earlier research into communication between doctors and health professionals (Towle et al., 2006). One participant, reflecting on a previous experience with a trained health professional, located the origins of those stereotypes in education:

I was astounded that someone close to my age, working in health professions, would have such a limited lens in looking to the impact of the residential schools. . . . [That person is] a very good person, but I think it’s a consequence of the way [he/she] was educated. (U-A)

UBC-DHCC staff identified the impact of colonialism on the relationship between health providers and patients, but did not identify the ways in which their own perspectives might be part of a “settler problem.” I would argue that taking the additional risk of naming and acknowledging the complicity of universities in colonialism is an important part of decolonizing work within community-university engagement.

Risk-taking for UBC-DHCC was also mitigated by funding structure and job security. Both Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC identified that the ways in which UBC-DHCC engaged in partnership were not the norm in academia. The initial funding provided to the UBC-DHCC partnership was program- rather than project-based; this type of funding, along with the security of tenure, allowed UBC-DHCC faculty and staff to take risks in establishing a partnership with Xyolhemeylh. Given the challenges involved in partnership-building, including the significant time required to build trust, a partnership like this would likely not be taken on by faculty seeking tenure and/or promotion due to the lapse between relationship-building and peer-reviewed publications. This is in keeping with Weerts and Sandmann’s (2008) review of research-intensive universities, which found that the devaluing of engaged scholarship

and fiscal or structural constraints on faculty members are barriers to faculty involvement in community-university engagement.

*Respect: Working in a good way.* It is clear that for almost all the participants in this study, the key to working “in a good way” involved building upon and listening to the leadership of Stó:lō community members. Xyolhemeylh participants saw their organization as facilitating the involvement and leadership of members of the Stó:lō community. The intention for the Community as Teacher program was to have community members actively involved in determining educational content, location, and community connections. One UBC-DHCC participant spoke to this when describing the extent of Xyolhemeylh’s responsibility for both the content and method of instruction: “The community should develop the objectives, and decision about... not only what they thought the students should learn about them, and their culture, but the way in which they wanted to teach it” (U-B).

Respectful relations also involve humility. Xyolhemeylh participants commented on the “down to earth” (C-A) approach of UBC-DHCC. They described having had to engage in “teaching moments” (C-D) with other non-Indigenous partner organizations, but noted that in the case of UBC-DHCC, they “didn’t seem to go through that” (C-D): “I would think not coming in as... this large institution... I never got that sense from [U-B] and [U-C], I just think you have to have that real down to earth kind of approach” (C-A). They also noted how UBC-DHCC staff and faculty were “humble” (C-B), both in their physical presentation, in terms of having open body language, and in the sense that they were open to new ideas: “They didn’t come with any preconceived ideas—I mean I think they did, everybody has a preconceived idea, but they weren’t driven to having it their way. They were open to whatever we think is going to work” (C-B). This approach of humility and openness to cultural protocols falls in line with Xyolhemeylh organizational values: “We do our work in a good way and practice humbly” (FVACFSS brochure).

Just as Xyolhemeylh facilitates the involvement of Stó:lō community members in cultural camps, UBC-DHCC staff and faculty can be seen to facilitate Xyolhemeylh’s involvement in health professional education. This is a parallel pointed out by a Xyolhemeylh participant:

We go to [the community] and say this is the camp we’re trying to do, what do you want—the same way [a UBC-DHCC representative] does to us, we do that in our communities, and then we listen to what they say. So we don’t go in with a camp, we go to them to partner for the camp. (C-D)

Listening to community voices, both in the sense of UBC-DHCC listening to Xyolhemeylh and Xyolhemeylh listening to the Stó:lō community, is a key element of respect or “working in a good way.” Participants demonstrated respect by listening to community voice and leadership throughout the entire process, following cultural protocol, and considering reciprocity as a practical demonstration of respect.

Gift-giving was an important part of reciprocity, particularly in relation to ceremony. On one



*Photo by:* UBC Patient & Community Partnership for Education

occasion, two UBC-DHCC participants participated in a ceremony marking the end of one of the camps. As a Xyolhemeylh participant put it, “[f]or the one year when [two UBC-DHCC participants] came out at the last day of camp, family camp, and there was gift-sharing... that was meaningful because it was recognition of [five] years” (C-C). One UBC-DHCC participant in particular became aware of this “need to reciprocate” (U-A) and brought a set of blankets to a graduation ceremony, hoping they would be used in some way. While the blankets were not used for the ceremony, they were appreciated and remembered by Xyolhemeylh staff and community members. This is an example of how a UBC-DHCC participant listened carefully, built upon the information they had available, and looked for significant ways to reciprocate.

It is important to note that reciprocity was not by any means an exchange or payment for services. Giving a gift was, instead, one way of honouring all that had been given and demonstrating that “what I received was important” (C-C). By giving gifts at the end of the camps, for example, Xyolhemeylh staff showed their appreciation and respect for the contributions of visitors. Reciprocity here manifests as gift-giving, as a part of respectful approach.

Respect is core to the “Four Rs” described by Butin (2010), as well as Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991), and is a key element of community-university engagement. As Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) observe of the experience of Indigenous university students: “The university represents an impersonal, intimidating and often hostile environment, in which little of what they [i.e., Indigenous students] bring in the way of cultural knowledge, traditions and core values is recognized, much less respected” (p. 5). This description could apply equally well to Indigenous organizations’ experience of the university. Given the multiple and overlapping ways in which Indigenous people and organizations are disrespected in society,

through stereotypes, racism, and systemic oppression, respectful relationship-building must be at the core of community-university engaged work. A foundation of respect, or working in a good way, is the basis from which Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC approached the work of relationship-building.

*Relationship-building: A hidden “R”.* In the Community as Teacher program, relationship-building is central. One Xyolhemeylh participant explained its value as an educational approach for working with non-Indigenous students: “It’s the only thing that really... works is always that human interaction... looking eyeball to eyeball is really the only way that you can actually get it” (C-B). In addition, both Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC participants observed that relationship-building between individuals was the core of the institutional relationship:

We always tend to look at organizations like they have the end discussion—how’s the relationship between UBC-DHCC and Xyolhemeylh. Well the relationship between me and [U-B] and [U-A] was great, do you know what I mean? So it’s not about UBC or Xyolhemeylh, it’s about people. (C-B)

Within the partnership, Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC members built strong interpersonal relationships, and over the years made it a priority to build face-to-face, “eyeball-to-eyeball” relationships. Participants from both organizations stressed the importance of meeting face-to-face, both at the beginning of the relationship and as part of its ongoing development. In fact, in-person meetings were the first step in exploring a potential relationship. As one Xyolhemeylh participant described it, “[t]hey just came out here and met us... we just started talking” (C-B). UBC-DHCC staff and faculty drove out to Chilliwack, a drive of approximately 1.5-2 hours each way, for in-person meetings: “A lot of things are done via emails and telephone. But face-to-face is really important, regardless” (C-A). As described by one participant, putting in the ongoing effort to set up face-to-face meetings is an important part of relationship-building, especially in a Stó:lō context: “It’s a long drive, but they came in person to us every time, that’s huge” (C-D). The importance of physical meetings to the partnership between Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC echoes Steinman’s (2011) suggestion that “novel personal interactions and ‘witnessing’ can emerge to transform... the relationship between university and community partners” (p. 5).

Most participants indicated that the partnership between Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC falls in the “middle” range of the series of Venn diagrams described earlier, which indicates that the partnership lies somewhere between what Clayton et al. (2010) call a “transactional” relationship, in which each party benefits, and a “transformational” relationship, in which each partner grows. It is clear that both partners value the partnership and engage in ongoing and deliberate work to maintain the relationships that sustain it.

Service-learning scholars Bringle and Hatcher (2002) also describe the significance of building personal relationships, paralleling the ways that universities relate to community partners with the ways personal relationships function. In a subsequent article, they further

explain that they “view interactions between persons as being critical for establishing the character and capacity of the activities in a relationship” (Bringle and Hatcher, 2009, p. 14). The importance of individuals to the quality of a relationship is also shared by Weerts and Sandmann (2010), who identify the key role that university staff can play as “boundary spanners.” Boundary spanners build relationships within and beyond the institutions; they listen with an open mind.

In the Community as Teacher partnership, relationship-building was the basis not just of the partnership, but also of the program’s educational approach. Relationship-building as an approach to teaching and learning builds upon thousands of years of what Barnhart and Kawagley (2005) refer to as Indigenous Knowledges. The Community as Teacher program itself could be seen as the type of program that Barnhart and Kawagley (2005) advocate for—one that asks Westerners to “understand Native worldviews and ways of knowing” (p. 9). This suggests the importance of valuing relationship-building both within the content and the process of community-university relationships.

### **Limitations**

This paper is based on a qualitative case study of a single Indigenous-university partnership; the findings are thus limited in scope and context. There are many layers of context that are important to consider, some of which have been explored: the geo-political context of unceded Coast Salish Territory; the institutional contexts of a research-intensive university and an Indigenous family services agency; and the funding context, in which funding for “Indigenous issues” is made available to select actors within society. In addition, my social location as a settler scholar and as an employee and graduate student at UBC significantly impacted my ability to understand and capture potential nuances and aspects of this study.

As a settler scholar, I have taken a decolonizing approach to the extent that is possible, and have tried to deconstruct and become aware of my colonial assumptions. One example of this learning has been my growing understanding of the importance of relationship-building, what this study calls the “hidden R” because it underlies many existing principles of community-university engagement (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Butin, 2010). My research began with a chance encounter with a Xyolhemeylh participant outside a building in Saskatoon, followed by conversations, meetings in Vancouver and Chilliwack, and eventually a decision to focus this study on the Community as Teacher partnership. While the study began with a connection that evolved into a relationship, throughout the process of conducting this research, I experienced a tension between building relationships and “getting it done” in accordance with the institution’s timeline. The following story illustrates this tension.

In February 2013, I booked a lunch meeting to reconnect with a Xyolhemeylh staff person. The morning of the meeting, I received a call from the staff person, cancelling our lunch meeting and passing on some surprising news: the cultural camp program was in jeopardy, and given the organizational turmoil it would be unlikely for me to interview anyone at Xyolhemeylh until June or later, much later than my original research timeline. Rather than thinking about the pressures on the organization, I leapt to the conclusion that Xyolhemeylh

was no longer interested in the research, and I even considered pursuing another research project. In retrospect, this reflected my position as a privileged researcher who can, when the going gets tough, pick up and move to another place to “do” research (Smith, 1999). Such a move, after over six months of collaboration and planning with Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC participants, would have been in many ways an abandonment of the relationships built so far. I realized that I needed to respect the process that Xyolhemeylh was going through, while also living up to my responsibility to continue with what I had said I would do “in a good way”. I decided to relax my research timeline. A few months later, I had completed several community interviews and was in contact with Xyolhemeylh participants.

This example is only one of many moments during which I reflected on the process of data generation and research coordination work. As a novice researcher studying the process of community-university engagement, I discovered that being self-reflexive was an important part of the research process and also a source of data about the process of building relationships between community and university (Rausch, 2012; Stoecker et al., 2009).

### **Implications and Conclusions**

In the course of this study, many additional questions have come to light. One priority for further research is an Indigenous-led study of the Community as Teacher program and partnership. Further research could also expand the scope of this study to explore the ways in which UBC overall, not just UBC-DHCC, engages in partnerships with Indigenous organizations and communities. Another avenue for further research might “focus the mirror” (Marker, 2006) on settler health professional students, exploring ways for such students to understand their own histories and positions as settlers and how that historicity and positionality has contributed to the erosion of trust between doctors and Indigenous patients.

For Indigenous-university partnerships more generally, this study suggests several conditions that are necessary for decolonizing community-university engagement work and enabling community-university partnerships. Community and university partners must ensure that their partnership is relevant to both parties and carries a shared vision; they must also acknowledge the risks inherent in embarking on a partnership; work in a good way; and recognize and nurture relationships. This study also has particular implications for the funding of Indigenous-university partnerships. Working in a good way, defining “relevance” in collaboration, investing in ongoing relationships, and taking risks all require time and a long-term commitment. Funders and partners must acknowledge that risks are not equally shared and find ways to allow space for university and community risk-taking.

Xyolhemeylh and UBC-DHCC have worked together to develop a mutually relevant partnership that involves significant but unequal risks. Working from a foundation of respect, they have found ways to build relationships into the core of their work. I hope that I, and others, find ways to do the same.

## About the Author

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## Indigenous Methods and Pedagogy: Revisiting Ethics in Community Service-Learning

Swapna Padmanabha

**ABSTRACT** This paper looks at the development of a teaching module intended to enhance students' understanding of ethics in a community service-learning (CSL) class. This module, created to meet academic (western) learning outcomes for CSL, is based upon Indigenous pedagogy and methods, and offers a non-western framing of specific community service goals, particularly reciprocity and transformative dissonance. The paper proposes that moving toward Indigenous or other ways of knowing offers students and instructors an entry point into decolonizing practices and into alternate ways of experiencing service, transformative learning, and power dynamics. The paper also includes a discussion of the theory behind the teaching module and focuses on the intertwining of ethical research protocols (from Tri-Council policy, OCAP® principles, and elsewhere), service-learning goals, and Indigenous methods within the context of settler colonial practices and policies. Alongside other traditional service-learning outcomes, the primary goal of the module is to encourage students to become critical thinkers reflecting on the mechanics of power and social inequity as they experience social justice founded upon the ideals of relationship building.

**KEYWORDS** ethics; CSL; transformative dissonance; Indigenous methods and pedagogy; decolonization

A few years ago, I was given the opportunity to take an undergraduate, interdisciplinary community service-learning (CSL) course in the capacity of a graduate student, with enhanced readings, assignments, and a teaching component. The course focused on the topic of community engagement in the city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, located in Treaty 6 territory and Métis homeland. It combined theoretical teachings, weekly service engagements with community-based organizations, and an intensive week-long community service-learning experience during our institution's spring break. Throughout my time in this class, several incidents occurred that highlight some commonly reported problems in CSL, problems which are indicative of how transformative learning fails to happen for many CSL students. Upon conclusion of the course, the professor and I identified that many of the problems the students encountered appeared to be grounded in the students' inability to *sit with discomfort* when faced with acknowledging aspects of others' disenfranchisement or marginalization that simply have not been part of their own everyday experiences. Reflecting on this, we decided that strengthening the ethics portion of the course could alleviate some of the problems

students were facing. Focusing on ethics may seem like an odd solution to these problems, particularly for CSL contexts in which little or no ethical review is generally necessary, as much of the work done is not classified as “research” requiring formalized consent processes. But strengthening this component of the class offered other advantages. By focusing on ethics, we would be able to ensure the inclusion of best practices normally seen in community-based research (CBR) and Tri-Council policy,<sup>1</sup> while also incorporating OCAP® principles (ethics guidelines that are specific to research done in Canada with First Nations populations).<sup>2</sup> Neither Tri-Council policy nor OCAP® principles apply directly to community service-learning, as they more explicitly deal with the ethics of research involving people, but I propose that incorporating their best practices into a CSL classroom, and into the broader ethics governing CSL, can bolster safety for both students and community members while also asking students to acknowledge privilege and power disparities.

This paper examines the theoretical underpinnings of a three-part (six hour) ethics teaching module I built that is grounded in Indigenous pedagogy and methods. I put forward the idea that this inclusion of Indigenous methods and pedagogy offers a new framing for implementing aspects of CSL in the classroom and in community. This framing pushes for CSL to occur in manners not wholly congruent with traditional western framings, and it thereby offers new understandings that can shape students’ experiences of service-learning, transformative learning, and the power dynamics at work in classroom and community contexts.

As a mature graduate student, a woman of colour, and a member of the Indigenous Studies department at the University of Saskatchewan, I embrace many different methodologies and ways of knowing. This positionality has informed how I approach service-learning and the module I built to enrich service-learning experiences. The teaching module is intended to help students understand the realities of privilege, the value of other worldviews, and the necessity of viewing situations from positions other than their own, all within the context of settler colonial practices and policies, which indelibly shape our experiences in Saskatoon and in Canada more broadly. The module draws on Indigenous research methodologies—specifically, the principles of relational accountability, respectful representation, rights and regulation, and reciprocal appropriation (Louis, 2007)—to help students negotiate moments of “critical dissonance” by prompting them to reflect on the mechanics of power and social inequities and by encouraging them to become critical thinkers open to social justice founded in relationship building.

In the first section of this paper, I identify commonalities between best practices in CSL, CBR, Tri-Council policy, and OCAP® principles, before moving on to describe Rachel Wendler’s (2012) “Human subjects protection: A source for ethical service-learning practice.” Building

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<sup>1</sup> Canada’s three federal research agencies (Canadian Institutes of Health Research [CIHR], Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada [NSERC], and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [SSHRC]) jointly created a panel that develops and interprets the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS). The TCPS has been widely adopted and serves as the basis for many organizations and their research ethics boards.

<sup>2</sup> OCAP® is a registered trademark of the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC).

on the best practices and on Wendler's source, I then discuss how Indigenous epistemologies provide a necessary framework for community service-learning in settler colonial contexts and how Indigenous pedagogies of modelling, listening, and relationship building can be used to instruct CSL students in these ways of knowing.<sup>3</sup> I juxtapose the outlined best practices with four cornerstone teachings of Indigenous methodologies to illuminate how CSL can be strengthened by adapting Indigenous epistemologies and pedagogies. Specifically, I examine how deconstructing accepted understandings of reciprocity, a common concept in both community service-learning and Indigenous contexts, and rethinking how transformative dissonance is achieved can bolster service-learning in terms of project valuation, student reflexivity, relationship building, and cultural acceptance. Following a discussion of the teaching module I designed from the foundations named above,<sup>4</sup> I end by considering future possibilities for the module, particularly as it provides formalized teachings that can be seen as an entry point into decolonization practices.

### **Best Practices for Community Service-Learning**

In this section, I present a synthesis of best practices which have been culled from principles for ethical research established by Tri-Council Policy and OCAP®; guidelines for service-learning classes from Vanderbilt University; key concepts from the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning; and a research article on the elements community partners seek in service-learning collaborations (Tinkler et al., 2014). These best practices are wide-ranging, but I have identified their similarities in order to create the following list of recommended considerations for ethical community service-learning:

- **Concern for welfare:** Faculty, students, and community partners must be aware of the impact of CSL partnerships and practices on individuals, particularly in relation to factors such as physical, spiritual, economic, and mental health or social circumstances.
- **Community voice:** Community members should be involved in every stage of the project and course when possible.
- **Reciprocity:** Service-learning should be reciprocal in nature, benefiting both the community and the university partners.
- **Public dissemination:** Results of CSL projects should be shared with the community organization that is involved, if not a larger audience.
- **Community partner's mission:** Faculty and students must be attentive to the community partner's mission and vision.
- **Shared responsibility:** Faculty, students, and community partners should accept and share responsibility for inefficiencies.

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout this paper, I use the term "Indigenous" to mean the First Peoples of North America and refer to Indigenous knowledge, methods, research, and pedagogy as foundational practices representative of Indigenous peoples in North America. In the Canadian context, the term "Indigenous" brings together the First Peoples of our lands under a singular umbrella that encompasses many diverse peoples. While there are many different Indigenous groups and types of Indigenous knowledges/methods throughout the world, this paper focuses on knowledges founded and developed by Indigenous peoples of Canada, although there may be some pan-Indigenous commonalities.

<sup>4</sup> An abbreviated version of the module is included in Appendix A to provide context and examples of exercises.

- **Resources:** University representatives must be mindful of the community partner's resources.
- **Long-term consideration:** All stakeholders must consider the legacy of the partnership.

In my synthesis of best practices, I found that the organizations and researchers I list above continually included aspects of respect, community involvement, and reciprocity in their articulations of what should guide the ethics of interaction. These foundational considerations, along with reflexivity, inform Wendler's (2012) guidelines for ethical service-learning, as well as the teaching module I introduce later in this paper.

### **An Overview of Rachel Wendler's Guidelines for Ethical Service-Learning**

Wendler (2012) argues that “[d]espite the potential harm inherent in some aspects of service-learning, the field has established few formalized principles for protecting community members such as those for protecting human research subjects” (p. 29). Wendler suggests that instructors need more “specific conceptual tools to help university service-learning instructors analyze ethical issues in service partnerships” (p. 30). She draws upon the Belmont Report's principles of respect, beneficence, and justice to provide guidelines for ethical service-learning.<sup>5</sup> Wendler's adaptations augment the original principles, creating space for flexibility in interpretation and delivery, while fostering longevity and stronger relational practices. She adapts the first principle of respect by suggesting that, in the service-learning context, respect involves more than just informed consent. When respect is practiced, “[s]takeholders [i.e., community members or organizations] are offered a culturally-responsive and revisable explanation of the [service-learning] project, without coercion. Consent is continually renegotiated—in relationships. Respectful asset-based frameworks guide interactions and representations” (Wendler 2012, p. 31). To adapt the concept of beneficence to the CSL context, she suggests that practitioners consider how benefits might be shared and harms minimized in CSL practice, including minimizing potential dangers related to obtaining and sharing community knowledge (Wendler 2012, p. 33). Wendler's (2012) adaptation of the principle of justice draws upon feminist and participatory research practices to move beyond safeguarding research participant selection: “[Community service-learning] partnerships demonstrate attention to power dynamics and attempt to equalize them, including the micro-dynamics of the partnership as well as the macro-dynamics in society at large” (p. 34). In addition, Wendler (2012) suggests a guideline around reflexivity that speaks to the improbability of achieving objectivity and focusses instead on situated knowledge, or on an “awareness of how who one is shapes one's perception of the service-learning situation, including recognizing that one's viewpoint is not absolute” (p. 35). Informed by these four principles, this paper hopes to show how Indigenous practices and methodologies can augment Wendler's guidelines for ethical community service-learning. Like Wendler, I turn to the principles of ethical research—but in my case, Indigenous research—to advance service-learning guidelines.

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<sup>5</sup> The Belmont Report, authored in 1978, is the gold standard for human research subjects' protection in the United States, serving as the basis of U.S. Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects (Wendler, 2012, p. 30).

## Indigenous Methods

The American Indigenous Research Association (2017) describes Indigenous research as flowing from tribal knowledge: “Information is gained through *relationship*—with people in a specific Place, with the culture of Place as understood through our own cultures, with the source of the research data, and with the person who knows or tells the story itself and how it is interpreted by both teller and researcher” (n.p.). This intertwining of relationship, culture, place, and history, along with the complexities of language,<sup>6</sup> means that there will be certain knowledge(s) that cannot be described or understood by all people, or perhaps not even heard/seen at specific times and places. Indigenous knowledges do not claim universality, and they are predicated on the understanding that information is constantly flowing from any given place/moment/person/animal/ceremony to another (Battiste, 2002, p. 12-14).

Outside of this fluidity, the most commonly acknowledged divide between western and Indigenous knowledge lies in the concept of objectivity. Traditionally, western knowledge and research is premised on the idea of the researcher being objective and unbiased. In Indigenous knowledge, the researcher is not objective (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 3-7). The researcher’s goal is to create relationships with the community connected to the research, as well as with their land, worldviews, cultural values, beliefs, understandings, and histories (Evans et al., 2009, p. 3-5).

In her work examining the divide between knowledge systems and research standards, Renee Pualani Louis (2007), a Hawaiian cartographer and academic, identifies four common principles found in the literature on Indigenous methodologies and research (Battiste, 2002; Simpson & Smith, 2014; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012): **relational accountability; respectful representation; rights and regulation; and reciprocal appropriation**. Louis (2007) understands the first principle, relational accountability, in much the same manner as the American Indigenous Research Association, stating that all parts of the research process are related, from inspiration to expiration, and that the researcher is not just responsible for nurturing this process but is also accountable to “all [their] relations” (p. 133). While CSL best practices insist on the involvement of the community in CSL partnerships and projects, the Indigenous concept of relational accountability speaks to a deeper and more complex process of relationship building, which should be considered foundational to ethical CSL practices.

The principle of respectful representation speaks to the need for researchers to accept that not all of their ideas will be used in the project, and that not all knowledge is accessible to them. This concept is not readily acknowledged in community service-learning best practices, although many CSL programs stress that students should be attentive to community voice and ensure their projects meet the needs of the community members. This principle speaks to the idea that researchers and service-learners must practice humility and recognize that their perception of the “right” solution may not always be seen by others as an effective measure.

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<sup>6</sup> Many Indigenous languages in Canada are descriptive in nature, and this richness allows for textural conveyance that is not possible with word-for-word translations. The symbolic and verbal aspects of Indigenous languages, combined with intonation, allows for the use of single words to convey complex concepts. This then adds to the complexity of adequately conveying meaning using the English language (Battiste, 2002, p. 17).

Reiterating to students that projects which build on previous years' work are sustainable and include member voices/ideas, as well as reminding students that not all ideas are good ideas, can help students move away from focusing on how *they* can make a difference to *what kind of intervention* would create a difference. Shifting the emphasis from student strengths to community strengths, previous community endeavors, and community voices can help foster relationship building between community members and students. For many, this shift may represent a relinquishment of innovation and of power or authority (i.e. the ownership over and implementation of a project). However, with proper context and understanding, students can be directed to see the value in being able to adapt, add to, and bolster others' work; sustaining previous projects can therefore be seen, in this light, as an indicator of progress and as a vital means of incorporating thoughts and work from past students, community members, and community organizations. This shift in emphasis increases the likelihood that students will begin to see other worldviews, embrace cultural differences, understand aspects of oppression, adopt greater reflexivity, and experience transformative dissonance.

The principle of rights and regulation refers to the researcher's obligation to ensure that Indigenous peoples' intellectual property rights remain under the control of Indigenous peoples (the community) rather than the researcher (Louis, 2007, p. 133). This is partly echoed in service-learning best practices that focus on respect, as well as in Wendler's principle of justice, which asks CSL practitioners to pay attention to power dynamics. Within CSL, the majority of projects will not have formalized processes with respect to intellectual property, and students will generally be required to follow the community organization's property requirements. In an ideal setting, community members would have a say in project development. For CSL contexts, this means ensuring students understand the need to include community voices as well as recognize the value and knowledge passed to students through such inclusion. For many students, this will come in the form of requesting if community members would like to be acknowledged in their project presentation or paper. In situations where confidentiality is required, even a simple "thank you" to the members of a given organization for their valued insight and ideas can make organizations, academia, and students more aware of the strengths of collaborative work, while offering a respectful nod to the community members.

Finally, Louis (2007) identifies reciprocal appropriation, as written about by N. Scott Momaday, as the fourth cornerstone of Indigenous methodologies. While some would contend that this is the same as the principle of reciprocity that is common to CSL best practices, I offer a more nuanced understanding of reciprocal appropriation. The combination of the words "reciprocal" and "appropriation" speaks to the truth that as humans, what we take from the land and environment, be it tangible or intangible, cannot be given back to the land in the same measure. There has been an inequality to our sustenance and an appropriation of what is not necessarily ours. However, the reciprocity portion of this concept speaks to the idea that humans must give back, though this may not be an "equal" return. Reciprocity, in Indigenous terms, does not necessarily mean an equal exchange. For instance, the offering of tobacco in Indigenous ceremony is not meant to be payment of equal value for what is being accepted, but is a symbolic, spiritual, and practical action representing the completion of a cycle, where

the tobacco is used as a means of connecting with the Creator. It is an acknowledgment of the gifts that are given to humans from the Creator, and it is a way of returning what was given to the earth in order to connect with the Creator (Struthers & Hodge, 2004, p. 213-220). In this way, something is returned or offered to acknowledge what is being taken, and it is an appropriation precisely because of the inequality of the exchange: all that humans gain from the earth cannot be commensurate with anything they offer back. While there are other types of offerings made in Indigenous ceremony, and practices that may not be symbolic and may include exchanges that approximate similar values, reciprocity is not contingent upon equality in this way.

This form of reciprocity differs from western conceptualizations of research and work with Indigenous people. In Tri-Council policy and OCAP® principles, for example, the emphasis is on creating a system where the Indigenous/First Nations community will gain or benefit from knowledge and/or own, maintain, or have access to the resulting knowledge. Similarly, in community service-learning, there is the hope that students will give back to the community organizations they are working with (reciprocity), and that the definition of what is valuable or equitable should reside with those who are offering the experience: the community organization and its members (Blosser, 2012; Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning, 2015; Himley, 2004; Rundstrom & Deur, 1999; Wendler, 2012). Current models of CSL show that students' interactions and projects should be of value to the community organizations with which they interact (Himley, 2004; Tinkler et al., 2014). Because of this, Dostilio et al.'s (2012) concept review of reciprocity in service-learning demonstrates that there still exists a need for an exchange of tangibles for one to say reciprocity has occurred. In contrast, if we examine Willie Ermine's (2007) work on ethical space and Erich Steinman's (2011) collaborations with tribal nations, we begin to see another conceptualization of reciprocity that is predicated on relationships, respect, and humility, but is not reliant upon an exchange of tangibles or "equal" benefit.

Ermine (2007), building on the work of Roger Poole, sets the stage for understanding different ways of knowing by calling the space between two differing cultural views "Ethical Space" (p. 194). Ermine describes how respect and acceptance of different worldviews can open a new space for engagement between differing cultural groups. Within this space, respect is given to the others' understandings, beliefs, and views, even if one does not understand how such beliefs or views arise or are held; respect and value of other worldviews is apparent. It is within this ethical space that reciprocity occurs. Unlike mainstream conceptualizations, Ermine's ethical space places reciprocity as acceptance of views rather than an exchange of ideas, services, or things.

Erich Steinman's (2011) analysis of service-learning describes two tribal nations who did not require or request what would be considered a "reciprocal" relationship within the context of community service-learning. The two tribal nations invited service-learning students into their community, asked that students spend time with and build relationships with tribe members, and did not require students to perform a service. However, the process of just "being" with community members and learning how to listen was shown to be a difficult

and discomfiting task for students (Steinman, 2011, p. 6). In Steinman's interpretation, the intentions behind the tribal nations' resolve to have "an absence of service" were as follows:

[This dynamic] provides a powerful corrective to the elevated do-gooder—inferior recipient dynamic, as it suggests a set of counter questions directed at the dominant settler society: Why aren't you honoring your treaty? Why are your people so uninformed about our rights? Do you individually understand our status and rights, and if not, why is that? We are a sovereign nation – what is your relationship to us? (Steinman, 2011, p. 9)

Steinman (2011) acknowledges that the tribal nations never state the reasoning behind their decisions (p. 9, 11) and that his own observations and conclusions are based upon the relationships he has cultivated.

But Steinman fails to observe that listening, observing, and learning without instruction or intervention is an Indigenous pedagogy (Battiste, 2002, p.15). What Steinman and academia deem an absence of service may in fact be the tribal nations' way of imparting knowledge, based upon Indigenous pedagogies, using an Indigenous methodology of having the students begin to develop relationships with the people, the place, and the culture of that community. Within Indigenous pedagogy, transferring knowledge is often dependent upon service, and service is understood as a form of reciprocity. For example, you may spend time with your grandmother peeling potatoes while she prepares the rest of the evening meal. During that time, she might tell you stories. In that setting, the stories your grandmother is telling you constitute knowledge being transferred. Your spending time with her and peeling the potatoes is a service and form of reciprocity.

Even the tribal nations' choice not to tell Steinman specifically why they made certain decisions might have been part of Indigenous pedagogy. Steinman's ongoing relationship with the tribal nations—his understandings based on what he saw, what he learned historically, even what he experienced in earlier encounters—serves as knowledge gained through Indigenous methodologies. Within Indigenous pedagogy, one is allowed the time to learn at their own pace, and knowledge is not forced or imparted solely for the sake of learning, as it often is in classroom settings, but is instead tied to intent, need, use, time, place, daily observation, and ceremony. Indigenous knowledge, conveyed traditionally through oral history, practice, animation, and modelling, allows for a person's daily observations and practices to become integral to their learning process (Battiste, 2002, p. 2, 14). Learning becomes something that happens continually and daily, rather than something that unfolds in an institution. So why did the practice of observing and being present prove difficult for students? Why did the removal of service from the equation make students uncomfortable? To me, Steinman is describing transformative dissonance, a process through which students are confronted with cultural differences and differing worldviews but find this difficult because they do not have a task or title to retreat behind while they try to understand or negotiate differences.

### **Transformative Learning and Dissonance**

Within community service-learning scholarship, the experience of discomfort is viewed as a time for students to experience transformative learning:

The process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives)—sets of assumption and expectation—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change. Such frames are better because they are more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (Mezirow, 2009, p. 92)

This form of learning is often augmented by reflective practices such as journaling, online discussion forums, group classroom discussions, and discussions with professors or advisors (Mitchell et al., 2015, p. 53). But even when these reflective practices are carried out in productive ways, there is the possibility that, as transformative theory acknowledges, if there is too much dissonance, the learner will simply shut down. Hollyce Giles (2014) writes of her own experiences with transformative learning: “as I experienced in my teaching, these ways of knowing are unpredictable and come with the risk of potentially disrupting rather than enhancing learning” (p. 65). As with Giles, my experience with community service-learning saw times when the dissonance appeared to interfere with rather than facilitate student learning. I wondered at what point student discomfort tips from being a place of learning to a place of avoidance, and whether the push is first to avoidance and then to learning, or if avoidance could completely obscure learning.

Kiely’s (2005) foundational work on dissonance, particularly his categorization of high-intensity and low-level dissonance, can help distinguish the tipping point for students. In his longitudinal case study of service-learning in Nicaragua, Kiely (2005) categorizes low-level dissonance as the type of discomfort that is easily negotiated by the student—e.g., wearing sunscreen to avoid sunburns or taking pills to avoid malaria. High-intensity dissonance, “such as witnessing extreme forms of poverty, hunger, scarcity, and disease,” he writes, is “much more ambiguous and complex” (p. 11-15). Kiely’s work demonstrates that high-intensity dissonance is what is required for transformative learning; however, his study was an examination of students removed from their home locations and put in unfamiliar settings from which they could not escape. In contrast, in my initial experience with high-intensity dissonance, students seemed able to disassociate themselves from situations of discomfort perhaps in part because their service-learning experience took place in a relatively familiar context—the city in which they lived. Coryell et al.’s (2016) work with international service-learning highlights this problem as it delves into specific aspects of transformative learning that separate the idea of a commitment to social justice from changes in perspective. Based upon work by Eyler and Giles (1999) and Ogden (2007), Coryell et al. (2016) conclude that the kind of transformative service-learning that truly alters perception is rare because “students may resist challenging their own worldview and lifestyle” (p. 425). While these authors find transformative learning to be beneficial in service-learning, they are unable to explain how to ensure the translation

of dissonance or discomfort into transformative learning rather than avoidance. Significantly, however, each of them obliquely or directly refers to the incorporation of other worldviews as seminal to the process, as in Mezirow's (2009) explanation here:

“Transformative criticism,” as conceptualized [by O’Sullivan and Taylor (2004)], posits a critique of the dominant culture’s ‘formative appropriateness’ and provides a vision of an alternative form of culture and concrete indications of how to abandon inappropriate elements and to create more appropriate new cultural forms. They suggest these elements should form a new type of integral education. (Mezirow, 2009, p. 98)

This excerpt speaks to how including other ways of knowing is central to the process of transformative learning.

### **Negotiating Dissonance**

Community service-learning allows for experiential learning, but negotiating that experience in the face of distress or conflict appears to go beyond many students’ abilities. For this reason, I began to look for methods to simulate such experiences and ensure students were given the tools to negotiate dissonance in a manner that would foster transformative learning rather than avoidance. While simulation is not the same as actual experience, I believed that incorporating aspects of storytelling and modelling, predicated on Indigenous pedagogy, would allow me to straddle both western and Indigenous teaching paradigms.

When we include Indigenous pedagogies that are based on the importance of developing relationships, students have a much greater chance of being exposed to different worldviews and of creating bonds that allow them to see “service” as vehicle for societal change, rather than as a personal achievement. Indigenous pedagogy fosters students’ learning and growth by having them experience daily practices, rather than having them complete projects or service as stand-alone goals.

Today, many community service-learning educators try to emphasize the role of students as “learners” versus “saviors” and encourage students to allow their work to be driven by community members rather than by the students’ own perceptions of what is a necessary intervention (Himley, 2004; Wendler, 2012). As Blosser (2012) has written, “[s]tudents become active learners, taking what they experience in the community and using it to push the classroom material and conversations in directions that faculty never imagined. Education becomes less about an individual’s comprehension of facts and more about an individual as part of a community that works together to solve challenges” (p. 200). However, these practices are moot when students have trouble negotiating the new environments they find themselves in and fail to step outside of placing themselves as the creator of a project to “help,” rather than positioning themselves as part of a community endeavor.

Harkening back to Steinman’s (2011) article, where the tribal nations did not require a service component, we see that students had difficulties when they were placed in unfamiliar

situations and had no “role” to retreat behind. The act of simply observing and being a learner appears foreign within the community service-learning framework, where the notion of “service” as the provision of something tangible in response to community need has superseded learning as being in relationship. Inclusion of Indigenous pedagogy in these settings gives the student the ability to negotiate varied perceptions of reciprocity, alternate worldviews, and other knowledges. The instructor, too, has the opportunity of moving beyond the need for “tangible” service to the inclusion of intangible and experience-driven learning in manners not always fostered when using western Eurocentric framings of service-learning.

### **The Ethics Teaching Module**

The ethics teaching module is a three-part module to be delivered over the course of two to three days. The module was designed to help students find a way to achieve transformative dissonance by negotiating difficult situations rather than retreating behind privilege, and to be inclusive of both western and Indigenous methods with an emphasis on Indigenous pedagogy. Each module prompts students to consider ethical issues and conduct. Ethics here is very broadly defined to include human behaviour research ethics, as well as ethical practices that might more often be viewed in terms of morals or just behaviour.

The first module allows students to think of the moral and ethical implications of their actions and was created by drawing upon Indigenous pedagogies based on learning from daily observation, acceptance of differing worldviews (perspectives), and respectful representations (i.e., what appears to be a positive intervention may not be the best solution when viewed from other perspectives). The second module brings together Indigenous and western teachings. The module fosters critical thinking, which is foundational to both types of knowledge, and demonstrates how western knowledge, without acceptance of other knowledges, can reify colonial, patriarchal, and imperialistic practices. In this module, the instructor has the opportunity to draw upon Indigenous and feminist theories to show students how to develop CSL projects that are more in line with community inclusion and community perspective. The third and final module again brings Indigenous and western practices together by asking students to be reflexive. The module creates space for everyone’s voice to be heard and includes an inversion of power by asking the facilitator to demonstrate how they have learned from the students’ contributions, actions, and growth. All three modules are informed by Louis’ (2007) principles of relational accountability, respectful representation, rights and regulation, and reciprocal appropriation: students are asked to consider relationship building as central to their CSL practice; to acknowledge that their own views are not primary or central in collaborative, community-based work; to respect the rights of community members and organizations; and to approach the experience with humility and the recognition that they have been given much more than they can return. Listed below are more detailed explanations of the exercises included in each module.

**Module 1** focuses on bringing students together and providing a platform for them to begin to think about commonalities between themselves and the community members they are about to meet, as well as differences that might exist because of societal structures. This

module consists of a series of 20 scenarios. Students break into small groups and discuss whether ethical dilemmas exist in each of the scenarios and how to negotiate the dilemmas. After a specified time, the groups come together to report back to each other and to have further dialogue surrounding each scenario. As students examine the scenarios from differing perspectives, they will begin to see how ethical issues can arise or recede based on perspective. Similarly, students will begin to reflect upon their own privileges as they recognize that their perceptions come from specific vantage points. Each of the scenarios is also designed to remind students that they should not be working on projects (or at their community organizations) in isolation. There are support systems in place for students, and the scenarios encourage students to seek out these supports. Finally, bringing students together in small groups to brainstorm each scenario reminds students of the benefits of collaboration and offers them opportunities to acknowledge other perspectives, think proactively about the consequence of their actions, and recognize how their own actions or beliefs might be viewed by others.

**Module 2** focuses on academic rigor within community service-learning while fostering students' acceptance of other worldviews. This module provides examples of positive and negative service-learning practices to allow students to think critically about what and how they are being taught. This module focuses on two readings given to the students: Rachel Wendler's (2012) "Human subjects protection: A source for ethical service-learning practice" and Jan Hammill's (2001) "The culture of masculinity in an Australian Aboriginal community." Wendler's article helps reiterate the strengths of good ethical practice in service-learning and provides a solid foundation for students' work on critical thinking. As the theoretical foundation for the development of the ethics module, the article helps ground the students in what the module is trying to achieve. The Hammill (2001) article is included as an example of what appears as western Eurocentrism, bias, power imbalances, stereotyping, promotion of the savior mentality, poor research techniques, and lack of community voice (or the inclusion of community voice in a deceptive manner). In the article, Hammill reports on her intervention in an Australian Aboriginal community, presenting the men in the community as lazy, drunk, gambling wife beaters who are uninterested in fostering family relationships. Along with women in the community, Hammill organizes two events meant to bring the men back into the community fold; however, the intervention depends on non-Aboriginal men from a wealthy car manufacturing company coming to the community to help the children build billy-carts for a billy-cart race. Hammill's imposition of western-Eurocentric values, her inclusion of non-Aboriginal men as "father figures" for the Aboriginal children, and her failure to understand why the men of the community may have chosen to avoid the event speaks to an inability to see beyond one's own perceptions.

Using the two readings, students have an opportunity to question the veracity of knowledge being presented and to offer differing understandings of the results of the research examples. This module highlights power imbalances, asking students to think about how we might give credence to something we might otherwise be skeptical of simply because of the "authority" attached to the author and/or the instructor who has assigned the reading. It also serves as a reminder of how differing worldviews can be interpreted, how stereotypes can be perpetuated,

and how positive intentions can prove to be negative if one is not being critically mindful about what they are reading and experiencing.

**Module 3** focuses on students being able to have an open dialogue expressing how they have incorporated what they have learned into their projects or practices. It includes an interactive portion for the facilitator to demonstrate their own practices of observation and relationship building. During this piece, students gather in a circle and the facilitator begins by addressing each student individually. The facilitator identifies how she/he has seen growth in the students during the course or identifies a specific action that she/he finds commendable. Giving the facilitator an opportunity to praise each student creates a positive setting and allows each student to enter into the final activity knowing that their actions have been recognized. Once the facilitator has concluded their comments, each student is given an opportunity to reflect on their time in the course. Once all students have commented, the facilitator thanks the students, asks for any last comments, and the activity is concluded.

Initially, this module was conceived as a means for students to culminate their experience through dialogue. Shortly after I incorporated the interactive portion, I realized that, as a facilitator who consistently reminded students about other worldviews, questioned western Eurocentric practices, and reiterated aspects of privilege, I came to be seen as someone who always brings up “negative” topics. Through the inclusion of the interactive portion, I hoped to create an activity that encourages the facilitator to be mindful and present, and also affords them the opportunity to practice Indigenous pedagogies, particularly those predicated on relationship building. This final piece also allows for the facilitator to practice humility, acknowledge limitations, and express gratitude for the opportunity to learn from students.

### **Decolonization and Future Directions**

The ethics module cannot replace lived experiences, and while the module and its delivery are predicated on Indigenous pedagogies and best practices in community service-learning, it was still created to meet specific academic objectives that are embedded in western frameworks. Also, while I consider this module and its implementation to be an entry point for introducing decolonization, I also acknowledge that without the specific aim of ensuring Indigenous sovereignty, the value of calling this a decolonizing method can be questioned. Despite this, I stand by this module as a means to enter into decolonizing practices. From my perspective (specifically as a non-Indigenous person), our most difficult challenge is in recognizing when we are reinforcing and participating in ongoing colonizing practices. It is in those moments when I believe students, and others like myself, will feel discomfort: we will know something is wrong, and if we can sit with that wrongness—sit with the recognition of our complicity in social inequality, recognize our unhappiness, shame, fear, anger, guilt, and/or privilege, and refuse to retreat from those feelings—then we will move beyond the dissonance and into transformation. As further iterations of the originating class occur, I anticipate the ethics module will continue to be modified and strengthened. My hope is that future CSL practitioners will build upon my work and continue to use Indigenous pedagogies as a way to expand and grow community service-learning.

## About the Author

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## APPENDIX A – Excerpts from the ethics teaching module

### Module 1

The students are asked to determine the following for each of the scenarios:

- a) Does an ethical dilemma exist here?
- b) If it does not, why not?
- c) If one does, what is the dilemma?
  - a. What are some possible negative consequences of such a situation?
  - b. How can negative consequences be mitigated?
  - c. Are there specific actions that should be taken?

\*Note: not all scenarios are considered “ethical” dilemmas according to Research Ethics Boards (REBs), but all will include situations that question morality/perspectives/worldviews.

### Sample Scenario 1:

You have been working at an organization that provides an open space for youth to come and engage in art projects. The organization is constantly looking for ways to raise funds, particularly since their art supplies are sorely lacking. You decide to hold a team building art event next week. You ask one of the staff members if you can do a lunchtime project that creates faux stained glass. You also mention that you want to call it a brown bag art event and so you will ask everyone to bring their lunch. The staff member likes your project but reminds you that they do not have money for extra materials. The project involves sprinkling crayon shavings over leaves on waxed paper. Then a second sheet of wax paper is placed over the shavings and leaves and pressed together. Finally, a cloth overlay is spread over the waxed paper sheets and you iron the cloth, thereby melting the wax. The resulting material is then placed on a black construction paper cut-out and your project is done. You think 12 youth will attend and feel you have enough art supplies, but you worry about time, as there is only one iron at the center. You decide to bring your own iron from home as well as some old crayons and wax paper that are lying around. You are donating your crayons and waxed paper.

**Answers/Discussion:** This scenario focuses on details of the art project to draw students into the experience of the activity. Focusing on the activity, as in real life, often makes us forget about whether there is value in the activity and if the potential negative outcomes of the activity outweigh the potential positives. Donating items to an organization can also be seen as a means of displaying power/privilege. Recognizing inequality within the community membership is important.

What if someone cannot afford to bring lunch or forgot to bring lunch?	Have you thought of what will happen to the CBO if someone is injured? How will you feel?
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Donating items approved by the organization is okay. Be cognizant of your own privilege in being able to donate items. If others learn you have donated items, think about whether you have used this as a means to demonstrate you are “different” from members using the organization’s services.	Do you need more than one person to help facilitate a group of 12?
Did you ask the appropriate organization member for approval of your project?	What are possible outcomes if a child goes home and tries to do this activity without supervision?

## Module 2

Module 2 asks students to read two articles. The first article by Rachel Wendler (2012), “Human subjects protection: A source for ethical service-learning practice,” looks at ethical concerns involved with service-learning students and focusses on decolonial, feminist and participatory methods. The second article by Jan Hammill (2001), “The culture of masculinity in an Australian Aboriginal community,” can be problematized from a number of perspectives.

The inclusion of the Hammill article provides an accepted research article that allows students to think critically about a subject. Many students, upon seeing an assigned reading in a syllabus, automatically assume the reading is sanctioned by the professor. Asking students to be critical thinkers also affords an opportunity to have them question grand narratives and teachings that have historically positioned western understandings as superior. Similarly, the article provides openings for discussions of power and privilege and highlights how one can align themselves as an ally without the community identifying them as such, and without their work functioning to serve the needs of the entire community.

This article also demonstrates why some interventions might not be as welcomed or successful as others and highlights how researchers can further personal agendas in manners that appear to be driven by community members. This component allows students to question the authority of academia/institutions, and it creates space for discussion of western solutions being imposed on non-western societies in manners that outwardly suggest there is a need for communities to conform to the aspirations and societal constructs of western neoliberalism, globalization, and capitalism.

## Module 3

The final component is the coming together of students and facilitators for a discussion of their time in the community. Students sit in a circle and each student is given an opportunity to discuss anything related to ethics, projects, or classroom theory and learning. Next, the facilitator expresses a positive sentiment(s) to each student. These words can reflect something positive about the student’s being, an action the student has taken, their growth over the term, or how the student has helped the facilitator to grow. This ensures the facilitator has been

present and mindful of how students negotiated their time in the community and creates a situation where power dynamics can be inverted through the facilitator's expression of learning from the students. Finally, each student is asked to reflect on their time in the community. Topic flexibility is required as students are often emotionally exhausted at this juncture and offering a safe environment for positive or negative discussions is necessary.

## Production of the Global Health Doctor: Discourses on International Medical Electives

Lori Hanson and Jethro Cheng

**ABSTRACT** This article attempts to interrupt dominant narratives in the literature about international service-learning (ISL) in the field of medicine by critically deconstructing discourse related to a common model used to teach global health in undergraduate medical education: the international medical elective (IME). Based on a study conducted in 2012, the results have not been previously published. Using a Foucauldian discourse analysis, the study interrogated the underlying assumptions behind the nature of “service” being rendered by conveying the imagery, language, and consequences of the dominant discourses used in journal articles indexed on MEDLINE between 2000 and 2011. The analysis revealed an IMEs literature steeped in problematic discursive (re)productions of colonial constructs and imagined geographies, primarily through two dominant discourses designated as “disease and brokenness” and “romanticizing poverty.” These discourses both justify and reinforce privileged subject positions for students engaged in these ISL experiences, while inadequately considering structures and systems that perpetuate marginalization and health inequities. Such discourses often marginalize or essentialize people of so-called “host” countries, while silencing subaltern perspectives, resistance struggles, knowledges, and epistemologies. Challenging current ISL practices in medicine requires educators to actively work towards decolonialization, in part by recognizing the ability of discourses to produce meaning and subjects.

**KEYWORDS** international service-learning; international medical electives; global health; discourse; medical education

“Dissonance is the word that best describes my current view of international service-learning.”

-Doerr, 2011, p. 71

“Next to money and guns, the third largest North American export is the US idealist, who turns up in every theater of the world: the teacher, the volunteer, the missionary, the community organizer, the economic developer, and the vacationing do-gooders... I am here to suggest that you voluntarily renounce exercising the power which being an American gives you. I am here to entreat you to freely, consciously and humbly give up the legal right you have to impose your benevolence on Mexico. I am here to challenge you to recognize your inability, your powerlessness and your incapacity to do the “good” which you intended to do... Come to look, come to climb our mountains, to enjoy our flowers. Come to study. But do not come to help...”

-Illich, 1968

In his now classic 1968 speech to a group of students embarking on a volunteer summer in Mexico with the Peace Corp, critical educator and priest Ivan Illich (1968) suggests that students do away with their pretense. “*To hell with good intentions,*” he proclaims. It was a scathing indictment of the first modern era of international volunteer do-gooders, and arguably as relevant today as ever. Like volunteerism, the premise that underlies much of international service-learning (ISL) is that of good intention, of doing good, of benevolent service. This paper questions that assumption, interrogating the nature of the “service” being rendered in an era in which the West seems resolved to “quest for innocence in a post-colonial world” (Mahrouse, 2010).

International service-learning is in some senses an institutionalized form of the international volunteerism that became commonplace in North America in the 1960s. What has evolved since then is that ISL increasingly takes place in the current academic contexts of community engagement, service-learning, and internationalization. Definitions of ISL frequently suggest it as an ideal form of inter-cultural, international immersion, study, and community service that is fomented and organized through and by partners in more than one country (Bringle, Hatcher, & Jones, 2011). Like community service-learning, ISL is ideally a “structured learning experience that combines community service with explicit learning objectives, preparation and reflection” (Seifer, 1998, p. 274). Promisingly, perhaps, ISL as a form of service-learning is increasingly formalized, documented, and theorized (Bringle et al., 2011). Possibly excepting the relatively small sub-field of critical service-learning (Porfilio & Hickman, 2011), however, it is rarely subject to critique as honest and as raw as that of Illich. Critical approaches to ISL are even more rare in the health sciences where forms of ISL are flourishing.

This article attempts to interrupt the dominant narrative about ISL in the field of medicine by critically deconstructing the most common international service-learning model used to teach global health (GH) in undergraduate medical education—the international medical elective (IME). It does so by unpacking the discourses that pervade the new and rapidly growing field of global health as portrayed in the literature on IMEs. The article is largely based on a study conducted as a Master’s thesis in 2012 (by JC), with complementary analyses based on three decades of academic and practical work in global health, including teaching study abroad courses (by LH). To orient the reader, we begin with a brief critical introduction to the field of global health and to IMEs, following which we describe and discuss the approach, methods, and findings from the empirical study. We end with a critical reflection on current approaches and the possibility of de- or non-colonizing practices.

### **Global Health and the International Medical Elective**

The term “global health” easily conjures ideas such as Ebola, AIDS, SARS, or images of starving kids in Africa, together with North American development missions or Bill Gates-style philanthropy. Such conjecture is not far-fetched, but with a first glance at the academic literature, it would seem that much care is being taken to distance the academic field of global health from these notions. The GH literature claims it as a “new” field arising as: an outgrowth of critique of the paternalism of international health and the colonialist impulse of tropical

medicine (Crane, 2010; Eaton, Redmond, & Bax, 2011; Koplan et al., 2009); a new expression of the inherently international aspects of public health (Nixon, 2006); a strategic response to the security threats posed by new and emerging diseases in low and middle income countries (Garrett, 2007; Macfarlane, Jacobs, & Kaaya, 2008; Merson & Chapman, 2009); or a result of the World Bank incursion into the international health field in the 1990s, and subsequent shifts at the World Health Organization (WHO) (Brown, Cueto, & Fee, 2006; Thompson, Huntington, Hunt, Pinsky, & Brodie, 2003). A widely-shared view is that GH is “an area for study, research, and practice that places a priority on improving health and achieving equity in health for all people worldwide” (Koplan et al., 2009, p. 1995), requiring attention that is supra-national, inter-disciplinary, multi-level, and partnership-based (Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, 2011; Koplan et al., 2009; Marmot et al., 2008). Yet educators, researchers, and practitioners continue to struggle over what, if anything, legitimately makes it a distinct field or practice (Birn, Pillay, Holtz, & Basch, 2009; Brada, 2011; King, 2002; Macfarlane et al., 2008), and, increasingly, critical scholars of global health and global health education see the field less neutrally than any common definition would suggest. Rather, critical scholars point to the reality that global health initiatives originate largely from the Global North and privilege Western epistemologies.<sup>1</sup> They question the “hidden curriculum” in global health education (Anderson, Philpott, & Raza, 2014) and they point out the irony that as a science, global health “both generates and relies upon inequalities, even as it strives to end them” (Crane, 2013, p. 15). Increasingly, critics argue “that taking global health on its own terms obscures the powerful forces by which it becomes intelligible” (Brada, 2011, p. 285) and that it is the “moral maps and medical imaginaries” (Wendland, 2012, p. 108) of global health that are leading a virtual tsunami of interest in the field, shifting priorities of both students and medical schools.

The Consortium of Universities for Global Health (CUGH) reports that GH educational programs in North American universities in fact quadrupled between the years 2003 and 2009, with 61 medical education programs offering international electives and 11 with specified GH tracks as of 2005 (Kerry et al., 2011). The emergence of global health as an academic pursuit has given rise to expanded course offerings, new competencies for students, and novel educational practices (Cole et al., 2011; Hagopian et al., 2008; Redwood-Campbell et al., 2011), with the most popular form of global health training in North America being a form of service-learning known as the international medical elective or international medical experience (IME).

Characterized by short-term immersions of about four to eight weeks in lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs), IMEs are posed as providing medical students with a unique service-learning opportunity to “experience global health firsthand” and to understand

<sup>1</sup> We must make a note here on terminology. There is no ideal way to categorize countries of the world. Terms such as First, Second, and Third World, or Developed, Developing, and Under-developed countries, permeate the literature. All reflect the discourse of the era in which they were created, and all can conjure unhelpful stereotypical notions. More recently, progressive scholars have begun using the “Global North/South” and/or categorizations based on per capita income levels (LMICs and High Income or HIC) as less politicized choices. We use those, reverting to other terms only when quoting the literature. Importantly, no term is perfect, and all tend to ignore the historic forces that both created and perpetuate global inequities.

medicine in clinical and cultural contexts “far from their own” (Grudzen & Legome, 2007). Most often, IMEs involve a clinical component but may also include elements of community or public health and occasionally research. Demand for IME programs continues to grow rapidly, with over 30% of undergraduate medical students participating in overseas electives by 2010 (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2010), compared to only 6% in 1984 (Jeffrey, Dumont, Kim, & Kuo, 2011; Khan et al., 2013; Thompson et al., 2003).

Largely based on non-standardized students’ and administrators’ assessments (Hanson, Harms, & Plamondon, 2010), the published literature on IMEs claims that they produce in students improved clinical and language skills, development of compassion and humility, appreciation for primary care and public health, improved cultural competence, and inclination towards working in underserved communities (Crump & Sugarman, 2008; Dharamsi et al., 2010; Dowell & Merrylees, 2009; Smith & Weaver, 2006). Yet they are simultaneously fraught with ethical problems including inadequate supervision, providing clinical care beyond competency levels, exercising double standards, and exhausting local resources that are already constrained, affecting health systems, local trainees, and patients (Crump & Sugarman, 2010; DeCamp, 2011; T. Green, Green, Scandlyn, & Kestler, 2009; Shah & Wu, 2008). Ironically, like the field of global health in which they reside, some authors have suggested that IMEs can both reify and reproduce the very health and social inequities they seek to address, with evident neo-colonialist impulse (Hanson et al., 2010).

### **Producing the Global Health Doctor: The study**

*“Global health’ and the ‘resource-limited settings’ in which it takes place are not born ... they must be made.”*

-Brada, 2011, p. 286

The scholarly literature plays a vital role in constructing and propagating global health ideas and practices to academics, students, and health professionals, providing fertile ground for the study of global health discourses. Weedon (1987) defines discourses as “competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organizing social institutions and processes” (p. 34) but argues that not all discourses are awarded equal importance or status. The authority and influence of dominant discourses arise from the way they employ “a particular language and a distinctive worldview in which some things are regarded as inherently more important or true than others” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 136) and by being widely circulated and normalized.

Various authors have suggested how global health discourses induce individuals to conduct themselves and adhere to certain practices. In her fieldwork in Nepal, medical anthropologist Pigg (2013), for example, highlights the power of global health and development workers to deploy discourses that morally define which practices constitute “just sitting around” versus “doing something.” Hall (2006) traces the way Western medicine has traditionally been contrasted to the “primitive” practices of the Indian medicine man and notes that discourses in global health often rely on a dichotomy between “civilized, rational, scientifically developed peoples and the atavism of peoples by whom Western science gauges its progress” (p. 285). King (2002) suggests that these practices are well-embedded, noting that throughout the

history of global public health, discourses have been used to “identify villains and heroes, ascribe blame for failures, and credit for triumphs” (p. 767). Brada (2011) meanwhile warns that notions of morality and expertise affect how trainees orient themselves to others, and questions what power-relations are constituted as a result.

With growing numbers of students engaging in global health service-learning, particularly through IMEs, we felt it crucial to become more attuned to the discursive mechanisms by which the global health doctor is being produced and reproduced in North American medical schools. Our study of the published literature on IMEs arose from the belief that deconstructing the discourses therein might contribute to that attunement, and give way to the production of alternative meanings and practices.

### **Theoretical and methodological approach**

Situating our analysis broadly in the traditions of critical, feminist, and post-colonial theory, this study questions whose interests are represented in the prevailing organization of GH education and interrogates how dominant discourses about those arrangements account for and reproduce the status quo (Brookfield, 2005; Hinchey, 2010), privileging some people’s voices and experiences while marginalizing others (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005). The study thus included an exploration of how the “Other” gets constructed and portrayed.<sup>2</sup> Reflecting on the effects for colonized peoples of historic exclusions, continuations, and ruptures, we posed a project that recognizes how vestiges of past colonial encounters are frequently, if invisibly, reproduced in the present (Gandhi, 1998; Said, 1979). Thus, an important post-colonial aim of our inquiry was to expose dominant discourses about IMEs, paying attention to ways that the discourses can marginalize, victimize, essentialize, or disempower people of so-called “host” countries, and ways the discourses might silence or misrepresent subaltern perspectives, resistance struggles, knowledges and epistemologies (Spivak, 1998).

In discourse analysis, language plays an important role in constructing meaning and is not presumed to be able to objectively describe reality (Gergen, 2009; Mills, 1997; Weedon, 1987). Rather, as Foucault (1972) states, discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49), producing subjects who personify particular characteristics and attributes (Weedon, 1987). Within a particular discourse, individuals occupy subject positions that offer particular ways of being and relating to others. Discourses give meaning to these positions by informing individuals about how to act, normalizing certain practices while denying alternative ways of being and knowing. Individuals are further constituted by being subject to and governed by certain norms and forms of knowledge. For Foucault, discourses are historically variable ways of specifying knowledge; the notion of “truth” is thus problematic and should be challenged.

The Foucauldian discourse analysis (Willig, 2008) we utilize in the study is well suited for understanding how a particular version of events—in this case, the literature’s portrayal

<sup>2</sup> “The Other” is a term that has been widely used in post-colonial studies to emphasize the invented differences between Western and non-Western subjects that enabled the colonial production and reinforcement of positions of subordination and domination (Said, 1979).

of IMEs in the Global South—is elevated to the status of “truth.” It is also appropriate given its concern with how subjects are constituted and what the consequences are for those positions within discourses. Finally, Foucault’s ideas on power as a dynamic process permit an examination of how a different conceptualization of international service-learning in medicine might be possible to construct. The adapted version of Foucauldian discourse analysis used for the study follows (Willig, 2008).

## **Methods**

To understand the different ways that IMEs are constructed in the literature, we examined academic journal articles published between the years 2000 and 2011, a time frame corresponding to the period in which IMEs gained popularity and grew rapidly. We searched MEDLINE with a combination of these MeSH subject headings: “Undergraduate Medical Education,” “Internationality,” “International Cooperation,” “International Educational Exchange,” “World Health,” “Developing Countries,” “Travel Medicine,” and “Tropical medicine.” The search results were limited to articles published in English. A total of 293 articles were produced. We reviewed the abstracts of each article and only included articles that met the following criteria: 1) the participants were undergraduate medical students; 2) the direction of travel was from High Income Countries (HICs) to LMICs; and 3) the duration of the elective was short-term. The final dataset for this study consists of 60 articles.

Our analysis consisted of a number of iterative readings, noted observations, and coding informed by the kinds of concerns Foucault raises. First, the literature was coded in terms of varied and general ways that the text represented IMEs and their concomitant practices and activities. After identifying several possible discourses, we sought to understand how the varying discourses were structured and organized to legitimate certain practices. We noticed that the text consistently invoked particular portrayals of the following elements: representations of host countries and environments; the rationale of students and institutions for participating in IMEs; the preparation for involvement in IMEs; and the activities that take place during IMEs. We also examined how medical students and hosts were positioned within dominant discourses by considering the relationships and power relations between them. In the end, it was the common elements in the literature—portrayals of hosts, motivations, activities, and relationships—that revealed dominant patterns and discourses.

## **Findings**

In this section, we present and explore the implication of two of the principal dominant discourses identified. The first discourse portrays IMEs as a risky undertaking in places that are sick, chaotic, and in dire need of help. We name this the discourse of “disease and brokenness.” The second dominant discourse constructs an idealized and romanticized version of trainees working in faraway settings; this is the discourse of “romanticizing poverty.” In each section, we demonstrate how each discourse is constructed and how subjects are positioned within them by highlighting quotes from the IMEs literature. Due to space constraints, we only list a portion of the references.

### *Discourse of “disease and brokenness”*

A prevailing construction of IMEs in the literature presents medical students from the West going to a place laden with disease and imbued with a sense that nothing works—that all is broken. Implicitly and explicitly, the writing conveys inherent risks in such settings. The first dominant discourse is constructed from four main ideas: 1) Illness and Death; 2) Despair; 3) Foreignness; and 4) Material Depravity. In discussing these key components, we demonstrate how the discourse foregrounds certain versions of events over others.

The first aspect of the discourse introduces the idea that IME experiences are situated in faraway lands replete with strange diseases and death, a recurring image of the Global South characterized by “a greater variety of acute and serious illnesses” (Mutchnick, Moyer, & Stern, 2003, p. S4) where “health care providers . . . find a unique opportunity to learn about exotic diseases” (Schechtman & Levin, 2006, p. 326). Epidemics and outbreaks have a totalizing presence, allowing medical students to direct their gaze towards a “wider range of illnesses . . . and clinical experiences” (McKinley, Williams, Norcini, & Anderson, 2008, p. S53) and fixate upon “new diseases” (Eckhert, 2006, S38). Diseases are spoken of as “staples” (Sears, 2007, p. 351), as an essence of the host environment where affliction is thus viewed as natural and presenting “unmistakable” (Taylor, 2001, p. 373) patterns. More importantly, host settings are constructed as fundamentally different, symbolized by illnesses that “have not yet appeared in the Western Hemisphere” (Dubin, 2000, p. 732) or are “rarely encountered in the student’s home country” (Drain et al., 2007, p. 227). Warnings to students headed to the Global South that “infections can spread from the jungle to the urban doorstep in less than a day” (Dubin, 2000, p. 732) further portray host countries as inherently threatening to the West.

The technique of foregrounding images of despair and immeasurable suffering also strengthens the notion of disease and brokenness. IME programs are depicted as set in the “world’s poorest places” (Gupta & Farmer, 2005), among the “most oppressed and impoverished” (Rybak, 2007, p. 357), and in “situations of almost universal need” (Dodard, Vulcain & Fournier, 2000, p. 398). The sheer magnitude of the situation is exemplified by poignant illustrations of the “billions living in poverty” (Shah & Wu, 2008, p. 377). Despair seems to engulf the Global South, where the “neediest” people and patients (Schechtman & Levin, 2006, p. 332; Sears, 2007, p. 351) and the “poorest of the poor” (Panosian & Coates, 2006, p. 1771) live amidst “extreme poverty” (Pinto & Upshur, 2009, p. 2) and “deplorable situations” (Gupta & Farmer, 2005). The chaos that assails host countries is constructed as inescapable, dominating the “desperately poor” (Elit et al., 2011, p. 706) and the “throngs of patients” (Jesus, 2010, p. 19) who wait long hours for help: “Hundreds of families lined up each morning to receive treatment for ailments including parasitic infections [and] tropical diseases” (S. Green, Comer, Elliott, & Neubrandner, 2011, p. 304). One is further drawn into the plight as students retell harrowing experiences of places where “disease was rampant” (Sears, 2007, p. 351), “the number of ill and dying exceeded local resources” (Elit et al., 2011, p. 708), and “patients with obvious diseases could not be treated” (Jesus, 2010, p. 19). In the “most impoverished places” (Parsi & List, 2008, p. 268) where so many are “truly in need” (Ramsey, Haq, Gjerde, & Rothenberg, 2004, p. 415), a grim future that is “grave and far-

reaching” (Greenberg & Mazar, 2002, p. 1651) awaits. Differences between LMICs and HICs are portrayed as inevitable, with little effort to engage in a critical analysis about the inequities: “So I was just kind of lost . . . and again going to the point of, okay in Canada this would never fly” (Elit et al., 2011, p. 708).

Constructing an image of foreignness further reinforces the idea of brokenness, of chaos. Captivated by the difference, medical students construct the host environments of LMICs as “unfamiliar” and “foreign.” The exoticness of the “Third World” is enthralling, forcing outsiders to adapt to “alien cultures” (Imperato, 2004, p. 353) in a place that is strange and has unfamiliar rules. Vivid accounts reveal traumatic tales of medical students who “committed suicide after return” (Iyagi, Corbett, & Welfare, 2006) or who were “severely beaten up . . . as punishment for carrying so little cash” (Goldsmid, Bettiol, & Sharples, 2003, p. 163). Yet, rather than diminishing IMEs, the frequency of such reports seem to imbue them with an aura of exoticism and “allure” (Chin-Quee, White, Leeds, MacLeod, & Master, 2011, p. 742). Medical students are depicted as pursuing experiences that “might as well have been in another world” (Sears, 2007, p. 351), witnessing out of the ordinary fatalities and “watching someone die for the first time” (Vora, Chang, Pandya, Hasham, & Lazarus, 2010). Because the countries can be both foreign and dangerous, IMEs become a “foray into developing countries” (Parsi & List, 2008, p. 268) or an “international venture” (Jesus, 2010, p. 19) where students should be emboldened to “fight” (Drain et al., 2007, p. 226) against unknown hazards. Emphasis on the “inherent risks, uncertainties, [and] unexpected crises” within the Global South further sensationalizes “the unpredictable nature of international experiences” (Steiner, Carlough, Dent, Peña, & Morgan, 2010, p. 1563). The idea of foreignness effectively constructs IME experiences as imbued with mystery and intrigue, but also full of danger and threats.

Finally, the overwhelming material depravity of the Global South features prominently in the discourse of disease and brokenness. The broken landscape and poverty-stricken conditions of the “Third World” (Imperato, 2004) are portrayed as sickening: “The scope of poverty and the consequences of inadequate health care may overwhelm students unfamiliar with conditions in developing countries” (Reisch, 2011, p. 95). Descriptions of depleted facilities in a “war-torn setting in Uganda, and a mobile, railroad-based hospital in India” (Panosian & Coates, 2006, p. 1772) as well as poor clinics only capable of conducting “primitive ultrasound[s]” (Mukundan, Vydareny, Vassallo, Irving, & Ogaoga, 2003, p. 796) reinforce the impossibly destitute situation to be encountered. Speaking about host settings as devoid of modernity constructs a singular image of IMEs taking place in an undifferentiated space of brokenness.

*The Dangerous Irrational Other and the Caring Medical Student.* Within the discourse of “disease and brokenness,” subjects from the West and host countries interact with and respond to one another in prescribed ways, with host countries populated with irrational beings who are either passive or dangerous, while the Western students are logically positioned as dynamic and intelligent—and even as saviours. An orientation of the medical student for the ensuing danger reinforces this:

Students role-play scenes they might experience on arrival. For example, a student arriving at the airport and going through customs is approached by a young man who offers to carry her suitcase. Though he appears and may be genuinely helpful, it is also possible that his real intention is to steal the suitcase, to lure her into his car or perhaps to embarrass her into paying him an exorbitant fee for his baggage-handling service. (Einterz, 2008, p. 1462)

Student reflections on the health workers and professionals they encounter largely relay the image of less rational and less educated peers. This inferior, non-Western Other comes in “late, irregularly, or not at all” (Ly, 2007, p. 356) and even fails to practice “universal precautions” (Imperato, 2004, p. 363). Any ability for the Other to provide care is subsumed by an apparent lack of reason: “I didn’t feel like I had any choice in the matter because he [the surgeon] literally walked away” (Petrosoniak, McCarthy, & Varpio, 2010, p. 685). Incapable of practicing medicine effectively, the Other purportedly has a “lack of knowledge about medical education” (Radstone, 2005, p. 109). Moreover, the Other is faulted for being “hesitant to address concerns” (Provenzano et al., 2010, p. 212), or worse still, their “culture” (Crump & Sugarman, 2008, p. 1457) is to blame for their ineffectiveness when working with trainees. Portrayed as irrational and ignorant, the Other appears “insulted” (Vora et al., 2010) over trivial matters. Alternatively, they are seen as aloof and uncaring, walking away from a patient with uncontrollable seizures and leaving one student to “attend to him each time he seized” (Elit et al., 2011, p. 706).

Conversely, the student subjects from the West are constructed as the exact opposite of the Other—as intelligent and dynamic actors. Unlike the Other, the discerning medical student is portrayed as “the most qualified person” (Radstone, 2005, p. 109), being able to make quick decisions and possessing “unique resources” (Chin-Quee et al., 2011, p. 740). Medical students embody the role of leaders who have “passionate commitment” (Edwards, Piachaud, Rowson, & Miranda, 2004, p. 689) and are seen as “good will ambassadors” (Imperato, 2004, p. 372). They are distinguished by their “sense of mission” (Panosian & Coates, 2006, p. 1773), “visions of Great Deeds” (Coulehan, 2006, p. 814), and “altruistic ideals” (Ramsey et al., 2004, p. 412).

These differences are then used to justify and portray the subjects from the West as the protectors and guardians. The West is bestowed with a “special power” (Gupta & Farmer, 2005) to protect the health of people globally. An ensuing relationship develops where the West is positioned as a saviour who provides the extra “manpower” (Dowell & Merrylees, 2009, p. 124) to “help those in need” (Vora et al., 2010). Embodying the role of saviours, medical students are seen as answering a “calling” (Panosian & Coates, 2006, p. 1771) and endowed with the responsibility of “giving voice to those who are stifled by social burdens that seem impossible to overcome” (Dharamsi et al., 2010, p. 979). Without the benevolence of the enlightened Westerner, the Other is invisible and unable to speak: “In one settlement, women lined up for hours and told students that they wanted to be part of the needs assessment, because it was the first time that they had felt ‘heard and listened to’ in their lives” (Parsi & List, 2008, p. 268).

In highlighting the subject positions offered to students within this discourse, we draw attention to the power of students to constitute themselves as heroes or saviours and their ability to represent themselves as morally upright. However, we also bring into question the type of relationships that are enacted.

### ***Discourse of “romanticizing poverty”***

The second dominant discourse that we identified constructs a romantic notion of medical students working in under-resourced environments. In the literature, we encountered two specific and distinct ways in which poverty is romanticized. First, destitute and impoverished environments are represented as an opportunity to develop basic clinical skills and overcome challenges. Second, the host countries are constituted as static societies that are timeless and unchanging, where inhabitants live contently in beautiful simplicity.

The discourse of romanticizing poverty begins by constructing impoverished settings of host countries as rich learning environments and as natural settings for medical students to rediscover the roots of medicine. In this discourse, the destitution and material depravity of the Global South are no longer dreaded, but serve as propitious sites for medical students to discover the “attributes that make for becoming better clinicians” (Drain et al., 2007, p. 228). The under-resourced settings are constructed as an opportunity “for on-the-spot problem solving”—a kind of “medical outward-bound” (Dodard, Vulcain, & Fournier, 2000, p. 400). New responsibilities engender challenges, which students now embrace as an “adventure[ ]” (Einterz, 2008, p. 1461) as they set out on “exciting international medical opportunities” (Panosian & Coates, 2006, p. 1772) that will ultimately be “beneficial to their careers” (Morris et al., 2006, p. 119). Venturing to the Global South signifies a return to the days of their “forefathers” (Eckhert, 2006, p. S39) with a nostalgic yearning for pre-modern times: “Technology is not required to provide good, caring health care” (Haq et al., 2000, p. 569). Trainees represent poverty as a way to “appreciate medicine in its simple form” (Smith & Weaver, 2006, p. S35) and improve their “abilities to use their own diagnostic skills” (Dubin, 2000, p. 732), glorifying the idea of self-reliance: “Tremendous professional growth can develop from being forced to work up to the absolute limits of one’s knowledge and skills” (Schechtman & Levin, 2006, p. 326). Practicing medicine in “primitive” settings is also signified as a “return . . . to our foundation” (Eckhert, 2006, p. S39) and conceived of as a means to rediscover the “art of medicine” (Mutchnick et al., 2003, p. S3). There is an “allure” (Chin-Quee et al., 2011, p. 742) to such practice and a challenge for students to “become more sophisticated” (Parsi & List, 2008, p. 268) without the benefit of “the newest and most sophisticated technology” (Jotkowitz, Rosen, Warshawsky, & Karplus, 2006, p. 355). Compared to Western environments defined by “routine” (Chin-Quee et al., 2011, p. 743), learning medicine in the poor Global South is spoken of as inspiring and exhilarating. Within this discourse, experiencing poverty up-close is presented and constructed as a gratifying personal experience.

The notion that the Global South is a timeless, unchanging place is the second strategy that the literature employs to romanticize poverty. In a “primitive” environment where “[t]hings move slowly” (Schechtman & Levin, 2006, p. 327), an enduring image of countries untouched

by modernity is constructed. Working in “exotic” and “unfamiliar” settings thus takes on a whole new set of meanings. Medical students construct an image of an enticing, seductive landscape in their descriptions of travelling along “fragrant, winding roads” (Coulehan, 2006, p. 814). A distinctive and carefree life is envisioned, and an idyllic lifestyle is idealized with unusual candour: “I will never forget my stay in the jungle . . . you don’t need much to live a very peaceful and happy life” (Vora et al., 2010). Trapped in time, the inhabitants of such places are depicted as being happy and content with their simple way of life: “I think it looks poor here, but then I think if you lived here, you wouldn’t feel so poor” (S. Green et al., 2011, p. 306). Medical students “marvel at how much capacity there [is] among people who [have] very little” (Dharamsi et al., 2010, p. 980) and are fascinated by the noble and heroic ability of the poor to bear hardship. Stunned by images of stark poverty, students idealize the poor’s capacity to “endure without complaint” (Holmes, Zayas, & Koyfman, 2012, p. 931) and to be appreciative of any form of care. The literature thus celebrates the redemptive aspect of poverty and idolizes those who have the ability to endure long suffering: “I often wish my patients could understand how great they have it in the US, instead of complaining about a \$20 copay! Everyone should go to Honduras and see what we saw” (S. Green et al., 2011, p. 307). Simplicity is the essence of the poor. Hence, poverty ceases to be harmful or dangerous: “The hospital may be low-tech, its clients poor and uneducated and its facilities unpolished, but it is providing a valuable service to the people who use it” (Einterz, 2008, p. 1461).

*The Childlike Other and Triumphant Medical Student.* The representation of the Global South as unchanging and static has consequences for how its inhabitants are subjectively positioned. Living in a timeless present and removed from modernity, they are no longer positioned as a threat or irrational, but as a childlike being or as someone inscrutable and “shrouded in mystery” (Coulehan, 2006, p. 816). Portrayed as simple, the Other is described in a shallow and superficial way: “. . . women with colorful headscarves, crossed arms, and dozens of shoeless children” (Coulehan, 2006, p. 817). The suffering Other relies simply on “prayers” (Dodard, Vulcain, & Fournier, 2000, p. 399) and “hope” (Rybak, 2007, p. 357). The Other is the recipient of “kindness, gentleness, curiosity, and smile[s]” (Haq et al., 2000, p. 569) who puts childlike trust in medical students: “Frustrated that I could not speak the language and offer her words of comfort, I simply held her hand and pet her head” (Vora et al., 2010). Not surprisingly, medical students glowingly describe how they learned to “gather a history and physical despite significant cultural/language barriers” (Smith & Weaver, 2006, p. S35), or are astonished that they can get by with “pantomime, facial expression, and personality . . . [and] really get a lot across that way” (S. Green et al., 2011, p. 306). They “even communicate with patients and other medical professionals through smiles and different expressions and gestures” (Vora et al., 2010). Mesmerized by the Other’s innocence and juvenile nature, students describe their encounters with inhabitants with frankness and simplicity:

When we first arrived in Kigutu, we could feel the excitement of the villagers kilometers before we reached our destination. Children ran to the road and followed

our vehicle, laughing, delighted by our waves. As we pulled into the field we were immediately surrounded by hundreds of villagers, eager to show us the pile of bricks and stones they had collected for the foundation of their long awaited health clinic. (Rybak, 2007, p. 357)

The depiction of a childlike essence, apparent innocence, and delight at meeting the Western medical student subordinates and romanticizes the Other as happy and content. The people thus constructed, without depth or complexity, are contrasted with the sophisticated medical students coming of age. Leaving the familiar environment of the West, medical students are seen as undergoing life-changing experiences that are “exciting and character-building” (Edwards et al., 2004, p. 688). Answering a “calling” (Panosian & Coates, 2006, p. 1771), brave and daring medical students set out to “explore parts of the world that interest them” (Dowell & Merrylees, 2009, p. 122). Obstacles encountered during IMEs are seen as contributing to their “sense of mastery and confidence” (Dubin, 2000, p. 732).

This subject position of adventurous medical student coming of age also has connotations of status and power. It suggests a notion of superiority and authority insofar as students can “finesse the expectations that people have” and seamlessly “see one, do one, teach one” (Elit et al., 2011, p. 708, 707) with regards to new procedures. As they undergo “great personal and professional development” (Dowell & Merrylees, 2009, p. 122), students “realize their self-potential” (Murdoch-Eaton & Green, 2011, p. 645) and “restore [their] idealism” (McKinley et al., 2008, S55). The indomitable nature of medical students is signified by their ability to “triumph[] over adversity” (Dodard, Vulcain, & Fournier, 2000, p. 400) while “surviving and adapting” (Vora et al., 2010). Undeterred by the challenges of adapting to a new environment, medical students are defined by the essence of their “adventurous spirit” (Schechtman & Levin, 2006, p. 327). Accounts of brief “clinical stints” (Panosian & Coates, 2006, p. 1772) in places beset by poverty convey students’ newfound ability to “exercise clinical judgment and independent decision making” (Chin-Quee et al., 2011, p. 742). Finally, the completion of an IME marks the transition from an ordinary medical student to a self-assured, triumphant or heroic medical student.

## **Discussion**

According to post-colonial theorist Edward Said (1979), the common Western practice of characterizing non-Western countries as “foreign” produces imagined geographies. Though not associated with any geographical space naturally, such places come into being through the imposition of a limited vocabulary and imagery—through the production of a discourse. For Said (1979), the Orient for example, becomes produced and characterized as “a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, [and] remarkable experiences” (p. 1). According to Said (1979), imagined geographies legitimate a particular and essentialist vocabulary about non-Western countries:

They are all declarative and self-evident; the tense they employ is the timeless eternal;

they convey an impression of repetition and strength; they are always symmetrical to, and yet diametrically inferior to, a European equivalent, which is sometimes specified, sometimes not. (p. 72)

The presence of a foreign imagined Orient in turn strengthens the conventional image the West holds of itself, positioning it to produce and re-produce colonial subjects. Such subjects are posed as backward and irrational, in need of Western help in order to modernize. The interrogation of mechanisms by which colonialism continues to function and reproduce itself—in this case through the educational system—requires deconstruction of these dominant discourses and the practices they produce. Only in so doing might we enable a search of more liberating alternatives (Gandhi, 1998; Said, 1979).

In spite of what is said of international service-learning being about partnerships and mutuality, with structured experiences intended to lead to such alternative understandings and actions, we found little in the literature on IMEs to support the idea that any service being rendered through them was in fact leading to alternative discourses and practices. Instead, the portrayal of an imagined geography with undifferentiated “Others” in need of Western assistance appears too often to be providing propitious territory for well-meaning educators and students to inadvertently reproduce the kinds of inequitable social relations at the root of ill-health.

Far from being neutral, the IMEs literature frequently uses imagined geographies to depict timeless, symmetrical host settings that are inferior to North American social and physical environments. The power dynamics that underpin global health inequities are largely omitted from discussion; deeper social, economic, or political contexts are mostly missing; stories of local resistance and host community agency are almost entirely absent. There is little debate about the contested colonial history or the imposition of imperial power in the Global South and how those things have determined health in host countries. Instead, we would argue that the IMEs literature reflects mostly the West’s image of itself and its power to define and constitute “global health” in a way that confers unique privileges to Western practitioners and medical students. The exercise of those privileges through the production of the global health doctor requires a discursive construction of the “Other” in order to exist.

Our analysis thus reveals that the IMEs literature does not merely describe training opportunities in LMICs, but is a means of producing certain types of global health doctors. Problematically, discourses in the literature largely legitimize existing racialized colonial arrangements and liberal notions of benevolence, asserting what it means to practice global health as a medical student cum practitioner. This is largely achieved by relying on imagined geographies, notions of liberal benevolence and innocence, and pervasive colonial constructs, which post-colonial scholars argue are techniques that have been used repeatedly by the West to assert knowledge over the non-Western world (Gandhi, 1998; Said, 1979; Spivak, 1996).

## **Conclusion**

Using a critical theoretical lens and a Foucauldian discourse analysis, we have reported

on a study in which we examined literature on the form of international service-learning most common to undergraduate global health training in medicine: the IME. We find that the literature relies heavily on two dominant discourses to represent IMEs as set in places that are both poverty-stricken yet idyllic, and where the inhabitants are both dangerous yet childlike. These two dominant discourses construct common “truths” about IMEs, creating commonsense knowledge that is used to explain, justify, and normalize ensuing forms of global health work, starting with students’ engagement in IMEs. The production of global health doctors is occurring within existing inequitable social relations that are seldom questioned in this literature. Problematically, such discursive constructions constrain alternatives.

We opened this paper with a quote on a sense of dissonance as a descriptor of international service-learning and with a question regarding the nature of “service” actually being rendered in the form of ISL most common to medicine. Morton and Campbell (2007) suggest that “cognitive dissonance” is the “temporary gap that exists between what we think we already know and a contradictory experience or piece of evidence” (p. 12). If the field of global health is, as posed, primarily a field concerned with inequities, how is it that our current mode of ISL training prepares students to arrest them? Do IMEs, as currently practiced, actually function as a service to host communities? Can “good” come of a practice so imbued with colonial constructs and imaginaries? Is service what is required? Or is it solidarity that is called for? What might de- or non-colonizing medical training involving privileged Western students look like? What language would be employed, what practices awarded status? What would the dominant images look like? How and for what would students be attracted to global health, if it were otherwise conceived? About what kinds of training, what practices, and what settings would we be reading in the literature? Perhaps most importantly, who would be writing those stories?

Writing about resistance, Foucault (1978) explains that dominant discourses can always be dislodged by new ones: “Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (p. 101). We therefore contend that language can be turned into a “site of resistance” (Weedon, 1987) and can serve to destabilize existing discourses. Resisting and challenging dominant discourses and their associated practices through educational interventions in the highly problematic field of global health requires the development of post-colonial thinking and, to the extent possible, de- or non-colonizing practices. Material realities and historic social processes that determine health and lead to social struggle (rather than imagined geographies and colonial constructs) are where such interventions might reside. Perhaps educators need to be more insurgent (Porfilio & Hickman, 2011) and courageously defend the politicization of curricula in global health rather than succumbing to the creation of an a-theoretical and falsely neutral or benevolent field. In practice, that might mean the expansion of GH curricula to include, for example: critical theory; critical reflexivity; community organizing; mobilization for social change, and the learning of humility and solidarity in order to work *with* rather than *for* communities. ISL could be a useful pedagogical tool toward that end, but only “[i]n the hands of insurgent educators . . . [where] service-learning has the potential to blast open a liberating space of

criticality and consciousness” (Renner, 2013, p. 110).

Ultimately, the discourse on global health training can diminish the sense of dissonance only if it disrupts prevailing representations that are historically rooted in colonialist, racist, sexist and other forms of oppressive practice. In recognizing the ability of discourses to produce meaning and subjects, new “truths” about global health and ISL/IME experiences as well as alternative ways of being a global health student, educator, researcher, activist, or practitioner may become possible.

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# Humanities for Humanity

**John Duncan**

**ABSTRACT** Since 2007, the Humanities for Humanity (“H4H”) course has brought together student experience beyond the classroom, educational experiences for community members who could not otherwise attend university, discussion of social justice, and studies in the humanities. By discussing a selection of rich and influential primary texts from the humanities, course members are introduced to a rudimentary history of the present, focussing on who we have become as members of a concrete social and political reality intersected by capitalism, bureaucracy, liberalism, socialism, anti-essentialism, and post-colonialism. Both the texts and the student-participant encounters are rich, and the sessions are guided by two central classical ideals: the activity of learning is primarily an end in itself, and the most important thing to learn may be who we are. The core course content of H4H is outlined, and the ways in which H4H connects student mentors and community participants are discussed. Implications are drawn regarding what makes H4H a unique form of community service-learning in which service is virtually eclipsed by learning in a process that subverts barriers between people.

**KEYWORDS** service-learning, humanities, social justice, outreach, self-understanding

This paper describes, and provides a preliminary analysis of, a community service-learning course in the humanities. The not-for-credit course, co-developed and directed by an academic—the author—and a dean of students, both with backgrounds in the humanities, has for over ten years maintained high demand and led to spin-off courses. The continuing demand and growth is taken to count as a strong *prima facie* measure of success: the course provides educational experiences that continue to be chosen both by undergraduate students, and by community participants who would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend university. The course’s success is due in part to its content and the way the content is addressed, which include selections from so-called great books, themes in social justice, and ideals of inclusivity and the traditional humanities. Thus, the discussion here will include key aspects of both the core content of the course and its form. Next stages of analysis include the systematic collection of feedback from participants to enable analysis of their expressed evaluations with respect to specific aspects of the course. However, given its success, readers may find interest in a descriptive and preliminary analysis of this particular approach to humanities-based community service-learning.

### Introducing “H4H”

During the fall term of 2007, Trinity College in the University of Toronto launched a course designed to bring together four desiderata: undergraduate experience beyond the classroom in the form of engagement with community members; a course experience for community members who would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend university; the discussion of social justice; and study in the humanities. A humanities course was offered to a mix of community participants and senior undergraduate mentors. The course was called Humanities for Humanity, soon nicknamed “H4H.” The founding directors were the author, as director of the University of Toronto’s Trinity-hosted major program in Ethics, Society, and Law, and Kelley Castle, then Dean of Students at Trinity, and later Dean of Students at Victoria College in the University of Toronto. To find community participants, we reached out to directors of local community centers who served disadvantaged people in the downtown Toronto area near the university. We imposed no specific criteria for eligibility beyond saying that the course was open to people who could not otherwise attend university and were intrigued by the idea of reading the proposed texts. Community participants and student mentors came together in the college one evening each week during the term to share meals, attend lectures, and discuss a selection of texts from renaissance Europe to contemporary Toronto. We covered the costs of the reading material, public transit, and a hot meal to begin each session, and student babysitters looked after the children of participants. We asked philosopher and critic Mark Kingwell to lecture on Machiavelli’s *Prince*, and former Ontario Premier Bob Rae to lecture on Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, to name a couple of the better-known contributors to the course. Lecturers, undergraduates, and community participants enjoyed themselves, and learned from each other and the texts. Everyone volunteered their time.

H4H has been offered annually since 2007. Since 2010, Trinity and Victoria have partnered to co-host it. The content and structure have remained mostly unchanged, but each year there is a new group of community participants and undergraduates. Demand—one important measure of success—has remained strong for a decade, leading to the development of cognate courses. In 2011-2012, Victoria launched a major umbrella program called Ideas for the World, under which it (1) manages its H4H partnership with Trinity, (2) offers a new annual course similar to H4H but devoted entirely to plays, called Theatre for Thought, and (3) offers a set of lunch-time co-curricular discussion series—some for undergraduates only, others for both undergraduates and community participants. Trinity has continued to be a full partner in H4H, and in 2013 launched H4H.2, a course based on the model of a reading group. H4H.2 is designed for community participants who have completed H4H and Theatre for Thought and who want to continue the experience. Participants, undergraduates, and an instructor/facilitator meet every two weeks to discuss books of interest. None of these offerings are for credit, but they keep filling and have been praised by participants and undergraduates alike,<sup>1</sup> as well as by faculty.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Please see various accounts in the press and related media, which include participant and undergraduate learner voices: Brown, 2007; Loeb, 2007; Nayyar, 2007; Webb, 2008; Rupolo, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Please see Kingwell, 2017.

H4H involves community service, which, on the one hand, some consider to be an instance of charity. Thus, the course is about compassion—that is, about caring for “any who stand in need” (Acts 4:35, The New English Bible). Compassion is the primary meaning of the Medieval Latin “*caritas*,” from which “charity” is derived. Out of compassion, one provides for those in need. However, charity is a charged term in the service-learning literature (see Tinkler, Hannah, Tinkler, & Miller, 2014). Although we are not attached to the term, it is important to acknowledge that there is a relationship between what we do and charity. On the other hand, some consider H4H to involve badly needed social resource redistribution—and in general we are guided by such ideas of social justice. However, although resources are gathered from those “according to ability,” and distributed in the form of a course to those “according to need” (Marx, 1970), whether H4H fits into the service-learning category of charity or social justice is less important than its goals, as we will see below.

A group of undergraduate mentors facilitates the crucial discussion component of the course. Each mentor voluntarily undertakes this service for a term. Mentors are a group of co-learners with experience in the setting of a university course, and they are encouraged to facilitate discussion throughout each session. In this sense, mentors provide a service, from their abilities. However, as in many service-learning models, the service peculiar to H4H is interwoven with mentor learning, and indeed mentor learning is one of the main goals of the course. Students receive no remuneration or academic credit for their participation. Despite the substantial commitment involved, students find the experience worthwhile, and often report that H4H is one of the best experiences of their undergraduate careers. Interestingly, as I will argue in what follows, in service-learning of the kind being developed in H4H, what mentors learn from their service amounts to more than the sum of a set of learning outcomes.

Because H4H is entirely voluntary, it has little beyond the experience of the course itself to maintain attendance. During the first couple of weeks of each course, the door is wide open, as it were, which helps attract not only participants who already have interests in books and ideas, but also those who have little idea that such things might interest them. All get to give the course a try to see if they can find a voice in it. The resulting range of participants who stay in the course more than compensates for the challenge of managing the variable numbers during the first couple of weeks. Accommodating students for whom the very idea of a university course is largely new is an instance of our general policy of broad inclusivity.

Typically, 20-25 community participants and 20-25 undergraduates finish the course. Meeting weekly for three-hour sessions that include a meal in common, a lecture, break-out discussions, and a discussion involving the whole group--and doing so with people who have the goal of explicitly establishing an open and friendly environment--generates cohesion well.

In the next section, I will outline the core course content of H4H as a way to introduce its approach to the humanities and social justice. Then, in the succeeding section, I will indicate the ways in which H4H connects undergraduates and community participants in a mutual learning experience, connecting university and community, and especially the ways in which such connections are beneficial to students and the academy. In the final section, I will pull out some implications of the service-learning being developed in H4H.

**Course Content: Humanities and Social Justice**

In terms of content, the guiding vision of H4H arises from a hybrid of traditional humanities and social justice. The overall goal is to provide a rudimentary history of the present, focused on main features of who we are (as individuals of concrete social and political realities). As Beauvoir (1989) argues, following Hegel, “to be” is “to have become” (p. xxx). Thus, we reach historically both as far back as is feasible, and forward to within a generation or so of ourselves, through a selection of rich and influential primary texts. We take each text on its own terms, exploring what makes it rich and influential, developing a historical sense of its context, and considering how it might be open to constructive criticism. Because the goal is to provide ways of discussing important aspects of who we have become, text selection is important; at the risk of being didactic, I will outline what has been central to our message in this regard.

Central to the beginning of the course is a selection (edited and translated by Collard, 1971) from the historian Bartolomé de las Casas’ account of the European conquest of Caribbean “Indians” in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Well-versed in the classics, and a captivating advocate for Indigenous peoples, Las Casas provides heart-wrenching reports and critical analyses of early modern colonialism. Members of Las Casas’ family were involved in Columbus’ journeys, and selections from his *History* provide a rich narrative of Spanish motives, colonial abuses, diplomatic struggles to protect Indigenous peoples, and campaigns of rebellion and conquest. Las Casas himself is a complicated figure. Witness to some of the worst practices of colonization, he was a one-time slave-owner who went through a radical conversion and then devoted himself to defending Indigenous peoples. He stood on the right side of history but not without imperfection. Las Casas tended to portray the Indigenous Taíno people of Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican) as innocent lambs in contrast to the ravenous Spanish wolves who abused them. This illuminates major features both of what he took his mission to be, and of the context in which he worked, all of which allows us to discuss the challenges of historical writing and interpretation, as well as questions of voice. Thus, with Las Casas, the reader gets original accounts and criticisms of important aspects of the beginning of modern colonialism, which, of course, came to play a huge role in the development of who we are today. Each year many of the community participants have roots in former colonies, and Canada itself has a colonial history. Rather than select a text more directly related to the Canadian experience, Las Casas is read because his is the more canonical account of the beginning of modern Western colonialism, which in general grew out of the powerful countries of Europe to eventually reach around and change the history of the globe over the last 500 years.

Reading Las Casas makes clear an important point at the beginning of the course: that we discuss social injustice. Class members often raise comparisons and contrasts between the brutal exploitation on Hispaniola and examples of oppression in the world today, deepening perspectives regarding right and wrong in our world. Las Casas’ history also lays a tangible foundation for later discussions in H4H, which trace colonization, decolonization, and neocolonialism down to our own time.

Another text central to the beginning of the course is Thomas Hobbes' (1651/1994) *Leviathan* (selections). *Leviathan* is a classic of liberal political philosophy. Hobbes stands out as an early enlightenment thinker whose political philosophy is ultimately grounded on the foundational idea of virtually all modern political philosophy—that political authority is legitimate only because individuals would choose it, and not for other reasons such as, for example, the divine right of kings. Wherever individuals end up being governed or managed by policies to which they would not consent, they have grounds for criticism and dissent. Consent, inextricably linked to liberty, must ground action in free—that is, liberal—society.

The idea of consent that grounds *Leviathan* still grounds relevant debates today, but certainly *Leviathan* is about more than consent, and about much that subsequent philosophers criticized. In effect, the foundation of Hobbes' state is liberal in that we would all choose it, but his sovereign ends up with the right to do whatever it thinks necessary to preserve itself, a right with which members of the H4H class invariably express dissatisfaction. However, at least a few defend Hobbes' super-power sovereign on the grounds that it would be better than the instances of chaos they experienced in countries of origin undergoing widespread disorder. These newcomers to Canada have seen chaotic “states of nature,” as Hobbes would call them, in which we might all very well consent to a powerful central authority in the first instance. The class ends up seeing the primary importance of security even as it is left with the idea that human rights, largely left out by Hobbes, must also be developed.

The next core text we read is Adam Smith's (1776/1993) *Wealth of Nations* (selections). Smith provides an account of modern commercial society—what we call capitalism. His explanations are equation-free, accessible, and interesting, famously detailing the division of labour, the fundamental human propensity to trade, the significance of self-interest in the market, and the basic tendency of markets to reach equilibrium. His account of the superior productive capacity of early modern capitalism's division of labour and market system is revealing, and upon close examination presents us with glimpses of both the inescapability of production's social nature and the political technologies of the body, which were to establish an important foundation for the industrial revolution then just getting underway. The world is broadly capitalist, as is our city (Toronto), and we (members of each H4H class) are deeply immersed in capitalism (whether we like it or not). These issues are raised through reading and discussing the work of capitalism's first great proponent.

We also read from Smith's history of the origin and development of European commercial society, in which he develops an account based neither on the deeds of great men, nor on an uncritical notion of progress, but rather on social and political conditions that arose after the fall of Rome and then developed during the medieval and renaissance periods. Smith helps us to see that capitalism has come into being. It is neither natural nor eternal, but rather something that might well have been otherwise, which opens up discursive space for engaged critical discussion.

Furthermore, Smith's history provides insight into the development of political institutions in Western Europe, and in so doing provides historical context directly relevant to what we look at in Hobbes and others. The social and political forces that developed during

the medieval and renaissance periods contributed to the development of the institutions of modern political legitimacy. Thus, understanding Smith's history puts us in a better position to understand possible relationships between broad social and political forces and normative goals of our own time.

We read either Max Weber's (1922/2005) *Economy and Society* or Leo Tolstoy's (1886/1981) *Death of Ivan Ilyich* to get a sense of the administrative nature of late modern mass society—a core idea in the course. While Weber's writings on bureaucracy provide the canonical account of this social and political type, in many ways Tolstoy's mini-novel provides an intimate critical view of it from the inside. In mass societies, if firms and states are to succeed, they need to integrate diverse offices—e.g., payroll, human resources, and primary business—within their overall operating systems. Bureaucratic organization is the management system that integrates offices—“bureaus”—in this way, and it comes with many features distinct from previous forms of management. When we work through Weber or Tolstoy, we think through examples of the necessarily bureaucratic provision of both public and private services in mass society to develop an understanding of the administrative form that pervades our world.

From Smith, we get a sense of the historical background and nature of our modern social and political formation as deeply capitalist; from Weber or Tolstoy, we get a sense of the same as deeply administrative. With Hobbes, we are introduced to the normative realm of legitimacy and the fundamental ideal of liberal—that is, free—society, which is the idea of consent, upon which so many aspirations have been based for more than three centuries. Each of these texts generates a conversation about deeply fundamental aspects of who we have become. In discussions, some want to transform capitalism, the administrative apparatus, or the individual-based legitimacy of liberalism, but others find themselves essentially grounded in and sympathetic to capitalism, bureaucracy, and liberalism. A major part of who each of us is has to do with the fact that as societies we have become capitalist, bureaucratic, and liberal, the understanding of which is no small part of understanding our world today.

We read Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' (1848) *Communist Manifesto* to introduce the ages of revolution and socialist criticism and experiment that have had an immense impact upon the modern world. Marx and Engels, on the one hand, and Smith, on the other, work well together as they draw on similar historical accounts. At the same time, they are contraries in ways that continue to underpin core left-versus-right debates today. Thus, debates between those who think there is too much inequality in the world and those who think that inequality is a function of the efficient market with which we must not tamper unduly are debates that arise in our discussions of Smith and Marx and Engels. Who sides with Marx and Engels in these discussions, and who with Smith, is generally unpredictable.

We read selections from Simone de Beauvoir's (1949/1989) *Second Sex* to get a sense of modern feminism. Beauvoir's critique of the essential woman opens a door to the broader critique of essentialism that is an impetus for much of identity politics, a deeply important movement of our time. The critique leads into conversations about racialization, homophobia, and other kinds of “otherization.” These conversations are robust and complicated, and thickened by an abundance of personal examples offered by both participants and undergraduates.

We opened the important discussion of colonialism with *Las Casas* near the beginning of the course; it is picked up again when we read Frantz Fanon's classic engaged and critical discussion of decolonization toward the end. In *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1963) provides a raw conversation about the point at which the violent marginalization of the colonized rebounds in the form of decolonizing violence. The great period of decolonization occurred in the middle decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and as Fanon so astutely anticipated, decolonization and its aftermath have been long and arduous. These processes, which began ultimately some 500 years ago, continue to affect the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, the Durand Line was drawn by the Imperial British between what became Afghanistan and Pakistan, which divided the massive Pashtun nation, the very birthplace and homeland of the Taliban, with whom NATO has fought its longest and perhaps most inconclusive war.<sup>3</sup> The film *Battle of Algiers* (1966), a clip of which is often shown in H4H, and which became recommended viewing for Western military leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Global War on Terror, begun in Afghanistan, was directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, who was influenced by Fanon. As in the discussion of other core texts, H4H students and participants find a great deal to say about all this. Many seem to recognize in Fanon echoes both of their own experiences, and of current events in the world. Not that Fanon's text says all there is to say about colonialism, but rather that it is a text to which many colonial cases and experiences can be fruitfully compared and contrasted. Indeed, this applies for all the texts in H4H, for although no single text can speak comprehensively for all the cases it can be used to address, when rich and influential primary texts are approached with informed, open and critical perspectives, they provide excellent points of departure for discussion.

Our final core text is Dionne Brand's (1997) novel *In Another Place, Not Here*, which resonates with many of the texts and ideas discussed throughout the course. Brand's novel boldly combines voices, dialects, and poetry and prose, as it weaves together recollections of the history of Caribbean slavery, the struggle for post-colonial social and political transformation, the difficult experiences of immigration and racial integration in late-modern Toronto, and delicate issues of gender, sexuality, and identity. Revolutionary struggle and Fanon are invoked explicitly, Beauvoir seems to offer a typology for the lead characters—two lesbians—and colonialism animates much of the novel's background. Some of our most candid and wrenching conversations have come out of the sessions on this text.

If not so long ago we became capitalists, bureaucrats, and liberals in important respects, we have also become revolutionaries, anti-essentialists, and post-colonials. These are deep features of who we are today as global citizens—features of our identity kept in sight throughout H4H. They ground the ways in which we develop the ongoing discussion of social justice. The aim is to treat each text on its own terms, and to bring it into dialogue with the other texts. As we come to see more clearly how we have become who we are, our discussions about justice find traction. For example, even if socialism appeals to us, capitalism surrounds us; alternatively, if socialism does not appeal to us, we shall nevertheless have to hear of it well into the future.

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<sup>3</sup> Please see Duncan, 2016.

This is the sense in which what may seem like a fairly traditional approach to the humanities, on the one hand, and a fairly indirect approach to social justice, on the other hand, come together in H4H. We do not read articles about social justice. Neither do we simply read the great books. We read a selection of rich and influential primary texts that traces how we have become who we are in late modern Toronto, and that includes not only the capitalist, bureaucrat, and liberal, but also the revolutionary, anti-essentialist and post-colonial global citizen. Thus, the course endeavours to intersect significant elements of what we have become. The content becomes the shifting ground for discussions carried on by the class itself. And discussion is the core of each session: preliminary discussion is encouraged during dinner (6:00-6:30 p.m.); the lecturer is asked to introduce the text and provide a few leading discussion questions (6:30-7:30); after a short break, intense discussion begins in breakout groups (7:40-8:20), followed by discussion in the whole group (8:20-9:00). Participants and students alike negotiate their responses to the texts and to each other in discussion, with the goal of better understanding ourselves and each other. Together, we discover ourselves as sites of contestation.

As we believed from the beginning, individuals from the community are excited to discuss Hobbes, Beauvoir, etc., because Hobbes and Beauvoir have things to say about what we have become. Central to our approach is the idea that reading and discussing each text is an end in itself. We read Hobbes in order to read Hobbes, not in order to set hurdles for Rousseau, pass tests, or pick up skills. Behind this view is a classical idea of the humanities, that learning as such is its own reward. We read Hobbes, and each of the rest, not as a means to some end, but rather as an end-in-itself. We have adopted this idea because learning is deeply embedded in human life, so much so that it is tempting to follow the ancients when they argue that the capacities of learning and intellectual thought are the distinguishing features of being human. Our readings are moments in the legacy of human self-interpretation. We participate in this legacy-conversation in the twenty-first century, not to solve any particular problems, but to understand.

Certainly, H4H is inspired by the idea of outreach. Another motive arises from the idea that diverse voices are fundamentally important to our own understanding within the academy, the issue to which I turn in the next section.

### **Student-Participant Engagement: Opening the University**

One interesting theme in Tolstoy's (1886/1981) *Death of Ivan Ilyich* is that we can lose interest in diverse voices, or perhaps not have that interest to begin with. Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich has no time for what does not fit into his idea of the proper life. He never turns to others to listen to them. Not his own circle of friends—not even his family—and certainly not any of the individuals who appear before him in court. Ivan is interested in his prosperity, prestige, and proper pleasures. Anything that deviates from those interests is something to be avoided. Only when Ivan is forced to face the unexpected approach of his own death do the stories he has told himself for so long begin to unravel. All-too-often we find ourselves within careers, etc., which bear similarities to Ivan's path. Essential to H4H is the idea that being genuinely open to others—although it requires time and effort—is a good thing.

When we have discussed Las Casas' accounts of the European slaughter of Indigenous peoples, we have had among our discussants people from refugee communities who have lived through much more recent tragedies in places such as Syria, Algeria, Rwanda, and Congo. Their comments—and their very presence—have disrupted what might otherwise have been merely academic conversations. We could not look them in the face and say something merely theoretical or pass along facts or statistics heard second-hand about colonialism, exploitation, or racism, at least not without feeling we had to be careful—that is, not without feeling we had to care about what we were saying. The faces across the table—into which we were looking—had themselves looked such things in the face. For the undergraduates, all of a sudden, talking about the assigned material no longer had to do with participation grades or trying to score well on upcoming assignments; the discussion had to do with what the text was about, e.g., the real issue of violent exploitation.

I am reminded of Borges' poem "The Other Tiger." In a long first verse, Borges portrays a wonderfully life-like tiger in the morning jungle. We are drawn into the jungle, to the tiger itself. But then, the second verse:

Afternoon creeps in my spirit and I keep thinking  
that the tiger I am conjuring in my poem  
is a tiger made of symbols and of shadows,  
a sequence of prosodic measures,  
scraps remembered from encyclopaedias.

Borges goes on to contrast this conjured tiger with the real tiger it is not. It is not

[...] the deadly tiger, the luckless jewel  
which in the sun or the deceptive moonlight  
follows its paths, in Bengal or Sumatra,  
of love, of indolence, of dying.

As readers, we understand that the first tiger was conjured, but in making the conjuring itself explicit, Borges turns us away from it, toward the real tiger.

Against the symbolic tiger, I have planted  
the real one, it whose blood runs hotly,  
and today [...]  
a slow shadow spreads across the prairie.

"[S]till," even as we are turned toward the real tiger,

[...] the act of naming it, of guessing  
what is its nature and its circumstances  
creates a fiction, not a living creature,  
not one of those who wander on the earth. (1967, p. 81-82)

Borges reveals how easily we are deceived by word on paper. In his poem, the word itself turns us away from the paper—toward the prairie—and we think we glimpse the real tiger at last, but it is yet another paper tiger.

Of course, in academia it is in words, and in theoretical words, that “we live and move and have our being,” to borrow one of the early Hegel’s favourite biblical passages (Acts 17:28, The New English Bible). Because of this, academics may slide into posturing more easily and more willingly than Dante’s Paulo and Francesca fell into their barely willed embrace. Paulo and Francesca were overcome by desire for each other, which in itself is a natural, good, and formidable force, but their kiss constituted a violation of Francesca’s marriage to Paulo’s brother. Failing to steel themselves against the pull of desire, they slipped into a transgression. Although I am suggesting that falling into academic posturing is analogous to succumbing to desire, in fact the former may be driven by intellect and so it may be a much more voluntary and therefore a much more serious transgression according to Dante and his authorities (who were Thomas and Aristotle), creating a much deeper hell for those who choose it.

“Back to the things themselves” was the rallying cry of phenomenology. It signified both the importance of careful descriptions of things as they are experienced, and the danger of analyses based on theoretical beginnings. The academy needs to be vigilant and work against the tendency to begin and carry on with theories about things rather than with the things themselves. Levinas drank from the cup of phenomenology and explored the “face-to-face” encounter. “First philosophy,” he argued, properly begins with the face-to-face and it always already involves ethical possibilities. Being face-to-face with another person, my attempts to provide a theoretical account are repeatedly open to disruption. When non-academics, members of the community, many of whom are objects of our theories in one way or another, are invited into the discussion, our fall into posturing is disrupted. One reason for the disruption is that the community is not familiar with the forms of statement that function as various moves in the games of academic discourse (in which we live and move and have our being), so that academically adequate and impressive moves fall on deaf ears.<sup>4</sup> Of necessity, we must address the member of the community on their terms, or the discussion remains fake—possibly silencing. If we are compassionate, we feel compelled to drop our posturing—we might even feel embarrassed by it. We ought to first find out what the other is saying, and then begin the discussion from there.

A few times, when we have discussed Marx and Engels in H4H, the discussion has turned into debate, and sometimes the debate has become heated, and we have had to think quickly to keep it civil. Some of our discussants have lived through classism in its worst forms in this country and they have intense—disruptive—views about it. The results have been similar when we have discussed other texts.

Each year, half a dozen or so class members volunteer to say a few words during the final, celebratory session. Participants and undergraduates repeatedly say that what they have learned from their involvement in H4H has been irreplaceable. For undergraduates, not so

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<sup>4</sup> Please see Foucault’s methodological analysis of the specific regularity of each discursive formation he examines in intellectual history.

much the texts and lectures, but rather the community participants' engagement with the material has been especially important. H4H, they say, is no longer just another course of readings in stuff that might be interesting if one were not being forced to wiggle through four other such courses of readings at the same time in a competition for grades, itself part of a more challenging competition for places in the machinery of late modern capitalism and administration. The participants are not academic models. They are some of the real people most impacted by such models. They have experience-based things to say that bring unexpected reverberation to talk about the models. The sessions are eye-opening and they allow each of us briefly to get out of ourselves, to get to know others, and to get to know ourselves through others, advancing one of the explicit goals of the course—to know ourselves.

“Know thyself” is perhaps the most famous saying of the Oracle of Delphi—we ought to understand who we are. In H4H, seeking to know who we are as participants, mentors, faculty, and citizens of twenty-first century Toronto, together we discuss primary texts that express the realities that have made us who we have become.

It was as a university student that Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich “had become exactly what he was to remain the rest of his life: a ... man ... strict to carry out whatever he considered his duty” (p. 50). Tolstoy's portrayal of Ivan brings out how we almost inevitably conform to and reproduce the prevailing apparatus of power and in-so-doing shut down other possible lives. Tolstoy seems to worry that we are living in order to work—not because we might be workaholics, but rather because the choices and behaviours required to maintain careers with status can eclipse life. Tolstoy's judgment is that “Ivan Ilych's life had been most simple and commonplace” (p. 49). Indeed, we all conform quite naturally, but, Tolstoy adds, the utterly commonplace life is “most horrifying” (p. 49). Opening the door to real diversity during undergraduate education is one small way to contribute to avoiding the horror. Because each H4H course strives for both openness to diversity and stand-alone holistic status, it might avoid becoming commonplace.

Openness to diversity invites disruption into the academy, which reminds us that the perspectives we have on the real world mediated through academic work are not necessarily the same thing as the real world.<sup>5</sup> Being an end in itself—i.e., standing alone as a holistic experience—H4H resists being a mere means to other ends. Thus, both as a disruptive reminder and as resistance to mere instrumentality, H4H escapes the fate of so much in our hyper-specialized results-driven late modern world.

A text we often read during the week of Halloween is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. If a novel is a kind of letter from the author to the reader, *Frankenstein* (itself an epistolary novel) is a letter that reveals to us the monstrosity of life without love.<sup>6</sup> For readers who are like Shelley's character Walton, the novel can reveal the importance of love in a world that often seems to be eclipsed by money, power and spin. Indeed, in such a world, where the lives of many are frequently violated, returning to Shelley's meditation on the fundamental value of love would seem worthwhile. Caring for each other is at the heart of H4H. The discussion of charity

<sup>5</sup> Please see my related meditation on “the real”: Duncan, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> So I argue: Duncan, 2011.

above is relevant here, but openness to diversity as compassion is not merely charity. Rather it is the ground for a form of engagement that seeks to open itself to people of divergent perspectives in ways that exceed stipulated learning outcomes. H4H is not primarily aiming for learning outcomes in either social justice or humanities education; rather the humanities and social justice are crucially important sites of interaction regarding big questions that circle around who we are. Paradoxically, this sort of engagement, which some might argue confuses charity and social justice, hears echoes of itself, at least in part, in attempts to nudge social justice service-learning from well-developed theory to better real-world engagement (e.g., Butin, 2015).

### **Humanities and Engagement**

H4H provides the opportunity for learning as an end-in-itself, a seemingly simple thing. However, what seems simple is not always easy to achieve. Consider the following classical passage from Heraclides Ponticus, who tells the story of a ruler named Leon who was very impressed by Pythagoras and asked him about his profession. Pythagoras said he was a “philosopher”:

This word was strange to Leon, and, to explain to him what it meant, Pythagoras employed a simile... Life, he said, is like the gathering at the Olympic festival, to which people flock from three motives: to compete for the glory of a crown, to buy and sell, or simply as spectators. So in life ... some enter the service of fame and others of money, but the best choice is that of those few who spend their time in the contemplation of nature, as lovers of wisdom, that is, philosophers. (Guthrie, 1962, p. 164)

By providing a setting in which competition for status (“fame”) and the necessity to work (“money”) are temporarily bracketed, H4H allows students and participants “to look on,” *theōrein* in classical Greek (to be a spectator, to observe or contemplate), a word at the root of the English “theory.” To theorize in this sense is to step back from the realms of competition and necessity in order to observe, contemplate, and discuss the affairs of life—not to be wholly caught up in them—which is to participate in the philosophical life. The ideal philosophical education, as sketched by Plato, reaches its summit with the contemplation of the order of all things. If one were provided with the “leisure” to step back from competition and necessity in order to be properly “schooled” (a word descended from the classical Greek “*scholē*,” meaning “leisure”) in the order of all things, one might attain the very summit. Because we must suffer reality wherever we act in ignorance of it, for Plato, comprehension of reality was ultimately “splendid,” purely “beautiful,” utterly “good”—an end in itself, not a means to a further end (Plato, 1961, *Symposium* 211c and *Republic* 508d-509c). In H4H, as in Plato, we are provided with opportunities to bracket the realms of competition and necessity in order to contemplate reality together. Main features of our social and political identities—e.g., capitalist and socialist, liberal and revolutionary—are discussed in so many feasts of reason, bringing

each of us closer to our reality, from the perspective of which we might avoid suffering and live more fully.

In contrast to the goals of H4H, service-learning research in Canada tends to be focused on much more specific goals, often circulating near the notion of developing social justice conceptions of citizenship (King, 2006). For example, VanWynsberghe and Andruske (2007) utilized service-learning in a first-year sociology course in which service was required and in which reports of student engagement were collected and analysed with respect to Nancy Fraser's conceptualization of the public sphere. That is, VanWynsberghe and Andruske were looking for very specific outcomes. They concluded: "We have illustrated how community service learning can introduce students to their roles as engaged citizens" (p. 371). These are laudable goals, but they are not the goals of H4H. At least two things need to be said about this.

First, our goals in H4H are far less specific. We bring the academy and the community together in order to discuss great humanities texts and social justice, and in so doing we are guided by two central classical ideals: the activity of learning is primarily an end in itself, not merely a means to some other end, and the most important thing to learn may be who or what one is (as an individual of a particular social and political reality). All of this is indeed pretty indeterminate when contrasted with paradigms of specific learning outcomes, for which see Gemmel and Clayton (2009) for example, but because we know that both the texts and the university-community encounters are deeply rich, we are neither concerned with fully anticipating, nor could we fully anticipate, specific outcomes. Framing H4H with this kind of openness, in which we discuss what we have become, including within it fellowship and meals, and maintaining it as an end in itself, all help to constitute it as something of a stand-alone holistic experience. Each part helps to co-constitute it as something greater than the sum of its parts, so that as the whole develops each year, students and participants find themselves fitting into a place that enables them to question and express themselves together. As long as they continue to do so, the course will have a reason for being.

Second, although we certainly discuss it, engaged citizenship has not been a guiding concept. We end the course with a text that brings many of the course themes home to our own city, but the goal is not primarily to become better citizens of Toronto. Rather, it is to understand something about who we are as Torontonians. The implications of this for citizenship in Toronto are likely good. Nevertheless, if self-understanding is good for citizenship, we do not work toward it for that reason. We work toward it because it is good as such.

In this vein, it is worth considering H4H in comparison with Earl Shorris' well-known Clemente Course, which has inspired other excellent humanities-based service-learning courses in Canada.<sup>7</sup> According to Shorris, the Clemente Course aims to provide a humanities education to the poor in order to help them deal with poverty. The humanities provide excellent experiences of learning in thinking, understanding, criticism, and expression, which empower personal agency, which itself facilitates political agency—i.e., agency with respect to

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of relevant Canadian courses please see Klassen, 2013.

one's community. And political agency in this sense is necessary for avoiding the worst traps that come with poverty (Shorris, 1997). In H4H, if self-understanding is good for political agency, we do not work toward it for that reason. We work toward it because it is good as such.

None of this is to say that citizenship, personal agency, or political agency are goals not worth pursuing—not at all. Neither is it to say that such goals do not flow, at least in part, from self-understanding—far from it. Rather, it is to say that self-understanding is a goal worth pursuing for its own sake.

Finally, it is important to think carefully about the concept of service. The college students in H4H tell us that they feel they have received more than they have given during the course. There are a number of ways to account for this, but one way in particular is worth considering in this context. It is often said that when students engage in community service, not only do they contribute to the community, but they also learn from their service. For this reason, community service-learning is an important part of the Canadian academic landscape.<sup>8</sup> However, in this formulation of service-learning, the service logically comes before the learning. In H4H, the priority of service is much reduced. Student mentors provide a service in helping to facilitate discussions, but mentors are asked to facilitate only as much as is required to encourage participants to discuss the material. In this way, the service component is minimized and the listening component is maximized (for the students). The virtual eclipse of service by listening in this service-learning model is in fact part of the very process of engagement that subverts barriers between people. As such, it is a prerequisite for any genuine relationship of service as gift. Moving toward that prerequisite is at the heart of H4H.

H4H is a course—a service to be sure—delivered in part to community participants who could not otherwise attend university. However, its mode of delivery essentially depends upon the receptive agency—rather than the receptive passivity—of the community members. We seek to make each session a gift—rooted neither in paternalism nor exchange—that amounts to the opportunity to freely discuss and think together about who we are.

We might be able to glimpse ourselves in a clearer light if (a) community participants are provided with the opportunity to engage (if competition and necessity are temporarily suspended), if (b) we academics are fortunate and attentive enough to suspend our career-serving machinations and open ourselves to the voices of others, and if (c) together we attend carefully to great texts that help us understand who we have become.

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<sup>8</sup> For indications of its development please see King (2006) and Gemmel and Clayton (2009).

## About the Author

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# Experiential Learning in Circles of Safety: Reflections on Walls to Bridges and Dewey's Theory of Experience

Judith Harris<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT** This paper discusses a Winnipeg-based community-university partnership structured as a set of interlinked "Circles of Safety" to support criminalized women while incarcerated and after their release. The four Circles include university, community, social co-operatives, and corrections; these circles contain the action research activities we are undertaking to provide greater safety for women transitioning from prison into the community. The motivation for our prison education program, which draws on the American Inside-Out Program and the newer Canadian Walls to Bridges Program, comes from these four directions and is energized by a belief in the human right to education. This paper argues that the success of both American and Canadian programs is explained by an approach to prison education that is complementary to John Dewey's principles of educative experience, specifically principles based on continuity and interaction. Adapting and extending Dewey, the Circles of Safety model described in this paper maintains the value of experiential learning, which is defined as learning in situations that begin with the experience that the learners already have and subject matter that is within the scope of their ordinary life-experience, leading to their formation of purpose.

**KEYWORDS** community-based learning, prison-based education, experiential education, circle pedagogy, criminal justice system

Elder Marion Gracey believed that creating a safe community was more important than targeting poverty for marginalized Indigenous people in the city (B. Cyr, personal communication, February 16, 2013). Safety is the theme of a Winnipeg-based community-university partnership that is structured as a set of interlinked "Circles of Safety" to support criminalized women while incarcerated and after their release (see Figure 1). Through this project, which has focused on community-engaged education and the co-creation of knowledge with community and university partners, deep understandings about social justice and community safety have emerged. The Circles of Safety structure, which surrounds the women with people and systems that form a safety net, addresses their needs for education, employment, family re-unification, life skills, trauma counseling, and personal goal setting as they transition from prison. In this

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<sup>1</sup> I dedicate this paper to the memory of Larry Morrissette, a leader in the Indigenous community and a social justice activist who gave his life energy to his family, his children and grandchildren, his community, and the men and women who relied on his wisdom and his certainty of the goodness of all people. Larry encouraged and continues to guide this work in a good way, in its focus on social co-ops and development of prison teaching.

way, the research team considers this project to be a promising response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015) call to address the increasing rate of incarceration of Indigenous people.



**Figure 1. Circles of Safety and Community Learning (Harris & Cyr, 2013)**

Our Circles of Safety structure includes four interconnected circles or spheres of activity: the university, the community, social co-operatives, and corrections. Our strategy is to connect the University of Winnipeg (faculty, staff, students, and researchers) to Eagle Women's Lodge (an inner-city transition centre for criminalized women), the Social Cooperative Movement (based on Italian prison-based co-op models),<sup>2</sup> and the Women's Correctional Centre (a facility for provincially sentenced women located in Headingley, Manitoba).<sup>3</sup> In this essay, I focus on one of these circles of safety. Walls to Bridges (W2B) is a prison education program that has adapted the highly successful American Inside-Out initiative to Canada. Our classes bring campus-enrolled students to the Women's Correctional Centre to study with incarcerated students. As the project has unfolded, it has offered opportunities to explore ways in which the university can extend its mandate to address contemporary issues such as the growing numbers of Indigenous men, women, and youth populating correctional facilities. Our experience with the Walls to Bridges program contributes to the field of university-community learning practice, particularly for the many universities that find themselves working in an

<sup>2</sup> In previous research, I explore the role of social co-ops in supporting Indigenous women transitioning from prison. See McLeod Rogers and Harris (2014).

<sup>3</sup> See Figure 1 for an illustration of the Circles of Safety model. For more on this project, see Harris and McLeod Rogers (2014).

inner-city environment. Both incarcerated and campus-enrolled students who participate in the program, in the unlikely setting of a secure correctional facility, benefit from this educative experience.

This article first discusses the context in which this work unfolds. It then considers what we have learned about prison education in the past four years at the Women's Correctional Centre. It examines the Walls to Bridges pedagogy in light of John Dewey's (1938) classic theory of educative experience, defined by two central principles: continuity and interaction. My reflection on the role of these principles in our prison education program highlights the potential of the Walls to Bridges approach to expand circles of safety for incarcerated students and for men and women transitioning from prison.

### **Criminal Justice Context for University-Community Learning**

Turner and Wetzel (2014) observe that "since virtually all prisoners will return to their communities, it is better to approach their incarceration by providing conditions as close to normal as possible" (Turner & Wetzel, 2014, para.8). Global evidence suggests that we need to reduce the numbers of people going into prison and remove them "from communities for the shortest possible time so that institutional life does not become their norm" (Turner & Wetzel, 2014, para. 8). Anthony Doob (2014) of the Centre for Criminology, University of Toronto, argues that both the United States experience and historical evidence in Canada refute claims that a tough-on-crime agenda leads to safety and that longer sentences lead to lower recidivism rates.

Yet despite the findings drawn from these recent studies, the knowledge of those who see family members cycling in and out of prison, and the clear international examples that punishment is less effective than rehabilitation, Canada appears committed to expanding its "prison industry." Manitoba, where our project takes place, has the highest rate of incarceration in Canada at 240 per 100,000 people, almost double Canada's rate (138). The Province's occupancy rate is 127%, with some jails housing five people in a cell meant for two (Reitano, 2016). Nearly one in ten prisoners in Manitoba's jail system is kept in segregation, which is believed to be the highest proportion in the country and significantly higher than the rate recorded in the federal system (Friesen & White, 2016).

This expansion of the prison industry is justified by an "us and them" view of society that persists in dividing citizens into "deserving" and "undeserving" camps—and largely along racialized and class-based lines. Although the Indigenous population of Canada represents 4% of the population, Indigenous people comprise 25% of those in custody and the number of Indigenous men, women, and youth in the corrections system is growing (Reitano, 2016). Of particular concern is that the fastest growing demographic in our prisons is young Indigenous women (Elizabeth Fry Society, 2014). Justice Department data indicates that the number of Indigenous women "who were locked behind bars in federal institutions grew a staggering 97 percent between 2002 and 2012" (Rennie, 2014, para. 2). Correctional Services Canada has characterized the average Indigenous woman entering federal facilities as being 27 years old with limited education (usually grade nine), unemployed or under-employed at the time of

arrest, a sole support mother of two to three children, and a survivor of violence and abuse (as cited in Elizabeth Fry Society, 2013).

### **The University as a Community Learning Hub**

For many years, the University of Winnipeg has seemed isolated from its neighbourhood—physically and in terms of community relationships. Residents of the Spence neighbourhood, where the University and my own home are located, point to broken promises which have fueled resentment. David C. Perry and Wim Wiewel write: “Almost from the beginning, the relationship between the university and its surroundings has been as conflictive as it has been important—captured most commonly in the time-worn phrase ‘town-gown’ relations” (as cited in Toews, 2011, p. 6). In my experience, there are those within administration and among the faculty who continue to believe that scholarly activities are, and should continue to be, inaccessible to the majority and that theory and practice are separable.

Yet early on in the 1960s, the Board of Governors, faculty, and students of what was then called United College made a firm commitment to remaining in downtown Winnipeg rather than moving to the Fort Garry campus where the new University of Manitoba was established (Axworthy, 2009, p. 3). Past President Dr. Lloyd Axworthy and now Dr. Annette Trimbee (who was installed as President in July 2015) have provided leadership in integrating existing and new initiatives that reflect a commitment to opening the doors of the fortress. Axworthy (2009) defines community learning as a key theme in the future development of the university:

*Community learning...* describes the active integration of the university into the social, cultural and educational life of the community. It recognizes the responsibility of the university to function in an accessible manner and to open itself up to the wide diversity of knowledge and experience represented within society. (p. 1)

Not all scholarship must be community-based, but there is growing evidence of the academic quality of scholarship that values partnerships, local knowledge, and local research priorities.<sup>4</sup> As Axworthy (2009) recounts, the aims of community learning at University of Winnipeg are to:

- 1) provide innovative learning opportunities for underrepresented populations;
- 2) use resources to analyze/address critical issues with community groups;
- 3) cultivate dynamic/reciprocal relationship between campus and community; and
- 4) understand that these are learning opportunities for our students. (p. 1)

Axworthy (2009) echoes the philosophy of the extension education movement (see

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<sup>4</sup> Many examples can be found at the University of Winnipeg’s Experiential Learning website: [https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/experiential\\_learning/index.html](https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/experiential_learning/index.html)

also Dodaro & Pluta, 2012; Sim, 1993)<sup>5</sup> when he claims that community learning makes a difference: “The university has the immense potential to be a hub” and “use its mandate and independence” to advance “human rights and community goals” (p. 18-19). Both university and community have benefitted in terms of research, literacy, and advancing social justice work. Our work with women transitioning from prisons is one of a number of initiatives where faculty and students have engaged with community-based organizations and the community has responded in kind.

### **The Walls to Bridges Prison Education Program**

As stated above, our prison education program is located at the Women’s Correctional Centre in Headingley, Manitoba. We have taught three courses on community development and co-ops (L. Morrissette, B. Cyr, M. Stevenson and J. Harris), a writing course on the theme of water (J. McLeod Rogers and J. Harris), and a fifth course on Indigenous stories (K. Venema and B. Cyr). These courses build on the pedagogy of the Inside-Out Prison Exchange program, an initiative that, as noted above, was established by Lori Pompa in Philadelphia in 1995 (Davis & Roswell, 2013) and recently launched in Canada by Simone Davis and Shoshana Pollack under



the name “Walls to Bridges.” Its inspired approach is to bring incarcerated (“inside”) students together with university campus-enrolled (“outside”) students to take a course for credit inside the prison walls. The program emphasizes dialogue, collaboration, and experiential learning. Courses can be taught in any discipline, but the overall goal is to deepen conversation about crime, justice, freedom, inequality, and other social issues.

The impact thus far of our Walls to Bridges program is striking. The Women’s Correctional Centre staff have shared with us the fact that the women inside talk with excitement about the courses and have more self-esteem as a result of participating. The “outside” students, on the other hand, have observed how surprisingly familiar the class seems, yet so different—to be sharing their thoughts face-to-face surrounded by heavy security. The classes are a place of calm reflection, yet we often suddenly find ourselves circling around raw issues like “making

<sup>5</sup> Alex Sim was one of many University of Guelph instructors whose work with rural communities through the Extension Education Department is legendary. This movement acknowledges the value of the reciprocal partnership between academia and the community. Another example is that of the Antigonish Movement (Dodaro & Pluta, 2012).

it on the street,” panhandling as a moneymaking occupation, or doctors on Main Street who dispense drugs and keep the poor anesthetized.

As a result of their experience in the program, six “inside” students are taking courses and working with advisors to continue their education at the University of Winnipeg. And we expect that some of the “inside” students who completed the first course might choose to transition into the safe and supported environment of Eagle Women’s Lodge (one of the connected “Circles of Safety”).

### **Walls to Bridges Pedagogy and Dewey’s Theory of Experience**

Inside-Out/Walls to Bridges pedagogical values (Davis and Roswell, 2013) are rigorously integrated into teaching in courses at the Women’s Correctional Centre. As noted above, between May 2014 and June 2017, our Walls to Bridges faculty have held five classes, with a total of 70 students studying together for credit towards their degrees. The Inside-Out/Walls to Bridges pedagogy employs methods that have created a “shared liminal space”—a space where we satisfy our hunger to “express our true selves beyond the expectations (external and internal) that so often imprison us” (Pompa, 2013, p. 24). These methods, as I explore below, intersect with and echo Dewey’s classic theory of educative experience as informed by “continuous learning” and “multivalent interactions” (Mayer, 2015, p. 43, 45).

### **Walls to Bridges pedagogical values**

Below I provide a skeleton of the Walls to Bridges pedagogy (based on the Inside-Out pedagogy) and refer the reader to Davis and Roswell’s publication, *Turning Teaching Inside Out* (2013), for a more comprehensive presentation of an approach that has been refined over more than a decade by close to 500 instructors.<sup>6</sup> Fundamental aspects of the pedagogy include the following:

- Establishing the Circle of Trust: emphasizes the difference between instrumental speech (convincing others of our rightness) and expressive speech (speaking from one’s centre to the centre of the circle).
- Trusting the Process: requires instructor and students, when hearing emotional stories, to resist problem solving in response to discomfort and to expect that what unfolds in the classroom cannot always be known in advance.
- Creating Safety & Creating Choices: happens by providing a space where students can choose what enters the conversation and instructors can model courageous discussions, recognizing when a student is trying to name a dynamic aloud and giving her/him space to do so.
- Getting There Together: entails recognizing that we can learn in collaboration and we can explore together instead of failing to listen.
- The Bass Player, Not the Rock Star: is modeled by the instructor who balances compassionate open-mindedness with courage to respond to comments that arise out of power, privilege, and oppression.
- Attending to the Force that Ambivalence Exerts: necessitates working effectively with negative affect and resistance as integral and not subversive to positive intergroup interactions, as well

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<sup>6</sup> For a student perspective on the impact of these values in the classroom, see Sferazza (this issue).

as modeling honest, compassionate naming of what we see as needed.

- Instructor Awareness: requires self-reflexivity and an ability to be transparent, bringing out issues that students are seeing and addressing them in the moment —creating an opportunity for discussion.
- Learning with our Whole Selves – Emotional, Mental, Physical and Spiritual: requires deliberate dialogue and deep listening, through which students engage in a process of coming to know themselves and others.

Inside-Out founder Lori Pompa (2013) distinguishes service-learning from “the pedagogy of community-based learning [which] when done with great care and integrity, has the power to turn things inside-out and upside-down for [all] those engaged in it. It provokes one to think differently about the world, and consider one’s relationship to the world in a new way” (p. 25). Rather than inhabiting the contested binary of server/served that is common to CSL,<sup>7</sup> both “outside” and “inside” participants in the Inside-Out/Walls to Bridges classroom are engaged *as students* in a common learning project.<sup>8</sup> The American Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program and the Canadian Walls to Bridges Program demonstrate the power of experiential education that integrates Dewey’s principles of continuity and interaction. Both “inside” and “outside” students build on their existing knowledge and invest their evolving understanding in the circle of discussion (a place of profound interaction), focusing their common interest on a point in the discussion where “content meets context” (Pompa 2013, p. 16).

Simone Davis emphasizes that Canada’s Walls to Bridges must evolve slowly into a program that reflects national and regional contexts (2013, pp. 257-65). Given that the American program may in its development have been influenced by the “exceptional conditions it attempts to ameliorate,” having an incarceration rate many times higher than that of Canada, W2B instructors must be attentive to the challenges that present themselves as the initiative reveals itself in place. The fastest growing population in Canada’s prisons is that of Indigenous men and women and families who have had intergenerational experience with corrections. Indigenous educators and students in our Think Tank (a collective of individuals who are currently incarcerated or recently released and who advise and guide the program), alongside Aboriginal Student Services, provide guidance in shaping our approach to prison education and in facilitating the students’ continuing education at post-secondary institutions.

### **Taking Dewey’s theory of experience into the prison**

In referring to “community service-learning” or to “experiential learning,” one runs the risk of suggesting that these approaches are undertaken independently of more “traditional learning.” But Dewey (1938), who is often referred to as the father of the experiential education movement, describes an organic relationship (p. 74) between the traditional and the progressive forms of education emerging in the 1930s. His is a theory of experience that complements theories of education in the traditional classroom. Drawing on Dewey, I define “experiential learning” as learning in situations that begin with the experience that the learners

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<sup>7</sup> See Aujla and Hamm, this issue.

<sup>8</sup> See Davis, this issue, for more on the distinction between Walls to Bridges and CSL.

already have and subject matter that is within the scope of their ordinary life-experience, leading to their formation of purpose. The instructor might cultivate such learning by taking students out of the classroom to observe work that addresses an issue of concern, and then encouraging them to analyze the connections between what they have learned in the past and what they are currently observing. Another experiential learning situation could be arranged by bringing together two groups of people who have had distinctly different life paths. Again, the memories and analyses that students present in discussion can generate individual and group learning and conclusions. Each of these educative situations is characterized by interaction that sparks a response. Experience involves exposure to new physical situations and, in the second case, exposure to new ideas as different worlds converge. The University of Winnipeg's Walls to Bridges program in fact combines both experiential learning situations.

According to Dewey (1938), the two foundational principles of an educative experience are continuity of experience and interaction of internal and external factors. He comments on four key elements of this philosophy of education: freedom, formation of purpose, subject-matter, and the role of the instructor. As Mayer (2015) summarizes, "Dewey believed that what he called *continuous* learning must be directed in part by the learner—in accordance with the learner's present confusions, capacities, and understandings—while also being organized by intellectually challenging *interactions* with a teacher, peers, and pedagogically generative artifacts and phenomena" (p. 43, emphasizes mine). In other words, education is not a static endeavour, where learning "means acquisition of what already is incorporated in books" (Dewey, 1938, p. 19) and instructors provide content isolated from the context of its reception. Rather, educators have a responsibility to understand "the needs and capacities of the individuals who are learning at a given time" (Dewey, 1938, p. 46) and to connect the subject matter of the class with relevant individual and social contexts. In the case of our program, with its two ("inside" and "outside") student groups and the unusual, liminal space created inside a correctional facility, Dewey's theory of experience helps illuminate the ways in which Walls to Bridges provides a continuous and interactive learning experience, where knowledge is located in the present experience of those in the room, but "stretched," as Dewey says, to take into account both the past and the future: "[Present experience] can expand into the future only as it is also enlarged to take in the past" (p. 77).

### **Continuity and Interaction: From Incarceration to Post-Secondary Education**

Dewey's (1938) discussion of the first principle, continuity, directs both educators and students to draw from accumulated experience and apply this knowledge to alter future experience: "[T]he principle of the continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (p. 35). Experience, he explains, "if it arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative and sets up desires and purposes, will carry a person over dead places in the future" (p. 38). The "dead spaces" that we all face, but that might especially follow one released from prison into an unsupportive community, are a central concern in the Walls to Bridges program. Prison education represents hope and a path into the future to carry one over a

period of difficult transition. As Dewey (1938) explains, “The principle of continuity in its educational application means...that the future has to be taken into account at every stage of the educational process” (p. 47).

Before beginning a Walls to Bridges class, outside students are screened by instructors. The process is intended both to orient them to studying in the prison and to ensure that they are not simply adopting a “service” or charity-based mentality—all are co-learners. Students who do not support the right of those in prison to education are not approved for the class. For all students, it is an opportunity to have a conversation with the instructor, who can then begin to understand how to connect with their individual experiences. Neill (2005) expands on the importance of continuity in relation to the existing experience of students: “Once we have a theory of experience, then as educators, we can set about progressively organizing our subject matter in a way that takes account of a student’s past experience and then provides them with experiences which will help to open-up rather than shut down [their] access to future growth experiences, thereby expanding [their] likely contribution to society” (para. 11). If we as instructors do not know the “powers and purposes” of those we are teaching, then the process of teaching and learning becomes “accidental” (Dewey, 1938, p. 45). But as prison educators, we are teaching adult students, and it is impossible to know everyone’s full story. With incarcerated students in particular, we need to be respectful of boundaries; it is up to each person to share his or her experiences if they wish. Two questions arise: “How much do we need to know about a student’s background in order to ensure that there is continuity in the educational experience?” and “Are there exercises that will assist the instructor in understanding how to make connections to the student’s past experience?”

Our approach in Winnipeg has been to work closely with the teacher at the Women’s Correctional Centre in selecting the inside students who we enroll in our classes. We are aware however that the correctional environment in North America is generally one of “reward and punish,” and there is therefore a danger that our program could be coopted by that system if, for example, a student’s ability to enroll or participate in classes is linked to “good” or “bad” behavior or past crimes, as adjudicated by the system. As we continue to establish administrative procedures through negotiation with the correctional institution, we aim to collaborate on a screening process for the inside students as a means of maintaining a degree of independence. With each institution we are dependent on a stable working relationship that must steer a course above a sea of regulations and attitudes that can change unexpectedly and could scuttle the program. It is clear that by bringing a university group inside to enter into a dialogue with prisoners, Walls-to-Bridges is starting to pull away a veil that prevents society from understanding the corrections system.

Walls-to-Bridges in Manitoba has access to advisors who are well-informed and understand how the prison population represents those whose lives have been lived at the intersection of

race, poverty and gender.<sup>9</sup> University of Winnipeg's Aboriginal Students Services staff has been going into the prisons for many years. They work very closely with formerly incarcerated students who they meet with before their release and for the duration of their studies. Our Manitoba Think Tank of alumni and educators advises us on how to evaluate our impact on the students serving time. Inside-Out and Walls-to-Bridges Think Tanks across the USA and Canada are sites of debate, research, and action, often advocating for needed change in prison conditions.

The students in our classes make meaningful connections with each other, sharing their past and present experiences and thus creating an environment conducive to Dewey's notion of continuous learning. I have observed that the students show concern for each other and appreciation for each other's knowledge. They are curious about the "other's" life experience—the university experience on the one hand and what has led to incarceration on the other. They suspend judgment about privilege and about involvement in illegal activity as they work together on group projects—for example, designing new workers' co-operatives in classes on community development and co-operatives. Pollack (2016), too, highlights the relational and intellectual impacts of Walls to Bridges pedagogy on students and describes the dismantling of labels (p. 7). A recent graduation presentation by one of the "inside" students expresses this in vivid terms: "The opportunity took our moments of grey and gave us colours of hope" (Walls to Bridges Manitoba participant, personal communication, June 28, 2016).

There is a clear change for both groups of students in how they see themselves, given the chance to engage in collaborative learning. Student evaluations have identified circle pedagogy as an effective method for connecting one's centre to the centre of the circle (Palmer 2009, p. 119). Both groups experience change as personal development that arises from "talking to ourselves," that is, our inner teacher (Palmer, 2009, p. 121). Palmer and Little Bear (2000) are standard readings in the first week of W2B classes. Both educators speak of the transformational effect of learning through experience (Little Bear, 2009, p. 81) and both reject interference and the practice of setting each other straight. By speaking our truth to the circle and listening to our inner teacher or authentic self, we are able to carry our understanding with us when we leave the class, reflecting Dewey's (1938) concept that "[e]ducation as growth or maturity should be an ever-present process" (p. 50).

Continuity behind the prison walls can also take the form of continued studies. As Dewey (1938) observes, "[t]he most important attitude that can be formed [through an educative experience] is that of the desire to go on learning" (p. 48). Walls to Bridges pedagogy cultivates this desire in participants. On the one hand, the "outside" students have shown a continuing interest in learning more about corrections and have asked to be involved in follow-up initiatives, indicating a commitment that has grown out of their discussions with

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<sup>9</sup> The University of Winnipeg, in line with its strategic direction on Indigenization, now requires all students to meet the Indigenous Course Requirement (ICR). The office of the VP Indigenous Affairs provides supports for faculty integrating Indigenous content and pedagogy into their courses. The University is committed to best practices in teaching that recognizes race, class, and gender issues. The University's Urban and Inner-City Studies in Winnipeg's north end (the author has taught in this department since 2007) is attracting many students who face barriers of racism, and classism.

“inside” students. For “inside” students, W2B classes importantly, and at a minimum, meet fundamental needs related to self-esteem, cognition, and self-actualization. Inside students are clearly hungry for learning but continuing education can be more difficult and hard to access. Provincially sentenced women, like our students at the Women’s Correctional Centre (who serve sentences of up to two years less a day), are not provided with the same degree of programming (educational and otherwise) that is available to federally sentenced women, who face longer periods of incarceration. For these students, we will negotiate involvement in an inside Think Tank.

Support for students interested in post-secondary education once they are released is also an important part of the Walls to Bridges program. Our University of Winnipeg admissions, student advising, and Aboriginal Student Services Centre staff are well aware of the challenges faced by students as they transition into the community and enroll in more courses. Our Think Tank has the intention of offering a clear path and smooth transition, and together with Students Services will provide an integrated education plan for the “inside” students. Of course, keeping in touch with students once they are released is a challenge and a source of concern, given the factors that contribute to the revolving door that is the penal system. One recommendation made at a recent debriefing that involved Women’s Correctional Centre staff and University of Winnipeg staff and faculty members called for the program to offer the continuing education course “Intro to University” in advance of Walls to Bridges courses so that the “inside” students are well-prepared for classes and have a solid foundation for continuing study. Tutors are included in the program at the prison and meet weekly with the students to help them with readings and assignments.

“Interaction” is the second key principle in Dewey’s (1938) theory of educative experience. The development of experience, he explains, comes through interaction: internal and external; longitudinal and lateral; instructor and student; student to student; and for past, present, and future understandings (p. 42). In the Walls to Bridges classroom, the standard use of interactive exercises and ice breakers in the first three to four classes can function in a practical way not only to build relationships, as Pollack (2016) recommends (p. 11), but also to identify learning styles, personal goals, and ideologies so that subject matter is more likely to match with the students’ purposes in taking the class and their academic goals.

Walls to Bridges circle pedagogy is oriented towards maximum interaction. Dewey (1938) observed that “every experience is a moving force” (p. 38). In Walls to Bridges classes, instructors commonly use conversation circles and “wagon wheel” exercises, where an inner circle of “outside” participants sits facing an outer circle of “inside” participants. The inner circle remains stationary while the outer circle rotates as students share responses to facilitators’ questions. Such encounters focus our attention—we are “listening hard” (S. Davis, personal communication, April 5, 2015) and interacting deeply. With its connection to Indigenous epistemologies, circle pedagogy is particularly resonant in our Walls to Bridges classes, which take place on Treaty 1 Territory with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. According to Métis author Graveline (1996), in circle pedagogy “one person speaks at a time; the person holding the special object is the speaker; and all others are to be respectfully listening to that

person” (p. 179). “[Y]ou speak your own voice,” she continues, “describe what your own experience has been,” and “speak from your heart” (p. 179). Beck and Walters (as cited in Graveline, 1996) characterize the circle process as “collective mindfulness” (p. 178). Graveline further speaks of the “energy of a circle” that creates a space “to allow for the unorthodox to enter and the unexpected to happen” (p. 180). Those who have experience with Indigenous circle pedagogy are aware that as each person in turn responds to the collective understanding that is encompassed by the ring of participants, energy also accumulates and makes its way around—borne by a talking stick or stone. I have personally felt the heat of the stone as it is infused with the expanding illumination on the issues at hand and the deepening emotions of the group.

In the circle, relations among students and between students and instructor are equalized and generate a feeling of trust—something that is often lacking in academic discussion and a barrier to full exploration of difficult and critical issues. Dewey (1938) observed that it is often the “collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes” (p. 48) that is most important to educative experience, rather than the subject matter per se. Classes that prioritize interaction, create trust, and focus on social justice issues present an opportunity for students to consider the structural causes of conflict in relation to their own experiences. In this context, “inside” students come to realize that an environment of violence and social exclusion in some part has likely predetermined their path into prison (Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2000, p. 15). Reflection on these realities may help them to distinguish those past events which came under their control from those that were the consequence of wider forces. Through this collateral learning, students can sometimes come to terms with the present and plan for the future.

### **Reflections on Experiential Learning in Walls to Bridges and Circles of Safety**

In this essay, I have focused on a university-community initiative to address the vulnerability of justice-involved women. Circles of Safety can be understood as a social justice strategy and a framework for collaboration within and among institutions based on the prioritization of safety above (although not exclusive of) poverty-alleviation and risk-assessment, fostering socio-economic inclusion and protecting our communities. A safety lens allows us to see each other, listen to each other, engage with each other across differences in race, income, and gender identity, and to create alliances across the boundaries that separate us. The university and its inner-city neighbours are creating alliances based on a mutual respect for the knowledge that we each can bring to the table and to the classroom. Together, we may have the capacity to confront the very real challenges ahead. In 2018, Harris and Stevenson are introducing a course at the Stony Mountain Institute, a facility that houses maximum, medium, and minimum security men. We are aware that we must be attentive and draw on our previous experience in order to put in place measures to create a safe place for men and women in the class.

Among those who bear the costs of racial and class rifts in our fragmented society are the growing numbers of Indigenous women populating our prisons. For crimes of poverty, they are often provincially sentenced in facilities that have fewer options for programming.

Hannah-Moffat and Shaw (2000) analyze the paths that men and women take into prison and remind us that “the context in which behaviour takes place needs to be considered, in terms not only of the immediate actors, but also of preceding experiences and events” (p. 15). For women in particular, these experiences and events include prostitution; drug use (not trafficking); theft of clothing, groceries, and make-up; and welfare fraud. These are the activities women are drawn into upon release. Wrap-around services and circles of safety must surround the women and introduce them to paths that lead to more hopeful futures.

The Walls to Bridges program in Canada and its parent, the Inside Out program, have established an approach that demonstrates the continuing relevance of Dewey’s classic theory of experience, and Dewey, in turn, sheds light on the value and transformative capacity of these programs. Eight W2B pedagogical values (Davis & Roswell, 2013) are set in motion in the Walls to Bridges class we are conducting at the Women’s Correctional Centre: an understanding of structural factors that influence our lives; a co-learning process that empowers the students to create an internal order to the subject matter; the formation of a circle of trust that encourages students to draw on their whole selves; the development of interpersonal and analytical skills that can be applied to conditions that will arise in the future; instruction focused on the present and on honest and compassionate naming of what we see; and expanding awareness of historical knowledge that brings awareness of a changing world.

Dewey’s principles of continuity and interaction are integrated emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually in the circle of trust that provides the physical setting for classes. Walls to Bridges honours what students bring to the circle from their experience. The circle is a safe environment and one that leaves room, as Dewey (1938) would urge, for the necessary free play of individual thinking (p. 58). To learn in such a space is something for which we all hunger, but incarcerated women are starved for such an experience, which can explain their past, respect them as individuals, and engage them in purposeful discussion. Our intention is that their education inside and outside of prison and the connections and relationships built along the way might help to carry them safely over some of the difficulties of transitioning into the community.

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## About the Author

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## Imagination Practices and Community-Based Learning

Simone Weil Davis

**ABSTRACT** Informed by my experiences in prison/university co-learning projects, this essay centres two community-based learning practices worth cultivating. First, what can happen when all participants truly prioritize what it means to build community as they address their shared project, co-discovering new ways of being and doing together, listening receptively and speaking authentically? How can project facilitators step beyond prescribed roles embedded in the charity paradigm of service-learning to invite and support egalitarian community and equity-driven decision-making from a project's inception and development, through its unfolding and its assessment? Second, the sheer fact of a project taking place in the marginal place between two contexts gives all participants—students, faculty, community participants and hosts—the opportunity for meta-reflection on the institutional logics that construct and constrain our perspectives so acutely. What can we do, by way of project-conception and pedagogy, to open up those insights? The vantage that “the space between” provides can bring fresh understanding of the systemic forces at work in the lives of the community participants. And the university's assumptions about itself and its place in the world can also suddenly appear strange and new, objects of scrutiny for students and community members both.

**KEYWORDS** community-based learning, pedagogy, prison education

*Someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism.*  
-Frederic Jameson

In the years since Jameson's 2003 article in *The New Left Review*, it has grown increasingly easy to imagine the end of us, the end of life on earth—not just thinkable, but oddly familiar, entering the popular conversation in unprecedented ways as we confront environmental catastrophes; ever-starker wealth inequity; a brutal rise in white supremacy; talk of nuclear war; proliferating hunger, drought, and disease.

And the irony of Jameson's comment steps in: while getting “used” to the end of viable life on planet earth, it can still feel keenly uneasy to invoke the end of capitalism, almost intolerably “unrealistic,” intellectually or practically suspect. What are the reasons for this imaginative paucity? Why is it so intensely hard to hang on with conviction to the possibility of radical change? Naomi Klein (2014) is among those who insist that the sustained imagination we'd need to make radical transformation possible is being blocked—and by the same forces that sustain injustice and endanger the planet. Unblocking that imagination may be the most crucial

thing that needs doing, which Robin D.G. Kelley has been reminding us re racial liberation and capitalism since 2003.<sup>1</sup> What role can community-based learning praxis play in creating conditions that might deepen mental, ethical, and creative agility, the capacity for collective imaginative work?

It is hard to create touch-points between the big picture alarms, as above, and our day-to-day work without seeming delusional about the impact of the educator's role, but that's what I'd like to do in this brief reflection on community-based learning as a site for imagination-building practices.<sup>2</sup> Speaking from the standpoint of prison abolitionist and prison educator, Mauricio Najarro (2015) remarked at a University of Montreal workshop ("Teaching Theological and Religious Studies Inside Prison Walls") that he asks himself two questions as he creates a syllabus, questions that can work as useful guideposts for community-based learning practitioners as well: "How will it help students in the short term? But also, how will it help make profound social transformation more likely?"

With this second question as a guide, I'd like to look here at two elements in community-based learning endeavors that, when prioritized, can help to unblock and make more muscular the collective imaginations of students, community participants, and faculty involved in community-based learning projects, namely, **participants' relationships with each other and with the institutional and social contexts being straddled**. In what ways can we step loose from the conventions that structure our interactions, conventions that privilege status quo power relations and foreclose on the possibility for transformation? Quoting Sara Ahmed, Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (2012) would maintain that "[e]ducators are called upon to play a central role in constructing the conditions for a different kind of encounter . . . that 'might affect *where we might yet be going*'" (p. 42, 52, italics original). This mandate can shape our approaches to community-based learning.

There is a profound merit in choosing to pay primary attention to the nature and quality of interpersonal dynamics and interactions across the span of an entire community-based learning project. Moving between institutional realities, each predicated on sometimes starkly contrasting principles and priorities, students may be encouraged to embrace and explore the peculiarly illuminated views that their shifting standpoint offers up. And *all* participants in a community-based learning project can bring their own wisdom to bear as they notice and reflect on the interplay between large systemic forces and day-to-day micro-dynamics that will surely show up as they address their shared work. This is politically vital work, especially when it comes bundled with the opportunity for engaged debriefing and meta-reflection, both shared and solitary. No matter how righteous a community-based learning project may be on paper, if people are interacting with one another in ways that inadvertently replicate relations of privilege and oppression, that cause hurt or mask hurt, that are driven by unquestioned power

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<sup>1</sup> See Kelley on Black imagination and change, for instance in *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (2003), or in the powerful video footage from a 2016 conference in Los Angeles, *Abolition and the Radical Imagination* (Critical Resistance and the Los Angeles Poverty Department).

<sup>2</sup> "Community-based learning" is the term selected here over "critical service-learning," simply to retain awareness about the freighted history behind the term service-learning.

dynamics, then what has happened, exactly?<sup>3</sup> By contrast, what would the consequences be, should faculty, students, university coordinators, community group staff and members aspire to genuine presence with one another, to listening receptively, connecting head and heart, and exploring what it means to acknowledge the ways that we are connected? This essay is a call for people doing community-based learning work (instructors, community participants, students, and staff) to develop and encourage intentional meta-reflection practices that can render visible our own engagement with structural inequities, unsettle our presumptions, and allow interpersonal and institutional dynamics as we experience them to serve as teachings.

I have been deploying the first-person plural—implicitly invoking a “we” based on a posited solidarity of purpose. “We” cannot be presumed. Nor should it be despaired of out of hand, emerging as it does from actions, practices, experiences, and recognition of the mutuality and intertwined concerns that exist between perhaps radically different players. To imagine “the community” and “the university” as stable, distinct binaries between which the engaged student will ferry “needs” and “knowledge” is misguided. At the same time, to over-homogenize an easy “we” in the name of an unexamined solidarity is to commit a kind of neo-Lockean move—to declare a “universalized humanity” that has, oxymoronically, exclusion as its precondition and its work in the world.

The most important work, point, and gains of paying attention to interpersonal dynamics as one sets up and engages in community-based learning may be to build a solidarity that is rooted in what Gaztambide-Fernández (2012) describes as “incommensurable interdependency” (p. 46). People are situated differently and occupy profoundly non-conflatable positions. We are students from different class backgrounds; tenured or sessional faculty and staff experiencing the university in drastically different ways; volunteer and paid community organization staff with varying relationships to “the front line” and the administration; members of “the served community” experiencing varying constraints on our autonomy, etcetera. We love differently, live in different bodies, experience gender differently. We are white settlers and visitors, Indigenous people, Black, Brown, and Asian diasporic people. We are located differently in power, privilege, in culture, in life experiences. The insights accessible to us and the sort of knowledge we value also vary accordingly. We *are* in this together, but the radical differences between us, constructed in part by oppression, are deeply instructive and to be approached with respect, as teachers.

Much of my own work in this field is with Walls to Bridges, a co-learning rather than a service-learning project, discussed elsewhere in this volume. Thus, some of the points made here will have to be transposed to other community-based learning contexts to be usable, but I think that the translation works. Walls to Bridges is a Canadian prison education/community engagement program that I helped to found.<sup>4</sup> Walls to Bridges brings incarcerated or paroled students together with university- or college-based students as peers and classmates in for-credit postsecondary courses. In its inspiration and first incarnation it was linked to the U.S.-

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<sup>3</sup> Recommended reading: Gregoire and Ying Yess (2007).

<sup>4</sup> See Brenner, this issue, and Harris, this issue.

based Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program with which it still bears much in common, but Walls to Bridges then went on to become an autonomous program, with discreet priorities, principles, practices, and policies that emerge out of the Canadian context and respond to it.<sup>5</sup> Coordinated by Shoshana Pollack, the national training body, the Walls to Bridges Collective, and a robust local program are home-based in Kitchener, Ontario, at the Grand Valley Institution for Women and Wilfrid Laurier University's Faculty of Social Work, but practitioners working in multiple academic disciplines are using the model around the country. Classes are held in prison or jail—and sometimes at halfway houses, community sites, or on university or college campuses. With the discovery and building of trustworthy relationships and the development of critical awareness as two of its key goals, the Walls to Bridges model is grounded in dialogue; collaboration; meta-reflection; experiential, whole-self learning; anti-racist and feminist analysis and practices; and respectful engagement with Indigenous pedagogy and Indigenous teachers and learners.<sup>6</sup>

The Walls to Bridges Collective came into being in January 2012 in the wake of a Social Work course on Diversity, Marginalization and Oppression taught by Professor Shoshana Pollack at Grand Valley Institution for Women. The Collective is a group of people who have taken or taught at least one course, some incarcerated, some now released, and some not incarcerated. Now with both a Grand Valley and a Toronto circle, the Collective engages in a variety of public education and advocacy efforts. It also develops and offers five-day trainings in the Walls to Bridges model to interested faculty from Canada and beyond. We are dedicated to examining and trying to move beyond hierarchies of power and privilege; these can fall along multiple axes, and include the inequities and blind spots of the helper-helpee model that too often define service-learning and community-engaged learning practice. This is clumsy, humbling work that requires foregrounding the voices of those of us with lived experience of criminalization and confronting carceral trauma, and that doesn't wrap up neatly, but always starts and starts again.

Being together in a good way, especially between people who do not normally speak together and with people who are often silenced, includes creating frames that challenge us to identify, reflect upon, confound, and, as possible, step beyond the confines of positions that have been determined by colonial, hierarchical conditions: "A is the teacher." "B is the recipient of aid." "C is the giving student." "D is the expert."<sup>7</sup> This requires a conscious and conscientious movement beyond the prescribed roles embedded in the charity paradigm of service-learning. In this context, Tania Mitchell's (2008) tremendously useful overview of community-based learning's primary lessons bears careful study.

How does a community-based learning project change shape if its coordinators really make **the *how of being together*** a key component of the entire project? I will consider here how

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<sup>5</sup> See Davis and Roswell (2013); Pollack (2016); Freitas, McAuley, and Kish (2014); and Fayter (2016).

<sup>6</sup> Profound thanks to Kathy Absolon, Gale Cyr, Giselle Dias, the late Larry Morrissette, and Priscilla Settee, among others.

<sup>7</sup> "Being together in a good way": I am grateful for some things I learned about this from Kathy Absolon, David Blacksmith, Pauline Shirt, and Lee Maracle.

project facilitators might strengthen their commitment to egalitarian relations, equity-driven goal-setting and decision-making, deep listening and authentic sharing, and critical reflection on power relations—from a project’s inception and development, through its unfolding and its assessment. People engaged in this work can readily recognize the many ways of losing or failing to establish connection in community-based learning—sometimes even before and beyond the arena of the actual shared project. Here are a few:

- the community organization feels like they are using scant time or staff resources on training students who will only be with them for a few hours and the short term;
- the faculty person is “coordinating” the students’ time away from campus only pro forma (signature provision) because s/he is not paid for this work or it feels beyond his or her bailiwick;
- community members are cast only as charity-recipients or objects of scrutiny rather than *people with rights* as well as vital knowledge and strength;
- for the busy student, the whole endeavour feels “voluntary” and thus slips to lowest priority;
- involved faculty and community organization partners operate with drastically different ideas of what constitutes valuable knowledge and useful “deliverables”;
- time frames and priorities of students and faculty are structured by the top-down, evaluation and reward-based system in which they work—often irrelevant and even harmfully counter to the community organization’s priorities;<sup>8</sup>
- the agency or organization staff or community members and the student(s) are not understanding each other and/or accidentally alienating one another (e.g., a zealous student feels pity or a conviction that s/he knows all the questions and has all the answers; or doesn’t get the prevailing etiquette around time management or beginning and ending a meeting; or is received with frustration when she uses the sort of language s/he has been rewarded for at school).

At a University of Toronto critical community-based-learning workshop, Tania Mitchell (2015) described a community-based learning project that spurred profound connections and unsettled power and privilege dynamics while bringing about useful work in the world (Centre for Community Partnerships keynote address). Working through the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity at Stanford University, she and Kathleen Coll had helped to coordinate a three-year project that included multiple community-engaged learning courses where students committed to assisting the Domestic Workers’ Alliance (DWA) as they sought to get the California Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights put into law. Thus, the project was neither defined by nor contained within the duration of a single semester, nor were its outcomes guaranteed. Members of the DWA received training from university and Alliance sources that allowed them to serve as co-facilitators and teachers. Some days the most useful role for students to play was to themselves babysit the DWA members’ kids so the members could attend legislative hearings where their Bill was being considered: experiential learning in de-hierarchy that challenges and re-establishes the definition of academically meaningful community engagement work.

Taking this project as an inspiration, as we approach the design and implementation of a community-based learning project with the *how* of being together as a central priority, we

<sup>8</sup> See Dewar and Isaac (1998).

can adhere to project design principles elucidated by Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, and Donohue (2003), Isaac and Dewar (1998), among others.<sup>9</sup> Guiding questions might include:

- How and to what extent can the initial project design be a shared community endeavour?<sup>10</sup>
- Can training and orientation be a shared and sustained endeavour, one that includes building a foundation for mutual trust and future communication? This might include curricular expansion, opportunities for faculty trainings, and/or a course offering before or after the community engagement, ideally one that invites community participants and university student participants to teach and learn together.
- Can co-learning amongst equals be an incorporated element, even when it isn't central to the project (challenging the status differentials between "students" and "non-students")?
- Whose ethics? If the work includes research, are the organization's as well as the university's ethics review processes and standards being considered?<sup>11</sup>
- "Deliverables?": Are the desired outputs on the part of the student being determined by both the community partner and the participating faculty? How are they of use and to whom? Who "owns" them? Does the student set goals? In what ways do community members play a role in determining a project's agenda?
- Assessment: How is a student's "success" evaluated and marked? And will there be a collective, participatory process for project assessment? Truly extending control over the evaluation process so community participants are key players means developing an expanded understanding of what "success" looks like and requires, with impacts beyond the individual project. This is urgent ethically, politically, and pedagogically.
- What's next? What planning exists beyond the duration of the course-based programming? How will relationships be sustained, project goals be furthered, visions be pursued, and change be manifested once the term, or the year, is over?<sup>12</sup>

These project-structure concerns can be pivotal for productive and egalitarian engagement, but there are additional ways to pay attention to interpersonal relations as the project is actually unfolding. Though community-based learning projects can take so many different forms, there may be ways to incorporate "formal" elements that augment the informal moments of connection that matter so much, to allow a deepening of relationship between community-based and campus-based participants. University and community coordinators can consider how meetings, both small and large, are approached over the lifetime of the project—this can include presenting tobacco or other observances of respect; icebreakers; opening and closing check-ins at meetings; shared development of group commitments or terms of engagement; shared meals, music, and fun; closing ceremonies. How are participants—students, organization

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<sup>9</sup> See also Willis, Peresie, Waldref, and Stockmann (2003).

<sup>10</sup> For a powerfully effective instance of shared project design, see Buhler, Settee, and Van Styvendale (2014).

<sup>11</sup> Well-handled by Gregoire and Yess (2007).

<sup>12</sup> For example, a single Walls to Bridges course may be truly valuable as a stand-alone experience, but, especially for the incarcerated student, that value is limited in the face of structural oppression and stigma; what are some ways this value can endure or be built upon, rather than morphing into one more "over-promise"? All these approaches are in place or being explored by those in the W2B network: offering multiple courses at one institution; ensuring academic advising for students getting out; alumni involvement in Walls to Bridges Collective work or in participatory action research projects; building scholarship funds for Walls to Bridges students who proceed with their studies; offering classes on the outside for students on parole and university-based students.

staff, community members, faculty, community-based learning coordinators—actually treating each other? When are they meeting face to face (if at all), and on whose turf? What conscious intentions frame encounters in spaces that are familiar to some, strange to others? What formal or informal conventions are determining the nature of the interactions? Unthinkingly, people can play out prescribed roles and relationships, sometimes unintentionally harming themselves or others. Perhaps this happens even more often when people are moving into challenging spaces and across divides, without being offered the chance to develop tools for connection and communication together.

Whether in school, in prison, in an office, a health clinic, a field, or a sweat shop, even on holiday or in our homes, our roles and relationships are to some extent shaped and confined by constructs defined by capitalism's web of power and privilege, and often we are sunk in the institutional logic of whichever system most dominates our lives at that juncture. Much goes unexamined as we grapple with the urgencies of our day-to-day lives. I'd like to propose a second priority for community-based learning practitioners to embrace, in keeping with the long-term goal of making us all more ready and able for change. The sheer fact **that community-based learning projects take place in the marginal space between (at least) two institutional contexts** (e.g. the academy and the prison, or, say, a university and a senior care facility) allows all participants—students and faculty, community participants and community, non-profit or agency hosts—a very particular opportunity for reflection. Navigating between two contexts with often starkly differing priorities and protocols can feel like community-based learning's biggest logistical headache; at the same time, it also offers up a "neither-here-nor-there" vantage point from which to view the institutional logics that construct and constrain our perspectives so acutely.<sup>13</sup> In fact, because of the way power and privilege function more broadly, the working premises that undergird different social institutions can be at once consonant and contradictory, and as their founding assumptions and their regulatory fields converge and jostle, there is much to observe and reflect upon. To navigate "the space between" can bring fresh understanding of the systemic and institutional forces at work in the intimate and individual lives of the community participants. At the same time, the university's assumption about itself and its place in the world can also suddenly appear strange—delineated and newly available for scrutiny for students and community members both.

This deep opportunity often goes unplumbed or at least under-experienced by community, staff, faculty, and student participants in community-based learning projects. What can one do by way of project conception and pedagogy, to open up those insights for all participants? Perhaps brief readings and/or dialogue opportunities can be made available to both students and community participants that invite collective examination of the institutional and social forces that are most relevant to the endeavors being shared. Perhaps these suggestions should be proffered by community-organization participants.

Too, one can build not only journaling and brief reflection papers but also creative exploration into the work process, to foster meta-reflective practice. For its first few years, the

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<sup>13</sup> See Bumiller (2013).

Walls to Bridges facilitator training included four days at the prison and one day at the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University. Perhaps unsurprisingly, training days spent inside the prison can stir up strong reactions, learnings, and sometimes difficulties for training participants. Even this peripheral, short-lived, and relatively surface experience of prison is intense, as is the fact that as a training participant, one moves in and out of the carceral space, while some of one's trainers will be forced to stay confined. But on the "outside day," when sessions unfolded at the university, training participants confronted the fact of an absence, as some of their incarcerated trainers were in prison, and not on hand. And they hadn't moved to a "neutral" space but to another institutionally immersive environment, replete with its own logic and architecture of power. What do we know with our minds, hearts, spirits, and bodies, when we come with awareness to an institutional setting that we have grown inured to? At one training, on the day we'd left behind the prison environment and showed up in a university setting for the day, we asked people to begin the day in pairs, moving around the space, noticing together how it felt to move in ways or to parts of the room that they normally wouldn't in a university setting. They were asked to consider how power normally asserts itself in such a space and to share an activity that might otherwise seem unimaginable there. So, direct acknowledgement of institutional impacts on our experience can come most readily, sometimes, through creative engagement.

Perhaps the most "live" opportunity for this sort of analysis from the interstices opens up when we commit to **turning the elephants in the room into our teachers**. Writing about *Inside-Out*, Kristin Bumiller (2013) offers up one instance that could provide an occasion for subsequent reflection:

Halfway through the semester, one of my inside students is reassigned from the full security section of the facility to "minimum." My outside students are not aware of this...change..., and as we leave the class, the inside student, fairly nonchalantly, walks beyond the usual corridor to which he has been confined and joins us in the "trap" [or sally port]. In their silence (and expression of puzzlement . . .), I see my outside students ponder: Who is watching? Should I "tell" on my classmate? Am I entrusted with the "security" role as an outsider? . . . Possibly, the inside student muses—why does walking into the trap create shock in the eyes of fellow students who just convincingly treated me as a peer? (p. 184)

Typically, such moments go unmarked because they are uncomfortable, and thereby the meaning they deliver—that outside students are implicated in the carceral endeavour—slides home and makes its effect without being challenged. But this is not inevitable. In this case, whether incarcerated and campus-based students would find it most productive to discuss this as a class or to reflect on it more privately in writing would vary depending on the details of the event and the relationships in the room—and it would be important that the facilitator might be able to read this right. But the chance to take note of what had transpired and consider how carceral conditions interacted with and to some extent undercut the aspirations of the course is there—in its very discomforts, a learning.

In community-based learning projects configured differently than the co-learning model of Walls to Bridges, elephants will still show up and stand stolid in the living-room. Whether a student has it pointed out to him that he has unwittingly inspired mistrust, or an organisational administrator approaches his female staff in a way that the intern reads as harassment, or a faculty member consistently rejects the chance to visit a community site, painful moments will come as opportunities not to flee, but to stay in, to question and observe.

It is easy to slip into feeling that the project is “failing” or the students are “just not getting it” when people express resistance or negative affect. In fact, though, what happens along the way can be the stuff of that day’s learning experience for participants, not a distraction. A community-based learning project can foster or block opportunities for all those involved to take note of their own responses and learn from them and thereby to attend to their own inner teachers. We can try to welcome discomfort, when it surfaces, something to be responded to with care, not steeled against or denied.<sup>14</sup> For faculty and project coordinators, this takes a lot of readiness to be honest with ourselves about what is coming up *for us* as we engage with the project and our part in the course or program. It also means being honest in a sensitive but direct way with the students and with non-campus-based participants about what we see and about the questions we need to ask in order to understand better what is unfolding. Can we name it, when there’s a tension in the room? Who, amongst those involved with the project, may be prepared to offer the opportunity of a circle process around a tension that someone has named aloud?

Another urgent reason to keep the quality and tenor of relationships front and centre in community-based learning practice is the stark difference that exists between galvanized and paralytic anger at injustice. A community-based learning project may well mean that university- or college-based *and* community-based participants find themselves suddenly confronting social injustice and systemic violence in different and probing ways, with a sometimes breathtakingly raw depth of new insight. Let’s turn again to Mauricio Najarro (2015), who writes from the context of prison education programming:

Learning the truth of oppression often elicits a deep and debilitating rage. Anger, particularly in the form of self-righteous indignation, is a toxic fuel that poisons the communal atmosphere and corrodes the possibility of meaningful dialogue. Individuals both inside and outside prisons must transform their justified anger from self-righteous and corrosive indignation to orienting, productive, and enabling outrage.

I would like to suggest that fundamental to the transformation Najarro hopes for is the quality of the space for dialogue, *how* emotion and stories are welcomed and met, along the way. Quaker author and group facilitator Parker Palmer (2004) raises questions that are relevant here. As university-based students and community members interact in a community-based learning context, the challenge of listening with presence exposes itself. Palmer asks:

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<sup>14</sup> Khuri (2004) has a useful essay on this topic.

How can we understand another when instead of listening deeply, we rush to repair that person in order to escape further involvement? The sense of isolation and invisibility that marks so many lives . . . is due in part to a mode of “helping” that allows us to dismiss each other. When you speak to me about your deepest questions, you do not want to be fixed or saved: you want to be seen and heard, to have your truth acknowledged and honored. . . . But holding you that way takes time, energy, and patience. As the minutes tick by . . . I start feeling anxious, useless and foolish. (p. 117)

Faced with a full-on, nuanced glimpse at the lived experience of injustice and the larger systemic forces that contextualize and create such pain, the insupportable sense of being only “anxious, useless and foolish” can be rejected in favour of white-hot anger. The “self-righteous indignation” that Najarro describes can be, just as much as rushing in to fix or save, a coping mechanism, a place to run to. Absolutism’s “foxholes” (as Palmer puts it) are an easier place to live than in the profound discomfort of staying, together, in the presence of stories that will require us to change, to stay connected, to connect, and to change ourselves and the encounters that help to create our sense of what’s possible.

Alert, reflective, and cognizant in the spaces in between institutional contexts, engaging in practices that help us all show up as listeners, whole-self learners, community-makers, wisdom-sharers, hard-headed, warm-hearted analysts, ready to spill and spread our endeavors beyond the shape of a syllabus, semester, or a student roster, we become capable of imaginative interventions powerful enough to make profound change “realistic” . . . and real.

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# **Reports from the Field**



# The Future of Community Service-Learning in Canada

**Geri Briggs**

**ABSTRACT** Anchored by the question of what is needed for community service-learning (CSL) to continue to grow in Canada, this paper proposes three principles for effective campus-community engagement (CCE): 1) communities need to feel ownership of community-campus partnerships; 2) post-secondary institutions need to make the route to engagement clearer and easier to navigate for their communities; and 3) post-secondary institutions need to ensure infrastructure to support students, staff, faculty, and community involved in CCE. Aspiring toward better futures for CSL in this country, the author offers possible solutions for and approaches to CCE based on her observations, reflections, knowledge, and experience as former Director of the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL).

**KEYWORDS** community service-learning; campus-community engagement; recommendations for CSL; CACSL

In January 2010, I became the Director of the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL). Six years of learning, exploration, discovery, joy, and frustration followed. Below, I share my perspectives on the future of community service-learning (CSL) in Canada based on observations, conversations, and reflections.<sup>1</sup> My meditation revolves around the following question: what is needed for community service-learning to continue to grow and develop in Canada?

Let's begin with a quick history of CACSL.<sup>2</sup> The tale of CACSL's creation is one of creativity, collaboration, and community building, which was initiated in 2001 when Marla Gaudet (then Program Manager of the Service Learning Program at St. Francis Xavier University) invited others she knew were practicing CSL in Canada to the first pan-Canadian CSL Symposium. Approximately ten people were in attendance (Fryer et al., 2007, p. 11). From that and follow-up national meetings, CACSL came into being, with the "mothers" of CSL in Canada—Cheryl Rose (University of Guelph, founding Director of CACSL), Sara Dorow (University of Alberta), and Sandra Patterson (Memorial University)—forming the

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<sup>1</sup> CSL is one of the important ways citizens connect with their post-secondary institutions. In 2012, at the CACSL conference hosted by the University of Saskatchewan, participants decried the lack of materials on Canadian experiences with CSL. I would like to thank Nancy Van Styvendale for her perseverance in bringing this special issue, which gathers such materials, to fruition. Without her encouragement and feedback, my contribution would not have reached completion.

<sup>2</sup> My thanks to Margo Fryer, former chair of CACSL's National Steering Committee and founding Director of UBC Learning Exchange, for providing information about CACSL's history.

first Steering Committee. These women created and can take pride in achieving an amazing movement for CSL in Canada. Their passion led the way.

Part of what this initial committee created was a list of principles for CSL in Canada. Those principles drew me into the world of community-campus engagement. Back in 2009, while I was searching for something else, I stumbled upon the CACSL website. Reading the professed values of CACSL—respect for multiple ways of knowing; a commitment to mutual benefit for all stakeholders; and a belief in shared leadership between community and academic partners—I felt an intense kinship with the CSL community, and from this grew an overwhelming hunger to somehow engage and belong. Given my background in adult learning and career development, I was drawn to the CSL approach. Here, I thought, is an educational philosophy which believes in experiential learning that contributes to society as a whole and acknowledges that everyone should be able to contribute, everyone should benefit, and everyone has something to learn and to teach. Ideas matter; principles matter. I felt I had found a home. I needed to find some way to connect, so I called the CACSL office to inquire about volunteering. Timing is everything. Funding for CACSL had come to an end in 2009,<sup>3</sup> and then-current director Larry Gemmel was leaving to pursue other opportunities. CACSL was at a crucial moment in its history and needed to decide how it would continue to support CSL in Canada. At Larry's suggestion, I made a proposal to the Steering Committee and became the part-time CACSL Director through Interchange Canada.<sup>4</sup> Full immersion into the world of community-campus partnerships meant a steep and exciting learning curve.

From 2005 to 2009, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation kick-started the exponential growth and development of CSL in Canada by funding CACSL as well as CSL programs at ten universities.<sup>5</sup> This created a heyday for CSL, for where there is money, the institutions tend to follow. When I started at CACSL in 2010, the “McConnell Ten,” as they were called, had created active CSL programs and a wave of interest in CSL had blossomed across the country. With the end of McConnell funding, I somewhat cynically expected that CSL would slowly fade away without a champion and a funder, but this assumption turned out to be completely inaccurate. While some CSL offices have ceased to exist (University of Sherbrooke), many have continued to support campus and community to engage in CSL (University of Ottawa, University of Alberta): some have reframed themselves to support multiple aspects of community-campus engagement rather than just CSL, and some, like the University of Saskatchewan, have created central points for community to access CSL and other types of CCE (community-campus engagement). Today, in 2017, college and university representatives continue to connect with CACSL to ask about starting CSL programs, and individual faculty members across the

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<sup>3</sup> In 2004, CACSL “received a 5-year grant from the McConnell Foundation to provide technical advice and support for universities and communities who [were] developing community service-learning programs and to promote the growth of CSL by educating people about CSL and creating national and regional networks of programs, practitioners, and researchers” (Fryer et al., 2007, p. 12).

<sup>4</sup> Interchange Canada facilitates short-term (up to three years) work placements at host organizations, primarily for core public administration employees, to foster knowledge growth/circulation and professional development, among other reasons.

<sup>5</sup> See Kahlke and Taylor, this issue.

country have incorporated CSL into their teaching, sometimes independent of institutional support. Generally, our first piece of advice to post-secondary representatives is to assess what is happening at their institution and to build on the work that is already informally in place.

Certainly, CSL has demonstrated persistence, growth, and value over the past fifteen years. With no additional action, current CSL structures and approaches could well continue to provide opportunities for community and campus to work together to address critical issues. However, in my opinion, without conscious efforts to support community, faculty, and students to engage with each other effectively, CSL will not fulfill its full potential to benefit communities. The remainder of this paper thus explores some principles for enhancing the effectiveness of community-campus engagement, including CSL as one of the key aspects.

### **What is Community-Campus Engagement (CCE)?**

Both “community” and “campus” have multiple meanings and dimensions. Community can be defined as place-based; virtual; local, national, or international, among other descriptors. Campus can be a set of buildings, an online space, or the site of an outreach activity. Conversations about campus within community can quickly become confusing when we don’t start by specifying what we mean by community. In this paper, I am using community in the sense of a physical place.

When we talk about “community-campus partnerships,” we often create a sense of dichotomy—community as one entity and campus as another. But my view of campus has always been that it is an integral part of the communities in which it participates. As a prairie-raised person who grew up in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, I saw the university as open and relevant; the concept of town and gown didn’t fit my cognitive map. As a child, I saw campus as a place for me, even when I strongly felt the difference between myself and my wealthy schoolmates. However, I understand that this is not the case for everyone, and that my feelings of inclusion are based, in part, on my privileges as a white settler growing up in a family that valued education as a means of escaping poverty.

While post-secondary institutions have often been criticized for being removed from the needs and realities of communities, it is also important to recognize that these institutions participate in community in every action; they are large entities within their communities as well as being nexuses of ideas and action. Any barriers between campus and the rest of community are infinitely porous. As the CACSL website indicates, post-secondary institutions “have a major influence in their community. They can affect the economic and social life of a community by their employment policies, purchasing and investment practices, and their openness to community use of facilities.”<sup>6</sup> But whether or not these institutions can be called “good citizens” of the community depends on the nature of their actions—the way they spend their resources, the way they treat their staff, the way they teach, the way they research,

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<sup>6</sup> CACSL’s website contains a more detailed overview of three elements of campus-community engagement: community-engaged scholarship (which includes CSL, community-based research, co-ops, and internships), community services (which includes extension, advice, media, and speakers), and operations (which includes hiring/purchasing, residences, and building usage).

and the way they connect with others in their community all have a significant impact on the community as a whole. When making decisions, post-secondary institutions need to take into account the impact these decisions have on their communities—but do they?

My vision of effective community-campus engagement is informed by the idea of “anchor institutions,” which Dubb and Axelroth Hodges (2012) define as “institutions that consciously and strategically apply their long-term, place-based economic power, in combination with their human and intellectual resources, to better the welfare of the community in which they reside” (as cited in Bartley, 2014). The “anchor institution” perspective promotes the concept that an institution’s philosophy and actions contribute to the overall health, wealth, and resiliency of a community. The University of Winnipeg Community Renewal Corporation (UWCRC), for example, demonstrates how a university can focus itself to participate in the social and economic growth and development of its community. A non-profit charitable corporation, UWCRC partners with multiple sectors (community, business, and government) to work on an array of development projects, such as a residence (McFeetors Hall: Great West Life Student Residence), which has both dorms and affordable apartments, half of which are reserved for community members; and a day care, which provides care for children from both the university and wider community.

### **How Might Community-Campus Engagement be Enhanced?**

#### ***Principle 1: Communities Need to Feel Ownership of Community-Campus Partnerships***

By and large, the people talking the most about community-campus engagement are those within the post-secondary system. This focus is understandable, as community engagement constitutes a significant part of the mandate of post-secondary institutions. Community groups and organizations, in contrast, focus on specific goals, issues, or mandates within their communities. If working with a post-secondary institution can help them achieve their goals, excellent. However, given limited resources and ever-increasing needs, community groups and organizations generally do not have the interest or resources to take on the role of improving the larger system that supports CCE. Instead, each develops their own individual mechanisms for working with their local institutions. They may provide feedback directly to the people from campus that they engage with, but by and large, there is no established community voice that advocates to institutional senior management about how the CCE system could work better.<sup>7</sup> But community voice is essential to community benefit. One recommendation for addressing this deficit is to have a community organization take on the role of community-campus engagement facilitator, understanding that there are practical and ideological obstacles that might prevent this recommendation from being realistic or even desirable to all community organizations involved. But if such a structure were in place, communities might be able to feel shared ownership of the CCE system.

Another possibility for increasing shared ownership of CCE is to have community-

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<sup>7</sup> There are, of course, community members at various levels of university governance, but, for the most part, these members are not advocating in a formalized way for improvements to CCE.

led partnerships, where communities themselves define the relevant issues and strategies, and postsecondary institutions are one among many partners. Every year, multitudes of community-campus projects focus on critical issues such as poverty, violence, food security, diversity, environmental sustainability, and so forth. With a “collective impact,” community-led approach, the community would bring together all the organizations dealing with a particular issue, including the post-secondary institutions, and together they would create a strategy for addressing the issue, with each contributing their strengths.<sup>8</sup> Saint John, New Brunswick, has initiated this type of process through “Living SJ,” a multi-sectoral collaboration and collective impact initiative that is working to reduce poverty in the city.<sup>9</sup>

In the absence of community and institutional supports, community organizations can establish mechanisms to make community-campus engagement work for them and their community. An important factor for communities to remember is that the campus needs them sometimes more than they need it. Opportunities for community-based experiential learning and community-based research are often critical to students and professors. Organizations can make the system work for them by taking control of their ability to say “no,” or to say “later,” or to make clear the processes that need to be followed by those who wish to partner with them. Some organizations establish specific times and ways for institutions to apply to work with them. Others include their partnerships with institutions as part of their business and human resource planning (SAGE Edmonton). Some questions organizations should think about before engaging in CSL are:

- Can projects be created that can be completed in a short period of time and that will support the needs of the community? Most CSL projects will take place over one or two semesters and are usually around thirty hours. What can project participants accomplish in that period of time?
- Is there a larger project that can be modularized so that each part can be taken over by one CSL participant or one group of participants?
- Are there sufficient personnel with the time to develop these projects and to supervise the students? Students are used to doing assignments to be submitted to their professors. Sometimes they forget to keep in contact with the project sponsor about their needs. Most organizations have multiple demands on their time. Consider the cost-benefit of the time spent (i.e. will there be sufficient benefit to make the expenditure of time worthwhile?).
- Are there clear, measurable goals for the project that will enable evaluation?
- To what degree does the organization want to be involved, or to what degree can it be involved, in the design and evaluation of the learning?
- How will students be engaged in learning about the issues at the core of the organization’s mandates? How important is this to the organization?

<sup>8</sup> This arrangement might be differently envisioned as organic coalitions that involve universities rather than as community-led or community-structured initiatives that formally engage universities. Where these arrangements do exist already, the connection hubs are often social innovation or social action labs that are located in community but that convene cross-sectoral collaborators to work on complex social problems.

<sup>9</sup> For more on “Living SJ,” see Wright (2016).

***Principle 2: Post-Secondary Institutions Need to Make the Route to Engagement Clearer and Easier to Navigate for their Communities***

How does a volunteer group of community activists engage with their post-secondary institution? How does a small community organization identify ways in which they could benefit from working in collaboration with their local institution(s)? From the outside, universities are very complex and confusing, making it difficult to know where to start a process of engagement.

A variety of approaches have arisen to address this problem of accessibility. The first approach, discussed briefly above, is to have a stable community organization play a facilitator role. As part of its service to the community, the organization provides support to other community organizations that wish to engage with local institutions. One example is the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education (TCCBE, now the Trent Community Research Centre), which was initially funded by the McConnell Foundation. While the Trent Centre is supported by Trent University, it is an independent facilitator of community-based research, brokering relationships between community organizations and multiple post-secondary institutions.<sup>10</sup> Another example of a hub organization is the Kitchener Waterloo Volunteer Action Centre, which includes community-campus engagement as part of its services to the community.<sup>11</sup> These organizations demonstrate the value, for both communities and institutions, of having a stable community-based organization in the role of CCE facilitator, one that is knowledgeable about community as well as the workings of the local institutions: community organizations have someone who can help them connect effectively with their local institution, and institutions are then able to work with community organizations that are more prepared to engage with them. Hub organizations are also able to facilitate collaborative community activity. The positive impact of community-campus engagement would be increased by having more *community-based* CCE facilitation services to work with college and university centres for engagement. Sadly, finding financial support for such activities is a challenge. A potential role for funders (e.g. government or foundations) would be to provide seed dollars to support existing community organizations such as Volunteer Centres, United Way offices, and Ys to serve as centres for expanding the facilitation of community-campus engagement, perhaps in partnership with university-based units.

A second workable approach to the issue of accessibility, which has already been taken by several institutions to varying levels of success, is the creation of a central *institutional* point of contact for community engagement. Examples include the Michaëlle Jean Centre for Global and Community Engagement at the University of Ottawa, the Community Service-Learning Office at the University of Alberta, the Community Engagement Service Learning (CESL) Initiative at Red River College, and the University of Saskatchewan's Community Engagement Office at Station 20 West. The first three are located on campus and focus primarily on CSL. The University of Saskatchewan's Community Engagement Office, on the other hand, is located

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<sup>10</sup> See Kahlke and Taylor, this volume, for more on the TCCBE.

<sup>11</sup> See Hennig, this volume.

within a larger community enterprise centre (Station 20 West) that provides a wide range of health, employment, and social services to inner city communities; it takes the university to the people. Each of these organizations, in addition to providing service to community, also provides annual reports tracking CCE activity and impact. The existence of an institutional centre is complementary rather than competitive with the existence of a community-based centre. For example, the York University and the United Way have established a strong and effective relationship to support community-based research to the benefit of community organizations and university alike.

***Principle 3: Post-Secondary Institutions Need to Ensure Infrastructure to Support Students, Staff, Faculty, and Community Involved in CCE***

All stakeholders—students, staff, faculty, and community—need adequate support to create and sustain collaborative relationships that support healthy, resilient communities. Support infrastructure for community engagement has many facets:

- Administrative support to manage the process and paperwork, facilitate monitoring and evaluation processes, and provide forms and guidelines to be used as models by professors and community partners, at their discretion.
- Training and orientation for students. This training should focus on “soft” skills such as interpersonal communication, good judgement, self-directed learning, and reflection skills to assist students in making the most of their CSL experience and contributions.
- Recognition for the increased workload taken on by professors and community organizations to enhance the learning of students and make CSL useful for the community. This recognition can come in many forms. Some institutions provide small grants for community organizations or professors to develop new CSL projects. Others provide teaching release or reduced administrative work for community-engaged professors and researchers. Some have awards for students, faculty, and community organizations to recognize the difference they make, and some are improving recognition for community-engaged teaching and research in the tenure and promotion process.
- Mechanisms to create and support cross-disciplinary CSL programs or courses. Post-secondary institutions, like any large bureaucracy, tend towards multiple silos, which are further entrenched by the nature of academe, where each discipline has its own culture, language, and perspective. Cross-disciplinary CSL can bridge these gaps: it has benefits for students, who learn to value and engage with other disciplines, as well as community organizations, which benefit from a multi- or inter-disciplinary approach to complex issues.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, community service-learning is alive and well in Canada. Individual professors, students, and community representatives are finding ways to make it work and create benefits for society. They experience joy, exhaustion, failure, and success. In today’s fast-paced world,

organizations and institutions alike are over-worked and under-resourced. Despite this, they find ways to make it work. I congratulate all who do this work. You make the world a better place. Thank you.

### **About the Author**

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## Reflections of a CSL Groupie

Jane Hennig

**ABSTRACT** The Volunteer Action Centre has been an active supporter of community service-learning and other forms of community-engaged scholarship in partnership with three large post-secondary institutions in Waterloo Region. Over the years, staff have connected with local and national projects to enhance our understanding of engaged scholarship and try to translate that knowledge to benefit our community. This article explores the personal reflections of a community partner/broker. The author has a high level of respect for the institutions that connect their students, faculty, and staff with the community of which they are a part, but also has experienced some of the challenges of bureaucracy. This reflection attempts to share some of the ground-breaking work of local community-post-secondary partnerships while acknowledging some of the very real challenges of this kind of shared work.

**KEYWORDS** broker; McConnell Ten; multi-institutional; C2U

Over the years, I have been asked to participate in community service-learning (CSL) as a broker, a researcher, a spokesperson, and an advisor. I have advocated for service-learning as an important component of community-post-secondary relationships. As the Executive Director of the Volunteer Action Centre of Kitchener Waterloo & Area for fourteen years,<sup>1</sup> I have engaged in the work of CSL and other community-engaged scholarship (CES) at both a local and national level. This essay brings together a history of my personal involvement with CSL and my reflections about its role in the larger relationship between post-secondary institutions and the communities of which they are a part.<sup>2</sup>

It has been an incredible journey that began out of necessity in 2003. The staff at our Centre and the community organizations we work with were experiencing a dramatic increase in the number of students or instructors that would call each September and January looking for places in the community where they could offer student skills. Sometimes the projects they had in mind were for small teams, sometimes they were for larger groups, but mainly they were

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<sup>1</sup> Volunteer centres work in local communities to strengthen volunteering and citizen engagement. Though diverse in many ways, they share the following common functions: to promote volunteering; to build the capacity of organizations to engage volunteers; to facilitate connections between people with volunteer opportunities; and to provide leadership on issues related to volunteering and citizen engagement. All of this aligns the work of volunteer centres directly with the intended outcomes of community service-learning.

<sup>2</sup> It is hard to write personal memories without sharing specific names and roles. The people and roles named are those for whom I hold high regard. These individuals have had a positive influence on CSL locally and nationally and should be acknowledged for the impact that they have made. I hope that I represent them well.

for individuals, and usually for two hours per week for ten weeks.<sup>3</sup> The board and staff of our Centre determined that our best opportunity to manage this growing phenomenon was to get more closely involved. Our first step was to seek out key connections at each post-secondary institution in our community. My formal relationship with CES was to begin locally, grow to national participation, and, of late, has moved back to focusing on my own community. I have learned a great deal about campus-community engagement and continue to value and advocate for it.

In 2005, our Centre supported the successful application that saw Wilfrid Laurier University become one of the “McConnell Ten.”<sup>4</sup> Wilfrid Laurier had been engaged in CSL for nearly forty years; it was just not defined as such. Laurier professors and students had a positive relationship with community organizations through placements and research projects that were tied to curriculum before my tenure at the Volunteer Action Centre. Many of the organizations that we worked with were already connecting with instructors and some relationships were as longstanding as the organizations themselves. Now, with funding, it became an intentional institutional direction. This felt like a natural progression in some ways, yet the growth in interest from the post-secondary institutions also felt daunting for organizations who were considering how to grow opportunities at a similar rate.

The volunteer centre went on to be active in helping to facilitate connections for the Laurier Centre for Community Service-Learning (LCCSL), and we participated on a community advisory for LCCSL. Its Director was very open to exploring new approaches as long as they continued to meet the participation numbers and reporting requirements. This meant continuous growth in the numbers of students active in a community setting. It is important to note that we are situated in a community with a population of approximately 500,000, where the student body exceeds 60,000. While LCCSL focused its efforts on growing CSL for its institution, the University of Waterloo and Conestoga College were also implementing and growing CSL courses for students. Community organizations were beginning to feel stretched.

In 2007, Cheryl Rose, then Executive Director of the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL), and John Cawley, then Senior Program Officer from the McConnell Foundation, invited me, with about thirty other community participants from across Canada, to meet in Toronto to discuss the CSL experience from a community perspective. It was fascinating to hear what other community members were experiencing. We had much in common: excellent opportunities, real challenges, and almost unanimously the experience that “community” was an afterthought in CSL. One outcome of that meeting was a letter to the McConnell Ten that clearly set out the need for CSL programs to be more considerate of their community partners (Cawley, 2007).

At this point, Paul Davock, then Director of LCCSL, began to focus on new approaches to the Laurier program, even if it meant slowing the growth in participation numbers. I commend this approach because it really positioned community as the priority for the first time. The

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<sup>3</sup> Twenty hours per term (two hours per week) remains a common number of hours for service-learning placements.

<sup>4</sup> See Kahlke and Taylor, this issue, for more on the J.W. McConnell Foundation’s funding of CSL initiatives at ten institutions in Canada.

steering committee for the Centre, which involved faculty, community, and students, began to explore new strategies to support community. From this, the Volunteer Action Centre began to facilitate a multi-institutional committee to evaluate service-learning and explore if and how we could develop a community-wide approach to service-learning in our Region. It was an incredibly proactive approach; at the table were three major post-secondary institutions, local funders, students, and community organization representatives.

This multi-institutional committee simultaneously took a what we called a “macro” and “micro” approach to our work. The macro working group looked at the institutional approach to CSL, delving into the three major post-secondary institutions in our community in terms of liability, risk management, overall participation and expectations, and forms of CSL (e.g. curricular or co-curricular). From an outsider’s perspective, it was interesting to learn that, to find out what CES was taking place in our community, we needed to undertake ethics reviews in order to ask each department which instructors or which courses were engaged in CSL and how it was being done. To ask what we presumed was a simple question for internal use, we were required to go through not one but three ethics reviews that had to be accepted by three different review panels in three different post-secondary institutions. This is in contrast to experiences in even the largest of community organizations: when we want to ask an internal question and gauge what our departments are doing, we just ask the question and get the response. In this case, we were looking at ways to be more strategic about CSL and community-based research (CBR) to ensure a benefit to all stakeholders, but we experienced many bureaucratic road blocks.

Paralleling the macro work was a micro working group that looked at options for CSL programming. It met with community organization staff to explore alternatives and create CSL projects. Because the group was cross-institutional, there was a focus on a more balanced approach to CSL that, in my opinion, was the best approach to campus-community work that I have seen. Unlike many CSL projects, which are often determined by only one or two stakeholders, the micro group brought together faculty, students, and volunteer managers to develop projects that would add value to all participants. After three and a half years, however, staff changes at all three post-secondary institutions led to the breakdown of this model. Without three equally strong champions at each post-secondary institution, the process ceased. In my opinion, there was so much more that could have been accomplished with this macro approach.

When LCCSL undertook an extensive evaluation process in 2010, then LCCSL Director, Kate Connolly, asked me to be a research assistant for the process. She felt strongly that having a community partner on the research team, and not only as a survey or focus group participant, would add value and credibility to the project. Dr. Terry Mitchell was the lead investigator and welcomed the unique process. I found the process, the research, and the writing to be great experiences. I also found that, even though I have a Master of Arts degree from Wilfrid Laurier University and certification as a facilitator, my participation in the research as a seasoned veteran in our community sector was still new to some participants. While the participants from community and my fellow researchers accepted me in the research role,

many of the on-campus participants struggled to accept an outsider as part of the research team. In an age where knowledge mobilization is a focus for post-secondary institutions, an approach that actually respected the knowledge and expertise of a non-academic was (and in many ways still is) new and not always welcomed.

In 2008, I joined the Advisory Board for the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL). Being involved with CACSL was a great opportunity for me to learn about what was happening in CSL in other parts of Canada. I was introduced to faculty and service-learning administrators from across the country, but initially there were very few community members at the table. At the CACSL Symposium in Ottawa in 2010, there were, I believe, only two community representatives. Imagine my chagrin when I was asked to come to the microphone and speak “for the nonprofit sector”; there were, at the time, approximately 165,000 nonprofits with nearly one million paid employees in Canada, and I was a staff member at one of them. There was no way that I could speak for, or represent, an entire sector. This moment certainly speaks to a lack of engagement of community at such an event. And while each year there has been better interaction between community and post-secondary constituents, there is still a massive divide between these groups when it comes to learning together.

The intentional inclusion of Colleges in the C<sup>2</sup>U (Community/College/ University) Expo and the efforts of CACSL to partner with Volunteer Centres at the alliance’s semi-annual conference have increased opportunities for community members to participate in conferences and knowledge sharing with post-secondary institutions. These conferences are opening lines of communication and bringing community and faculty together in an environment away from the classroom. Yet there is still a divide. Most academics choose to attend sessions that are centered on post-secondary concerns. The joint sessions and community sessions have the lowest attendance. The keynotes tend to speak to the academic audience and, often, do not seem aware that there is other representation at the sessions.

I am thrilled to see more inclusion of community with post-secondary faculty in the joint learning environment offered by these conferences. I am, however, not convinced that we yet have a forum that will drive the change needed for CSL and CBR. I hope that there may be an opportunity to create such a forum with the recent change from CURA (Community-University Research Alliances) funding to the new Partnership Grant funding model through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). As I understand it, the intention of the new model is to be more inclusive and more equal in the funding and infrastructure aspects of partnerships related to these grants. As a past member of the steering committee for the Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) project, a SSHRC Partnership-funded initiative, I see the influence that a truly inclusive steering committee (including community representatives as well as academics) can have on a national project.

There is much value to be found in having good relationships with post-secondary institutions. First and foremost is the opportunity to engage young people in community programs and services. Studies demonstrate that if you engage individuals while they are still young, they are more likely to become life-long volunteers (Lyons, 2013). In effect, as

members of community organizations, we are helping to raise a new generation of engaged and contributing citizens. So, our primary focus is the future. But in terms of the present, we see CSL as an opportunity to provide students with experience that matches the theory they are learning at school. Many of these young people will be applying to work in the non-profit sector in the future, and adding a practical application component to their education is helpful for future hires. Finally, we see the relationship as one that opens doors to faculty and staff involvement, allowing us to access skill sets that we might not be able to tap otherwise.

In my over ten years of being connected to service-learning in Canada, I have been passionate about the potential of all things campus-community. It is that passion for the potential that keeps me connected to and a true advocate for this pedagogy. I have had to step back from my national work with CACSL and CFICE for now, but I continue to work actively with the post-secondary institutions in my region to build campus-community relationships and programs that will truly benefit the people we all serve.

### **About the Author**

**Jane Hennig** is the Executive Director of the Volunteer Action Centre, which provides services that strengthen the capacity of over 160 charity and not-for-profit organizations to engage and support volunteerism in Waterloo Region. Jane currently provides sector leadership through her work on the Board of Directors for Volunteer Canada and on committees for Wellbeing Waterloo Region and the City of Waterloo Neighbourhood Strategy. She is an active participant in the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network and continuously works to demonstrate the value of community engagement locally and beyond. While her national work related to Community Service Learning has stepped back, she and her staff continue to work closely with faculty and staff at Conestoga College, University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University. Email: [jane@volunteerkw.ca](mailto:jane@volunteerkw.ca)

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## The Nature of the Space: Walls to Bridges as Transformative Learning

Anna Sferrazza

**ABSTRACT** Community-based learning initiatives have the potential to have a meaningful impact on participants. When integrated into an academic setting, such experiential learning opportunities can initiate transformative learning within students and the broader community. Through a self-reflexive approach, this essay describes one such first-hand experience from a Walls to Bridges class, offered through Wilfrid Laurier University and facilitated in a Canadian Federal Prison. The learning model utilized within this class has the capacity to deeply engage students in ways where traditional classroom methodology falls short. Institutionalized education can learn a great deal from this model, which values diversity and community building, and which centralizes voices that are often absent or marginalized in academic settings. This essay examines the nature of a Walls to Bridges class as it compares to traditional educational experiences. The essay explores current, dominant educational paradigms that are influenced by capitalistic values and can perpetuate power imbalances and systemic barriers, while also highlighting alternatives to traditional education models. Teaching methodologies, such as collaborative rather than competitive learning, circle pedagogy, the creation of a safe classroom space, power redistribution, and creative means of critical classroom discussions, are celebrated as opportunities for deep learning.

**KEYWORDS** Walls to Bridges; incarcerated students; experiential learning; circle pedagogy; institutionalized education

Community-based learning can have deeply transformative effects. Experiencing and witnessing firsthand the realities of what one studies has the power to leave a lasting impression and to challenge one's sense of knowing. I had one such experience during my participation as a non-incarcerated student in a Walls to Bridges class. Walls to Bridges is the Canadian version of Inside-Out, the well-known prison exchange program founded in the United States, where incarcerated and non-incarcerated students take university classes together inside penal institutions.<sup>1</sup> The Walls to Bridges class in which I was enrolled was offered through the Masters of Social Work program at Wilfrid Laurier University and took place within a Canadian federal prison in Kitchener, Ontario. There were 20 students—10 incarcerated women and 10 non-incarcerated women—and one facilitator/instructor. Entitled “Race, Gender & Crime,” the class was focused on a range of topics, including punishment, the war on drugs, immigration,

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<sup>1</sup> The Walls to Bridges program is also discussed in essays by Harris and Davis (both this issue).

the incarceration of transgender people, colonialism and neocolonialism, violence against women, restorative justice, creative responses to injustice, and much more. Amongst all of these multifaceted issues, one that stood out as being particularly relevant to my social location and crucial for me to explore was the complex and challenging nature of institutionalized education. Using a critical self-reflexive approach, this essay will discuss my experience in the Walls to Bridges class and offer a critique of the limitations of institutionalized education. I argue for the necessity of creative, transformational, and inclusive educational spaces where community is built.

Before taking the Walls to Bridges class, I thought of myself as progressive in my political views as well as in my perceptions of institutions. Coming from a conservative Christian upbringing, I was well-versed in challenging institutionalized religion for my own spiritual, physical, and emotional liberation. It was within this context that I began to understand how Christianity has been bound up with the neo-colonial forces of cultural domination and oppression that have left deadly footprints on most of the planet. Through my undergraduate degree in Social Justice and Peace Studies, with a minor in Religious Studies, I began to discern my own path of faith. Discovering liberation theology, which looks at the life of Jesus as an act of resistance that exemplifies solidarity with the marginalized and locates the gospel amidst struggles for social justice, I was able to salvage my faith and find hope. I have found it useful to engage routinely in the process of unravelling once-entrenched ideologies in my own life. By participating in this deconstructive work, I have gained critical lenses with which to view the world around me, a process that reached new heights through my experience in the Walls to Bridges class.

Throughout my studies, I took part in community-based experiential learning opportunities in Central America and the Caribbean, and at social service agencies in Canada. I recognized the benefit and dynamic learning that takes place when the walls of a classroom are toppled and communities and real-life struggles become the context in which you “take notes.” It is in these settings where textbooks and journal articles fade away and the most important lessons in one’s life are articulated through action and interaction in the real world. These learning opportunities were tempered, however, with continual critical reflection on the impact of my white privilege, neocolonialism, globalization, trade policies, capitalism, and on how my own choices contribute daily to oppression both locally and globally.

Despite this prior reflection and engagement with community-based learning models, none have moved me the as much as Walls to Bridges. Many different facets of my mind and heart were invited to be present and engaged in this classroom space. There are a number of pedagogical values and practices that create the dynamic learning space of a Walls to Bridges classroom. From the very first class, students sit in a circle and are invited to enter into a “circle of trust” where they may speak their truth from their own emotional and intellectual centre to the centre of the class, or as Palmer (2004) describes, “to the receptive heart of the communal space” (p. 118). This process requires *listening* to each other rather than focusing on proving a point. In addition to trusting each other, we are also asked to trust the process. While students and instructors may have preconceived notions about how class “should go” and the

agenda may be set, we learn the importance of refraining from pushing through important discussions for the sake of accomplishing a lesson plan. The creation of safety and choices is another foundational value in the classroom. This means that students and the facilitator work to distribute power among *all* circle members in an effort to learn *collaboratively* rather than *competitively* (Walls to Bridges Collective, 2015). In this space of intentional power redistribution, the students teach one another and are continually working to uphold a safe space by staying responsive to issues of power, privilege, and oppression present in the classroom (Walls to Bridges Collective, 2015). By allowing students to engage with their physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional identities, Walls to Bridges fosters collaborative learning with one's whole self. This experience of shared vulnerability, responsibility, growth, and respect within a classroom was new to me, and it demonstrated an alternative way to conduct formal education.

What emerged for me was a critical examination of what exactly "education" is. In my experience, the Walls to Bridges model is somewhat of a novelty within academia, and so I was compelled to ask questions about why this type of learning model and facilitation style is not more widely available for students in post-secondary education. Though I was in my sixth year of university education, I realized I had never critically reflected on the nature of institutionalized education and the power dynamics and complexities at play before taking this class.

After reading and researching some of the challenges facing today's universities, as well as reflecting upon my own experience in this setting for many years, a number of issues became unveiled to me. Within modern day educational institutions, there exists a complex dynamic of competing interests. Universities have dual roles of generating and securing profit through commodification of education and fostering higher learning for the next generation. These roles, at times, become muddied through increasing privatization, corporate sponsorships, and pressure for both students and faculty to produce marketable outputs and achievements that are in line with capitalistic values (Paralta, 2015). In the competitive and rigid environment of 300-person classrooms, students must prove their ability to outshine their peers in order to be successful. Many humans do not flourish to their full potential within these high pressure environments, but adapt themselves to "function" in the most "productive" way possible, making them prime candidates for obedient participation rather than critical thinking (Paralta, 2015).

Universities have become dependent on corporate donors and private investors to maintain financial viability (Schrecker, 2012). Faculty members may obtain corporate funding for their research, but such funding has the potential to place restrictions on research and can be withdrawn if the research is not deemed remunerative (Schrecker, 2012). If profit rather than discovery becomes the motivating factor for scientific inquiry, then academic freedom is in jeopardy (Schrecker, 2012). Schools have been "bought" by corporate interests that pay the struggling education sector large sums to advertise on school property, during school time, while infiltrating educational materials with biased information that pushes an economic

agenda (Peralta, 2015; Schrecker, 2012).<sup>2</sup>

An eerie parallel may be drawn when comparing the imposition of external force within modern-day educational institutions to modern-day prisons. As Foucault (1977) describes, carceral punishment has shifted from being applied to the body and is often now applied to the soul. Similarly, while no physical harm is used to control students' or faculty members' ideas, there is an element of the "soul" which is inhibited and tamed within the context of corporate interests, rubrics, grades, and competition for funding, acceptance, and scholarships. If one "colours outside of the lines," there may be adverse consequences, such as failing marks, a decrease in research funding, or an increase in workload (Schrecker, 2012). The lines between the market and educational space have been blurred.

Certainly, there are consequences for the corporatization and commercialization of our spaces of learning. Peralta (2015) argues that the corporate university teaches students to be consumers rather than citizens, which in turn encourages unquestioning attitudes towards inequities and social disparities. As schools compete for bodies to fill classrooms so that tuition can float the budget, students are increasingly viewed as "customers that [have] to be wooed rather than minds that [have] to be expanded" (Schrecker, 2012, p. 43). The aligning of corporate and educational values is paradoxical: where the first seeks to perpetuate consumptive patterns, the other (in theory) encourages free thinking and fosters democratic participation. In this teetering balance, where educational institutions are caught between profit motives and platforms for critical voices, there are complex barriers and issues facing today's students.

Mainstream educational institutions fail to recognize and represent the diversity, uniqueness, and creativity of students who are pumped in and out of the machine yearly. Educational curricula, "standards," and structures are determined by a narrow cross section of humanity, which leaves many students and faculty in the margins. The under-representation of women and people of colour within faculty and administrative positions in universities in Canada and the United States further marginalizes students who do not see their own identities reflected in their professors or in those overseeing their institution (Mandhane, 2016). In 2014, 84% of full-time professors in universities in the United States were white: 58% were white males and 26% white females. Only 4% were black, 3% Hispanic, 8% Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than 1% were American Indian/Alaska Natives and of inter-racial descent (IES, 2014 as cited in Hamer, 2015). In Canada, 83% of university professors in 2006 were white and 67% male, while Indigenous people made up only 2.1% of the professoriate, and black Canadians only 1.6%, with visible minority professors experiencing a 10% earnings gap with non-minority professors (CAUT Education Review, 2010).

If education is structured and designed *by* the ruling class and largely *for* the ruling class, then imagine the difficulties someone who is not a part of the ruling class may face in gaining entry to educational institutions, and meeting the standards that have often been set without

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<sup>2</sup> The implications and dangers of corporatization are also important to consider in relation to the funding of community-engaged learning programs on campus, something that may be of growing concern in this era of increasing austerity and government cut-backs for education. See Aujla and Hamm, this issue, for information on the funding of service-learning programs in Canada.

cultural, gender, racial, or socio-economic considerations and systemic critique. Gaining entry to university is one challenge, feeling academically supported, having equitable resources, financial assistance, and experiencing a sense of safety and trust with peers and faculty members is another serious set of issues faced (Hamer, 2015). It is necessary for educational institutions to recognize that the experiences of a person of colour and a white person on campus may be very different. Racism permeates many North American university campuses, often insidiously through the minimization of incidents of explicit racism, the denial of racial discrimination on campus, and the reification of dominant assumptions about the cultural and academic deficiencies of students of colour (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrick, 2011; Mandhane, 2016).

Reynolds (2008) describes poor women of colour as the principal victims of this deficient and failing system. Economic and educational policies not only restrict these women from full participation in educational systems, but in fact push them into criminalized behaviour “as a means of survival” (p. 72). Today, many women who are incarcerated have been affected by poverty, marginalization, and mental health challenges, and the vast majority have experienced violent pasts through either physical or sexual abuse (Van Den Bergh et al., 2011). Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women, are consistently the most over-represented population in Canada’s prisons (Perreault, 2009). While Indigenous people account for 4% of the Canadian population, they make up 20% of the incarcerated population (Status of Women Canada, 2012; Wesley Group, 2012). Even more staggering is that in 2010, Indigenous women accounted for 32.6% of the total population of incarcerated women, meaning that *one in three* federally incarcerated women is Indigenous (Wesley Group, 2012). A very grave picture of the institutional make-up in our country—who is on the “inside” and who is on the “outside”—comes to light when we contrast this staggering statistic with the reality that only 7% of Indigenous women obtained a university degree in 2006, compared to 19% of non-Indigenous women (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2012).

While the Walls to Bridges class has allowed me the opportunity to question the very nature of institutionalized education, I find myself in a quandary. It is within the very context of a Masters degree in the institutionalized educational setting of Wilfred Laurier University that I have been able to partake in Walls to Bridges and have had the opportunity to analyze critically the nature of educational spaces. This experience has revealed to me the depth of my own privilege. I recognize the hypocrisy of being critical of the exclusive nature of education, while writing this paper with esoteric academic language that further distances me from the type of accessible learning I am calling for. As Pollack and Eldridge (2015) discuss, these revelations demonstrate my need for continued reflexivity, a willingness to assess my power and privilege critically, and to cultivate humility by accepting that my academic way of knowing is not the only way of knowing. Though I have reaped benefits, opportunities, and privileges through my participation in the very system I am critiquing, I continue to wrestle with the dominant hegemony within which the system operates and seek ways to humbly navigate it with an anti-oppressive framework.

Having an educational experience that fosters inter-dependence, cultural competency, critical thinking about systemic issues, collaboration, and connection is incredibly important.

This type of education lays the foundation for students to realize and assess their own positionality and what it means to be a global citizen and a community member. The focus of education should be shifted from forging “productive” members of a capitalist society to developing community collaboration and compassion. Education should be a space where individual talents, creativity, and abilities are celebrated within the context of strengthening the collective. Within these types of environments, where many viewpoints are shared, mutual understanding and deep learning is fostered, and the foundation of a more socially conscious world is built.

The space that was held for Walls to Bridges embodied these ideas. The classroom was alive and connected. It was a place of openness, of looking into one another’s faces and presenting our personal truths. Students were given the opportunity to take responsibility for their class, to determine collectively the guidelines for how all class participants would act together to create a safe space. Class each week started with an opening activity, often initiated by one of the students, which invited participants to become present and available for learning. Experiential and small-group activities were used to promote deeper thinking, creative communication, and the opportunity to express ideas without intimidation from a large group.

Such activities created space for getting to know one another, allowing bridges of understanding to be built between incarcerated students and non-incarcerated students. One example of this transformative learning was when the class facilitator invited us, in small groups, to construct a tableaux—a still, live image co-constructed by all group members using their physical selves to represent a message or topic (Walls to Bridges Collective, 2015). The topic of this particular tableaux was the overrepresentation of women of colour in prison. To depict this theme, my small group, which consisted of incarcerated and non-incarcerated students, decided to create a tableaux with all of the group members lining up in order of the shade of their skin. When presenting our tableaux to the rest of the class, we stood in silence and waited while our classmates began to realize that we were embodying the statistics we had studied on the criminalization of people of colour. We stood there in a racial line-up, which came to life in the lived space of our classroom, a room within a federal prison, where the majority of incarcerated women were women of colour and the majority of non-incarcerated women were white. The emotional impact of this activity was powerful and many students in the class needed time to debrief and discuss what they had experienced. For some students, including myself, this was the first time the research we were studying came alive in a tangible manifestation; it was a moment of transformative learning.

Because the class took place in the physical space of a federal prison, where structural injustice is apparent everywhere, I felt a heightened imperative to critique this injustice. The critical theories discussed in various articles took on new meaning when I began *experiencing* the concepts studied (Pollack, 2014). The context of the class is crucial as it defies the “safe” distance from which academics so often profess ideas, creating engagement with the very systems and structures being studied (Pollack, 2014). In this way, (in)justice systems move from being studied at a distance, with knowledge coming from the powerful and the privileged,

to being revealed through exploration *with and between* marginalized people and through their lived realities (Pollack, 2014). Every voice matters, every person's truth is allowed to exist safely within the circle. Students and facilitator were invited to participate with their whole selves: each individual's social location and intersecting identities were not ignored, but rather acknowledged as contributing to their own personal experience of power and oppression (Walls to Bridges Collective, 2015). Learning is fostered through the interaction of these varying lived experiences and the forming of connections between individuals who may previously have seen themselves as worlds apart.

Circle pedagogy is central to this process. In the Walls to Bridges classroom, students sit in a circle and each participant is provided the space to speak from their various experiences, feelings, and knowledge without interruption or being challenged, while reflecting on what motivates their ideas and responses to course material (Pollack, 2014). Modelled after Parker Palmer's (2004) "Circle of Trust," this process calls participants to "speak our own truth; we listen receptively to the truth of others; we ask each other to be honest, open questions instead of giving counsel; and we offer each other the healing and empowering gifts of silence and laughter" (p. 116). Circle pedagogy is rooted in the belief that *everyone* has an inner teacher of value and their own truths to be contributed to the circle. This approach provides an alternative to the notion of the teacher as the only expert with the authority to "advise," correct, challenge, and "set students straight" (Palmer, 2004). Professors act as facilitators rather than lecturers, creating activities that do more than just stimulate intellect; they also foster relationships among all students. Calling for a redistribution of educational power, this type of bottom-up classroom holds that the voices and hearts of every person within a circle or classroom bear the same significance and legitimacy. It is a relocation of power from the hands of a few to the hearts of many.

Walls to Bridges is not about *right* answers or how neatly one can fit into educational expectations; it is about *authentic* answers, speaking from one's heart and experiences, and *being* together in solidarity, connection, and honesty. The class embodies the South African philosophy of Ubuntu, loosely translated as "I am because we are." In this space of ingenuity, creativity, resistance, transformation, connection, and hope, critical parts of me came together to create something meaningful. The nature of the Walls to Bridges space fostered a transcendent educational experience. bell hooks (as cited in Musial, 2012) describes this as "an ecstatic experience" (p. 226). She states, "When we bring conscious mindfulness to work in the classroom we often have an ecstatic experience...at times like this I feel myself to be in the presence of the sacred . . . It is the collective learning taking place that produces the sensation of communal spirit" (p. 226). Many students shared the feeling that what had unfolded in the space was sacred and expressed having been deeply moved. Rather than devouring academic information in order to vomit it forth into a "brilliant" paper or rigidly structured test, the facts of which I often struggled to retain, I was called in the Walls to Bridges classroom to contribute parts of my authentic self to the community of the circle without the intention of obtaining the highest grade possible.

As Musial (2012) describes, too much emphasis has been placed on learning that delineates

between the mind and the heart. bell hook's idea of *engaged pedagogy* resonates a great deal with me, for learning which requires a mind-body-spirit connection is transformative and lasting (Musial, 2012). Within this context, where empowering students is at the forefront of a teacher's concerns, teachers themselves must also be continually engaged in their own self-growth and healing (Musial, 2012). When teachers are engaged in this work, they are more able to hold the space of self-healing and transformation for their students. The rigid space of the high-pressured, corporatized, intellect-oriented classroom needs to be transformed into a space where we acknowledge one another as emotional and spiritual beings as well as intellectuals and academics. In order to do this, a feminist heart-centred approach may be used to encourage students' self-reflection and personal growth while reducing classroom competition (Musial, 2012). Learning and education can exist in heart-centred spaces that embrace everything students and teachers bring to the space, not just their brains (Musial, 2012).

We have the power to call for change in our educational system and pedagogical approaches. Rather than fitting marginalized individuals into an educational paradigm and structure which inherently oppresses them, I suggest we address the structure itself. The first step is to open up the dominant conversations about education to include the voices of those who are subject to a system within which they may face many barriers. This would require having difficult conversations about patriarchy, classism, racism, and discrimination, rather than couching these crucial conversations in the innocuous language of "diversity and inclusion" policies (Mandhane, 2016). More work must be done to discuss and assess how the current system functions and/or dysfunctions, and these discussions must include and center the voices of those with lived experiences as marginalized students and faculty (Mandhane, 2016). These conversations must not be held privately in the chambers of ivory towers, but rather in public and accessible spaces, inviting many voices into the conversation. It must be determined whether education exists for people or for profit.

In order to expand alternative approaches to learning, or rather promote the pursuit of "unlearning" dominant educational paradigms, classes like Walls to Bridges should be brought in from the margins of educational spaces into the centre. This re-centring must be done carefully and with constant reflection in order not to water down the approach or contaminate the marginal with the mainstream. Instead, it is time that the mainstream begins to recognize that people are inherently more alive, powerful, capable, and brilliant than much of institutionalized education allows them to demonstrate. Educational spaces of radical openness, collaboration, trust, and diversity must not be seen as threats, but rather as opportunities for deep learning, for becoming more completely interconnected, and more successful as human beings. Such spaces have the power to transform classrooms and communities by planting seeds of mutual respect, empowerment, and hope in the minds of a new generation. I know, because these transformational seeds have now been planted within me, and I am excitedly forging a path of growth that honours what this experience has taught me.

## About the Author:

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## Wahkohtowin as Paideia

Dan LeBlanc

**ABSTRACT** The Wahkohtowin class was held in Saskatoon throughout early 2014. Wahkohtowin brought together prisoners, students, and professors, in order to critically examine Canada's "justice" system. For the author, participation in this class led to deep learning, or what ancient Greeks called Paideia. This article explores why Wahkohtowin led to deep learning. It concludes that the deep learning was attributable to four factors: the leaders created space for suffering to speak; course participants were racially, culturally, and educationally diverse; the pedagogy was relationally Socratic; and participant reflections were aimed at action, in addition to understanding. Throughout the article, Wahkohtowin is compared with the author's experience of law school in order to highlight why law school courses rarely result in Paideia.

**KEYWORDS** community-based learning, legal education, praxis, Indigenization

In 2014, I took my favourite law school course, called "Wahkohtowin." This course took place in the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. In the Wahkohtowin classroom, we discussed justice in addition to law. To a large extent, the course material derived from participants' lived experiences of the (in)justice of law in Saskatoon. Our class was a diverse bunch. It included Indigenous high school students, members of STR8 UP—a community-based organization that provides peer support for former gang members (all of whom have had experience in prison or the criminal justice system)—students from the University of Saskatchewan, and our formal instructors: four scholar-activists, two of whom are editors of this special issue. They have reflected on the course elsewhere (Buhler, Settee, & Van Styvendale, 2014 and 2015).

Our class met on Wednesdays at noon and each meeting followed an established routine. We began each gathering with bannock and soup; in my view, this was fundamental to the course. After we ate, each participant shared something about their week; through this sharing, we established trust and openness. Next, we again went around the circle, with each student sharing their experience of the topic to be discussed; participants in the class—particularly those from STR8 UP—often had lived experience of the phenomena in question. We then discussed that day's text. This portion included, for example, members of STR8 UP interpreting legislation, and university students interpreting poems about prisoners' experiences of solitary confinement.

Throughout the course, we studied topics including the regulation of panhandling in Saskatoon, the sentencing of Indigenous people in Canadian criminal court, and the law

of solitary confinement in Canadian prisons. The course's structure provided a measure of stability as we discussed these difficult topics. It also facilitated trust among our group and encouraged us to share what we knew.

Wahkohtowin is a Cree word, which has been translated to me as meaning "kinship." This kinship expands beyond blood relations. It is a kinship that is formed in time and space. This course presupposed our kinship with—and thus our concern for—those who suffer injustice. It also worked to develop kinship among participants.

The course was successful in developing Wahkohtowin in a way that university classes rarely are: it brought the students together and increased our collective solidarity with those outside of our group. In the classroom, our pedagogy was not only relational; it was also Socratic<sup>1</sup> and Freirian.<sup>2</sup> In addition, it was communal and participatory, as opposed to adversarial and competitive.

Wahkohtowin was non-adversarial in the sense that we did not have debates in which one position or "argument" won out against the other and was then acquiesced to by the group, who had seen the logic prevail. Our classroom discussion appeared consensus-based—though uniformity was not forced upon anyone, and we valued the different conclusions reached and maintained.

Dialogue and discourse were not merely features of our methodology; they appeared to be course goals. Dialogue was our means and our end. This focus on dialogue helped participants develop increased interconnectedness, knowledge of each other, and mutual respect. In short, the focus on dialogue helped us develop a sense of kinship or Wahkohtowin.

In our course, the individual's experience was an acceptable basis from which to derive knowledge. Our individual experiences were ripe epistemological soil, and we tilled it together. The course content was individual in addition to communal. Participants did not speak as "someone from prison" or "a law student," but rather as themselves, pulling on their experience in prison or law school. It was about our lived experience of the world, informed by our respective social positions.

We did not pursue objective truth together. In my view, we cannot touch capital-T "Truth" in any event (West, 2000, p. 42). Rather, we explored our experience of the world. We took our experience, rather than a purportedly objective set of conditions in the world, as the starting point.

Our diverse experiences were not merely used to develop a more "well-rounded understanding of the object as a whole"; we used them to understand the variety of experiences of the criminal justice system and matters related to it. Understanding each other's experiences of the world was not a means to an end; it was the end—or *an* end—of the course.

Finally, this class was aimed at action, work, and improvement of the "justice" system.<sup>3</sup> We

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<sup>1</sup> In the sense of critically interrogating our tacit presuppositions about the world and each other.

<sup>2</sup> In the sense that all participants were treated as knowing, thinking Subjects mediated by an Object—the text or phenomena we examined together.

<sup>3</sup> Many of my classmates believed that the system was too corrupted to be saved. For those individuals, the first step to "improvement" was discarding the settler justice system in its entirety.

discussed reforms required to the system, raised funds for an inmate wellness committee, and spoke seriously about the adequacy of possible responses to the ongoing tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women. We worked to move from understanding the system to changing the system.

In part for these reasons, I experienced Wahkohtowin as deeply shaking to my understanding of myself as a human in the world. It not only increased my knowledge and efficacy in activist pursuits; it was fundamental to my developing sense of self. I experienced it as Paideia, or deep learning,<sup>4</sup> as opposed to cheap schooling. It was Paideia in that it caused me to rethink my place in the world, reassess my privilege,<sup>5</sup> and think more deeply about what it means to be an “ally.”<sup>6</sup>

Throughout this paper, I aim to explore why I experienced Wahkohtowin as Paideia and what about it shook my foundations. My contention is that such experience is distinct from what is usually done at law school, where we encounter neither material that teaches us how to die, nor how to live; rather, we regularly learn how to “think like lawyers.” I am interested in this dissonance.

I will divide my reflections on Wahkohtowin as Paideia into four sections. First, I will highlight the course's ability to allow suffering to speak, and take seriously the lived experiences of marginalized human beings; such an activity is a fundamental condition of truth, and one rarely met. Second, I will focus on the makeup of the class, including its diversity along lines of race, class, and education level. Third, I will reflect upon the pedagogy of the class: student-focused, dialogical, and relationally Socratic. Finally, I will speak to the “active” element of the course: encouraging reflection and action, or praxis.

Throughout, I will work to compare and contrast this course with my experience of law school classes—not because law school is typically the antithesis of Wahkohtowin (although that may be arguable), but because it is “where I come from.”

<sup>4</sup> Paideia is a Greek word that will be explored more fully throughout this paper. However, one meaning of it is “deep learning.”

<sup>5</sup> By “privilege,” I mean a relative term, which references my position and access to social power against that of others. If some are privileged, it is because they are privileged by society—it has named them as valuable, important, or worthy of concern. No one can make themselves privileged; they can only work to join a social class (such as lawyers) that are already privileged. If some are privileged it means others are “un-privileged,” or more properly, oppressed and marginalized, meaning that society (or the privileged therein) has labeled them non-valuable, unworthy of concern, or other such violent categorizations. In particular, I was struck by my privileged ability to choose “activist pursuits,” as few issues touch me directly. If I stay quiet and join a law firm, I’m unlikely to experience social rejection and Othering. For some of my Wahkohtowin kin, these are not arm’s length pursuits; they are life and death issues to be considered, dismantled, and crushed. A particularly good example of this was our class discussion of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, where many knew persons who were disappeared or murdered.

<sup>6</sup> By “ally,” I mean a position that is active in support and resolution, but often takes its direction from outside of itself. It is a position properly taken when one has a secondary, rather than primary, stake in the issue at hand—for example, instances where a non-Indigenous individual wishes to speak of Indigenous sovereignty. In such a case, these activists should not be at “the front” of the fight. Indigenous persons are capable of generating their own content, and generating their own priorities. A non-Indigenous tactician is likely not needed, unless one is requested. I have identified this way on both race and gender matters for some time; I experience it as very difficult to unlearn all that I need to in order to offer non-paternalistic support, given my privilege, body, and history. Wahkohtowin has caused me to reflect and think more about these things.

## Meeting the Enabling Conditions of Truth

I aim to speak of truth, not only as a set of propositions that correspond to facts and observable phenomena in the world, premised upon falsifiable hypotheses and probabilistic reasoning, but rather, as a way of being in the world—a disposition and a moral stance.

The Marxist philosopher and revolutionary Theodore Adorno said that the condition of truth is to allow suffering to speak. There are two elements of this to be considered for the purpose of Wahkohtowin, where we purport to explore the “justice” system.

First, when the suffering of those most impacted (and arguably most targeted) by the system is silenced, we lack full data to properly understand the phenomena of which we speak. Theirs is a particular perspective on the system: they see it from a different angle, and their telling not only informs us of their experience, but also gives an indication of what “the thing” actually looks like. Their testimony not only tells us about themselves, but about the reality they describe.<sup>7</sup>

Second, allowing suffering to speak is fundamental to truth, in the sense of a disposition or way of being in the world. Allowing suffering to speak is implicitly a particular moral claim about habitually silenced persons and groups. It states that their position(s) are required, in part because adopting truth as a way of life requires solidarity with humans who suffer—especially those who are regularly made to suffer.

We must know their struggles and what they know of the world, because we must first understand what type of world we live in and the range of experiences within it. We must have the courage to look suffering, othering, and marginalization in the face, and continue to live. Our analyses must reflect what we know, and what others know. Those who become vulnerable and are willing to share their reflections do a great service to the listener, even as the listener is of help to the speaker, by validating and believing their story, which may provide strength.

Wahkohtowin provided space to speak; because of the safe space,<sup>8</sup> some individuals chose to speak of suffering—direct and vicarious. In particular, this information came out in talking circles held as part of the class. My classmates often shared their lived experience of the justice system; the courage and trust shown by my classmates with lived experience of the dark side of our current economic, political, and legal schemes were incredible and humbling. Their sharing enhanced our ability to both find truth and *live* truth, as a way of being human.

Many examples have stuck with me. I will list some of them here, in order to indicate the

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<sup>7</sup> This perspective on “truth gathering” is similar to an historic folk story I’ve heard, aimed at promoting religious pluralism, but applicable here. Three blind men encounter an elephant. Each begins to explore it with its hand, in order to ascertain what type of being it is. The first is holding onto the trunk and describes the elephant to be most like a python, or other large snake. The second is near the torso of the elephant, and describes it as huge and round, most like a rhinoceros. The third is touching the tusk of the elephant, and describes it as hard and static, like stone.

The story is meant to promote the notion that no one of us can see the whole of anything alone. We only touch one part, and this affects what we believe the whole to be. When we are in dialogue with others, we can better understand traits the object possesses—knowing that part of it feels like a snake, part a rhino, and stone, for example. We are not only sharing our experience of the thing. We are sharing what part of the thing is *actually* like.

<sup>8</sup> The safe space was created by factors including: our sharing food each week, dialogue through circle, guest presenters and leaders who were very open with us, and the selection of those invited to our group.

extent of my experience.

One participant who spent a good amount of time in the custody of Correctional Services Canada was particularly willing to share with the group. In one class, he spoke of an experience with guards—being stripped, blindfolded, tied to a table, and beaten in a room full of them. He knows things about the prison system that that few other people could teach.

Another participant spoke of being transported to Pine Grove, a prison for women located near Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Upon arrival, she was put into what she called “baby dolls”: prison-issued clothing, which looks like what a female child would wear. She did not like it. She spoke of humiliation.

One Wahkohtowin facilitator’s childhood best friend’s father was a police officer. The facilitator saw what sort of person this officer was, and described him to us as quite violent and sadistic. She saw how her friend was treated. She had inside experience of an officer’s home life. Her account was not intended to implicate all police officers; it was to share the story of one police officer and to establish the principle that not all police officers are good people.

A university student participant spoke about the ways in which she encounters racism in her life. She spoke of it affecting her, including others’ views of her as a scholar and a future teacher. Racism was pervasive in her life. For her, discussions of racism are not purely academic.

While speaking of missing and murdered Indigenous women, an incredible number of participants had either direct or secondary experience with the “issue.”<sup>9</sup> Members of my kin told me that disproportionate rates of violence against Indigenous women makes them afraid to walk alone at night. They feel that they have good reason to be afraid; they suffer because of this.

The experiences shared by others in the group moved the discussion from detached and sanitized to personal, direct, and pressing. We did not speak in generalities; we analyzed experiences. Rather than talking about people, we talked with them.

### **Distinct from My Law School Experience**

I do not experience law school as a context in which suffering is allowed to speak, however much those who suffer attempt to speak. There are a variety of factors which could contribute to this outcome.

First, few in law school are from the most marginalized communities and people groups. This often means that these communities’ experiences of suffering are individualized and are interpreted as less urgent to share. Experiences of suffering are framed as personal problems to be worked through, rather than indicators of systemic problems to be addressed and organized against.

Second, if such suffering does exist, and folks wish to speak about it, the law school community may not be conducive to it. The community is not conducive to telling difficult

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<sup>9</sup> By direct experience, I mean that the individual knew someone who was missing or murdered. By secondary experience, I mean that the individual knows someone whose friend or family member was disappeared or murdered.

truths, because there is insufficient trust within the community. The lack of trust is partially caused by systemic factors, including the large class sizes and competitive atmosphere. It is also partially caused by interpersonal factors, including the prevalence of “type A” personalities among law students.

Even if trust does exist—as it does between some groups of friends at law school, for example—the classroom context does not facilitate such truth-telling. The classroom setting is not conducive to truth-telling because it rarely values personal experience as a basis for knowledge, and because there is little time for it, once all of the required cases have been read. These conditions virtually guarantee that suffering will not be allowed to speak at the College.

The open dialogue and safe space at Wahkohtowin fostered the conditions of truth. I heard things that were very uncomfortable for me. I heard things I did not want to hear. I heard things that were very painful, and from which I wanted to look away. It hurts to hear stories of another human being harmed in these ways. Though difficult, hearing from these lived experiences has made me more reflective and critical. Hearing them has done some work to change the political into the personal; now we are talking about my family members.

### **Kin from Different Places: The Makeup of the Class**

At the time of writing this essay, I am one week away from finishing my second year of law school at the University of Saskatchewan, which is located in Treaty 6 Territory. The U of S College of Law shares a building with the Native Law Centre. In my two years of law school, no class I’ve been in has studied Treaty 6. This omission is notable; it is perhaps representative of the College’s position on the importance of exploring Indigenous-settler relations throughout the study of law.

Adding to this potential oversight by my College is my own personal lifestyle and life choices. Up to last year, I had no close friends who engaged in Indigenous culture and tradition.

As a result, my knowledge of Indigenous struggles has been informed primarily through books, popular culture, and, recently, *Idle No More*. Each has shaped my perspective. Notwithstanding the benefit of these sources, my relatively “white” social group led to a position where I principally talk about, rather than to, Indigenous people. Until now, I had never had a peer group, let alone Wahkohtowin, with Indigenous and Indigenized persons.

Being involved in a diverse and Indigenized community helped to shake and reformulate some positions I held. My “new” positions undoubtedly still reflect colonial and racist positions. I imagine I’ll spend my whole life trying to dismantle the racism inside of me—it is deep.

Notwithstanding these limitations, through Wahkohtowin I learned about Indigenous beauty, intelligence, and community. While I knew that brilliant Indigenous people existed, I was admittedly surprised to find such intelligence among those in our class who do not have formal education.<sup>10</sup> The academic skills of inductive and deductive reasoning, as well

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<sup>10</sup> This surprise was not because they were Indigenous; my racism is rarely so overt. Rather, it was because of their relative marginalization as reflected in a lack of education, correlated with a low-income upbringing and difficulty in schooling, which are in turn correlated with being an Indigenized person. I did not expect such academic skill from these folks; I had much to unlearn and relearn.

as analogizing, were evident within them as well. They not only had a lot of “interesting experiences,” but could expand from those experiences to ground reasonable positions and perspectives.

I also saw beauty among my kin. The beauty of Indigenous communities is regularly called into question in settler society.<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, such communities may be fetishized and essentialized by “allies” in settler society. Both appear problematic. I’ve fallen into both errors in the past. In particular, I saw beauty in our symbolic use of the circle—notably the opening check in, and ending each meeting with handshakes. I noted that these symbolic, seemingly ceremonial acts, affected our community. It changed the way we *were* community, and represented our relationships. It fostered feelings and dispositions of Wahkohtowin.

The experiences and reflections facilitated by this class have unhoused me (West, 2000, p. 40) and changed the way I think about my place in the world; they have changed the way I think about my role as a settler, Saskatchewan resident, and heir to Treaty 6. Such education amounts to Paideia, rather than the cheap schooling that academic discussions of “Indigenous issues” tend to be.

### **The Pedagogy of the Classroom**

Wahkohtowin’s pedagogy is distinct from most. I experienced it as democratically Socratic, as opposed to teacher-centric Socratism. Whereas the democratic expression of this tradition allows for both teachers and students to interrogate ideas and suppositions together, the latter version involves only the teacher questioning the students. It is presumed that the teacher knows and the student is yet to know. In its democratic form, all have valuable knowledge and things to learn. I often hear that the College of Law uses the Socratic method; if it does, it’s the non-democratic form of it.

The ancient Greeks often called the pedagogical method referenced above “the Paideia method.” This was partially because of its efficacy in bringing about “deep learning.” The Paideia method implies some growth in the intellectual freedom of the participants, as opposed to simple vocational training or acquisitions of knowledge (Davies & Sinclair, 2014, p. 23). It is also aimed at encouraging dialogue, both as a form, and as a way of being in the world (Davies & Sinclair, 2014, p. 22).

The democratic method is often difficult to implement on a large scale, as well as among people from disparate social backgrounds (Hoerl, 2007, p. 11). This difficulty derives from the requirement that participants share with each other; in order to share deeply, participants must respect each other and value each other’s perspectives and experiences. Also, groups must have a shared language, and social rules must be known in order to access this “democratic group.” In this way, the Socratic method may emulate the downfall of Greek “democracy”: democracy only exists for persons of a particular class.

Wahkohtowin appears to have overcome some of these problems, and achieved a

<sup>11</sup> By settler, I mean all non-Indigenous persons who reside in Canada. By settler society, I mean the cumulative collection of non-Indigenous societies present within Canada. Despite its internal diversity, settler society remains a valid cultural category because Indigenous remains a valid cultural category, and Indigeneity assumes its negative: settler society.

functioning practice of democratic Socratism among folks from a wide variety of backgrounds. The enabling elements for this were love and kinship (Hoerl, 2007, p. 6). We also embodied the fundamental values of Socratic Paideia: friendship and conversation (Hoerl, 2007, p. 18). Values such as love, conversation, and student-initiated discourse are very difficult to attain in a typical law school class. This is perhaps what leads to anti-democratic, though critical, teaching methods being the dominant method at the College of Law.

Wahkohtowin's method of instruction furthered the goals of the class, including dialogue, complex and problematized thinking about the justice system, and mutual respect. True, open dialogue is always radical and shaking. It is arguably more so when it occurs among a group as diverse as ours.

### **From Paideia to Praxis: Being Humans in the World**

Wahkohtowin went further than analyzing various perspectives on the justice system and the problematic outcomes which that system produces and reproduces. The class discussion regularly moved toward action aimed at mitigating the things we thought undesirable.

The pedagogy of Paideia, coupled with safe space for experiences of suffering to speak and a diverse group of participants, facilitated unique collaborative reasoning and thinking, resulting in nuanced analysis consistent with the lived experience of our members. This resulting analysis was often critical.

As our group was made up of members engaged in the world, attempting to be agentic, our discussion often led to the question “what can we do about it?” Our undertaking was both critical and productive. This is notably distinct from any law school class I’ve yet been involved in, where productive recommendations generally address only breaches of *Stare Decisis*.<sup>12</sup>

The emphasis on productive, and activist, work was not so much a shaking element for me, as I have spent a fair amount of time with communities who incline toward improving situations. Rather, Wahkohtowin’s shaking element was the radical democratic sentiment embodied in those with lived experience and their allies gathering together to think about solutions and set about building the type of world we endeavor to live in. Such collaboration rarely occurs in either law school or activist circles.

### **Conclusion**

Wahkohtowin raised issues of class, race, gender, oppression, and colonization, which are pressing and troubling in our times. These axes of oppression and identity are both historically contingent and deeply pertinent to what it means to be a human living in Saskatchewan in the present. These questions must be wrestled with (West, 2004, p. 217). They are fundamental to understanding one's self and one's place within history.

I was confronted with dark parts of myself that I am often unconscious of, including Eurocentric, patriarchal, and elitist dispositions. This means my fight for anti-racism, feminism, and democracy must also take place within me. I have a lot of work to do, if I am to be the

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<sup>12</sup> *Stare Decisis* is the Latin phrase for the legal doctrine of “precedent.”

type of human I would like to be. This acknowledgment does not bar me from working for systemic change; rather, it increases the impetus for me to fight for these things. Wahkohtowin caused me to explore the wilderness inside of me. This was a rare, precious experience of Paideia.

### About the Author:

**Dan LeBlanc** is a union-side labour lawyer in Regina. He also works alongside prisoners—mostly trying to get them out of solitary confinement. At the time of writing, Dan was a law student at the University of Saskatchewan. Email: dan@nordalleblanc.ca

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# Exchanges



## Exchanges

In the *Exchanges*, we present conversations with scholars and practitioners of community engagement, responses to previously published material, and other reflections on various aspects of community-engaged scholarship meant to provoke further dialogue and discussion. We invite our readers to offer in this section their own thoughts and ideas on the meanings and understandings of engaged scholarship, as practiced in local or faraway communities, diverse cultural settings, and various disciplinary contexts. We especially welcome community-based scholars' views and opinions on their collaboration with university-based partners in particular and on engaged scholarship in general.

### Community-University Partnerships for Social Justice: An Interview with Joan Kuyek

In this section, co-editor of this issue **Nancy Van Styvendale** interviews **Joan Kuyek**, an Ontario-based social and environmental justice activist with nearly fifty years of experience as a community organizer and educator. Joan has been involved in a wide range of projects, including Better Beginnings, Better Futures (as Founding Program Coordinator), which develops programming for children and families in a low-income neighbourhood in Sudbury; MiningWatch Canada (as founding National Coordinator), an organization that works with community interests to educate the public about and influence policy on mining practices; and, most recently (as Chair), the GottaGo! campaign seeking action toward a network of public toilets in Ottawa. She was shortlisted for Samara's Everyday Political Citizen of the Year ("EPCitizen") Award in 2015, which nationally recognizes citizens who are participating in Canadian democracy by enriching public life in the country. In addition to her book *Community Organizing: A Holistic Approach* (2011), she has contributed a co-authored piece on the Northeastern Ontario Women's Conference to the collection *Changing Lives: Women in Northern Ontario* (1996), has authored several digital publications on mining economies and mining waste, and has also published on the impacts of mining on women's health in *Canadian Woman Studies* (Fall 2003/Winter 2004). In 1995, she received an Honourary Doctorate of Social Work from Laurentian University for her community activities. Currently, she teaches at the School of Social Work at Carleton University in Ottawa.

Drawing, in particular, on Joan's rich history working with universities and researchers on community-based projects, the interview discusses the realities, challenges, and benefits of such community-university partnerships, including the more specific experience of working with faculty and students involved in community service-learning (CSL).

**Nancy Van Styvendale:** Hi Joan, it's an honour to speak with you today. Perhaps you could begin by sharing a bit about how you first got involved in community-university partnerships.

**Joan Kuyek:** I started out in community work in the mid-1960s when I was part of a Student Union for Peace Action project called the Kingston Community Project. That project worked closely with people from the university. It was in the low-income communities. We raised our own money to do it and we worked with activists in the university who wanted to change the way the university was set up, or how the power worked there, and who wanted to make it available to the people who weren't of the class that ended up in the university.

One of the projects we worked on was trying to change the Landlord and Tenant Act. In doing that, we—"we" being the Kingston Community Project and what became the Association for Tenants' Action Kingston—had a lot of back-and-forth between university colleagues and ourselves, including drafting a bylaw for presentation to city council and working on rent control. We were very much colleagues working together to make these changes happen. There wasn't a sense that this was a university-paid-for project. I don't think any of the people we were working with were actually paid by the university or by a grant. They did it because they believed in it. That's informed how I look at a lot of things.

**Nancy:** Could you say more about why you do this work with universities? What are your personal motivations, or the motivations of the organizations or groups you've worked with?

**Joan:** The first question I always have about community engagement or community-university partnerships is: why are we doing this? What values is it based on? I think that's often missing in the discussion about community-university partnerships. "Community" is a word that can mean anything. Often, it's used to camouflage differences in class, race, or gender. Certainly, it doesn't, in and of itself, talk to the issues of how power is distributed in a neighbourhood. It can mean a locality, it can mean a group of people with similar interests, and it can mean a neighbourhood. There's a whole lot of unpacking that has to happen to make any of this work.

The same thing is true about the university. The university is an institution that replicates power relationships in society. Most work that's done at universities is not to empower grassroots people, it's to serve elites. University people who want to involve themselves in social change face enormous obstacles, from getting money, to getting tenure, to being able to speak as they want to their students.

**Nancy:** Do you feel like that question of "why?" isn't asked as much as it should be?

**Joan:** I don't think it's ever asked. Or, a lot of people ask "why?" but it's never the presenting

question at the beginning. Everybody has good motivations. It's just that the discussion of power relationships, particularly in the university, is not explicit, and if you don't make it explicit, then it's hidden, and it operates in all sorts of ways we don't expect.

**Nancy:** What are your observations, then, about the ways in which the university works with or engages community and community partners? Are there strengths or weaknesses to these approaches?

**Joan:** One thing that often happens is you usually have fairly senior academics involved in developing the community partnerships because those are the people who can get the money, through SSHRC [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council] or elsewhere. They have to find money to do these projects, so the project gets shaped by the funder.

For example, with SSHRC, it's really about providing jobs for graduate students, to be quite frank. SSHRC-funded projects provide status for senior academics and jobs for graduate students. There are wonderful community-based SSHRC projects, but the academics who do them are up against enormous opposition of various kinds to make them happen. There are the accounting systems that don't easily get money to community groups unless they are a registered charity. The graduate students aren't paid enough. As an academic, you have to publish, and it has to be in a peer-reviewed academic journal. The work being done in the community is then written up in a language and form that the neighbourhood doesn't even necessarily understand or see. The pressures on academics, which you'd know really well, are enormous these days. To do a project well that isn't part of the core mandate of the university is incredibly difficult.

One of the projects I was involved with for years was Better Beginnings, Better Futures in Ontario. I was an activist in Sudbury, where we got one of the Better Beginnings projects in partnership with Laurentian [University]. It was a community-university partnership funded by the government of Ontario. The Ontario government chose, through competition, eleven disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Ontario to measure the effectiveness of community-based early intervention (i.e. programming to compensate for poverty and other disadvantages) with children who were either in the 0-4 or 4-8 category, and they planned to do a 25-year longitudinal study of the impact of these interventions. I was the Program Coordinator in the community who had to put the project together.

It was a really useful project, and it went along quite swimmingly until Mike Harris got elected and they cancelled the research component of the program. The results were still good, and there were all sorts of things that we learned from that experience. The parents were deeply involved in designing what would happen. The researchers did annual interviews with the parents of the kids, and the children went through a development measuring standard, so it was all done very respectfully. The parents loved having the research happen.

The place where there was the most tension was that the academics involved were under enormous pressure to show results from the research before we were ready. We

constantly battled over the ability of the neighbourhood to take the project where we wanted it to go and over the requirements of the funders. That was difficult. For example, the kids got older. People wanted to be working with pre-teens. But there was no money for pre-teens, and in the neighbourhood, the fact that the project was for 4-8-year-olds didn't make much sense.

There was also some tension over publications about the neighbourhood, although most people in the community didn't even know it was happening. That was fairly restricted to those of us who were more aware of what was going on. And there were a lot of problems around whose time got used. Although I thought the research was important, the demands of trying to run a community-based project with almost no money and a huge staff in that situation were so great that I ended up resenting almost every minute I had to spend discussing research objectives with the university. I think that often happens.

I hated feeling that way, but I did. I'd have a meeting with the academics and they'd want to discuss details and get us involved because we were supposed to help shape the research. I didn't even understand what they were talking about half the time, and I teach at the university as a contract instructor. I'm not ignorant, I just didn't have the interest in the details of the research that they did. I found that with other projects, too. The things we're interested in are different. And as the researchers came to be under so much pressure and the research looked like it was going to be cut, they wanted us to advocate for the research, which was another pressure. And we knew the only way to get money for the community was through the research.

**Nancy:** In one of the community-based projects I'm involved in, we struggle with knowing that if we're going to get money for the project, it's going to be research money. But what we really need is money for our program first. That's the most important thing for us.

**Joan:** I'm sure it is, but you know that you can't move it there. There's also the issue of community partners getting paid in a timely fashion. Community groups can't wait for months for money. And the sources of funding for politically charged community groups are particularly limited. It's hard for anybody doing any kind of social and community service, but if you're trying to do anything that involves political change and you can't get a charitable number, you're screwed. Grant money can be paid to a charitable partner or an individual, but not to a community group that isn't incorporated. You won't get money anywhere. That's a huge issue in these partnerships.

I worked for a legal clinic in Sudbury for seven years as a community legal worker. There were a number of projects we tried to do to help welfare recipients, injured workers, and low-income tenants through the university at that time. The legal clinic had charitable status, thank God, and was able to sponsor projects. We'd get student placements, but at the legal clinic, a placement was not a great idea because we had so little time. I had to manage 150 case files and a community-organizing file, plus I was expected to supervise any placements we got. If they made a mistake, it was really serious.

You had to be watching them all the time, because even though they might be really good, you didn't know that until you had supervised them. The time commitment to look after a placement was just too dangerous for us. We couldn't do it.

**Nancy:** Yes, that's an important issue. From a community perspective, what are some other limitations or benefits to working with students in CSL or other community-engaged learning contexts?

**Joan:** The same thing happened when I came to Ottawa in 1999 as the founding national coordinator of MiningWatch Canada. We took on some student placements, but we had to be careful that they had a discreet project that we might end up not using later on. We couldn't integrate them into the work of the organization until we had the finished product in our hands because it was too dangerous. We had to fact-check everything because if they made mistakes, the industry would go after us and we could lose all our credibility. MiningWatch Canada does take placements now, but generally, the students work on discreet projects with other students, and they are supervised carefully by a professor we know and trust.

With GottaGo!, we don't have any staff. We don't have an office. We're just a gang of people [working to establish a network of public toilets in Ottawa] who really want to see this happen. We've had good experiences with students, but we don't care as much if they make a mistake. We've had wonderful students who, in fact, pushed things way ahead. The quality of the student made a huge difference. But it was sort of the luck of the draw.

**Nancy:** Why do you think community partners and organizations get involved, then, with student placements?

**Joan:** Talking about GottaGo!, there's research we need done that we don't have time to do ourselves. It's like having another volunteer for six months who is dedicated to this and has some skills. It can really expand the base of knowledge. It can get you access to people who have the ability to look information up or to do literature reviews. We get some young people interested in the issue, which matters by itself. They get excited and go back to the university and talk to everyone about the need for public toilets. That's worth it in terms of sharing knowledge and building energy. I would like to think that it will shift how they look at the world. For young people who have done placements at MiningWatch, their understanding of extractivism is deeply shifted by these projects. When you're trying to build a social movement, having more people thinking about justice, peace, and integrity creation is worth it. But the price that's paid is pretty enormous sometimes.

**Nancy:** That resonates with what I've heard from community partners—it's about providing students with an opportunity to learn about an organization or an issue, and building energy, like you said.

**Joan:** It's wonderful. At Better Beginnings, we'd take students from diverse backgrounds because we wanted to make sure that the kids in the program saw their own diversity represented. It was important that there be lots of diversity in the staff, and where we were lacking diversity, student placements often made up for it. We would also take students who lived in the neighbourhood we were working in over anybody else. It enabled us to bring in neighbourhood people that we wouldn't have otherwise. A lot of the students who took social work courses were mature adults, and so we could bring one of the moms in as a placement student, and that was great.

You get some great students, but you can also get some terrible students; they're not interested in learning or their attitudes to people are just terrible. At Better Beginnings, we took a lot of placements because working with kids was something everybody thought they could do. But for some students, this wasn't really a field they should be working in, and we had very limited staff to deal with them. There were some really hair-raising moments.

**Nancy:** One of the things I've found, in that regard, is that students don't have the necessary training in the ethics of working in community contexts. They need to consider the ethical implications of their actions in the community, and when they don't, it can lead to some pretty hairy situations. What sort of training or preparation do you think students need?

**Joan:** One problem is that the placements are six months, if you're lucky. Most of the time, they're two and a half. That's really not long enough. In the length of time that students have in the community, I don't know how you'd do that kind of preparation or training without doubling the staff of the community organization. I think the only way for students to get the training is on the ground. And given how absolutely stressed most community organizations are, I don't know how they do that better, or if some kind of orientation is important, or if having a mentoring relationship with a key volunteer or a staff person would help.

**Nancy:** Do you have thoughts on journaling or other reflective tools that students use to gain critical perspective?

**Joan:** I'm not sure how I feel about journaling. I want to know what the prof is going to be reading in those journals if the students are journaling about what we're doing. There's a disturbing power relationship there, actually, in terms of community groups. I'm not asking the student to journal about their relationship with their prof. When I was supervising one student, I found myself thinking, "God, I wonder what she's saying about me," because I didn't know her prof very well.

Often the students are under pressure to do their journaling because that's how they get marked. One student we had was blocking on the journaling. There was nothing we

could do about it. She had some kind of trauma about writing down what she was thinking and feeling about stuff. Sometimes, students' whole lives are being challenged by what they're seeing in the community. Some of them get triggered by what they're dealing with, too. It's difficult.

**Nancy:** On the other hand, sometimes students have difficulty finding something to write about. CSL instructors often assume that students need to be pushed out of their comfort zones, but what if that doesn't fit with what the community organization needs or has asked them to do? I had one student, for example, who was tasked with fixing computers at an organization. It was really useful for the community, but it didn't give him a lot of fodder for critical reflection. So there can be a tension, I think, between what the CSL model asks for and what the needs of the community are.

**Joan:** Yeah, that's a big one. Sometimes what community groups need isn't community-service people. They need technical people: engineers, geomaticians, computer experts, plumbers. The best student I ever worked with was a Geomatics student. She did a map of where all the municipally owned public toilets were in Ottawa and put them on GIS coordinates. And then we introduced her to the [city] councillor who was supporting us, and he ended up hiring her to do the mapping for the city. She was just extraordinary: she cared about the project, she fought for it, and she did a great job. Sometimes language skills can be very useful, too. Somebody who speaks Arabic or somebody who speaks Chinese can be crucial to an organization.

**Nancy:** This leads into my last question: how could community service-learning or other types of community-campus engagement be done in a way that is most beneficial to communities? Is there anything you would recommend?

**Joan:** We need to think about the long-term repercussions of these partnerships on the community. When I lived in Sudbury, there was a nine-month strike against the major mining company, Inco. There was a huge university project that was observing what was going on, writing things up, and doing interviews. There was a lot of engagement by these academics who cared about what was going on. But they were observing everything. They were observing the Wives Supporting the Strike meetings. They were observing union meetings. It's now a huge archive at Laurentian [University]. I don't think a single working person in the community has ever read that archive. But I know who does read it: it's the companies and other academics. There is now a record of everything we did to win that strike. That's concerning, because the information describing a struggle and how people organize themselves is freely available to the very people who will need to be opposed again in the future. That is disturbing in terms of what is being learned from communities and where that information goes.

**Nancy:** How can we guard against this kind of exploitation?

**Joan:** There are times when organizing groups should just say no to researchers and students, quite frankly, because holding onto the data isn't enough. It's not enough to just say, "We want the data." They need to say, "You can't do the study." I'm conscious of the power relationships that underlie all this. We desperately need the knowledge and training and analysis that comes out of university. We need it in the language and form we can use and understand. We need the students. But the price is sometimes just too high. I'm always trying to figure out how we get access to what the academy has that would work for us and how we keep from reproducing those power relationships in our communities. It's not easy. I think there's a real question about what we do and how we do it.

And underlying it all, again, is why are we doing it? In my mind, I think: whose side are you on? Are you on the side of the huge corporate forces of death and of the elites? In a province like Saskatchewan, are you on the side of the oil and the pharmaceutical and the agro-industrial complex? Or are you on the side of the Earth and the waters and the people? Because it is definitely a battle.

### About the Contributors

**Joan Kuyek** is a life-long community organizer and adult educator. The founding National Co-ordinator of MiningWatch Canada from 1999-2009, she continues to work for communities affected by mining. She is the author of *Community Organizing: A Holistic Approach* (2011), and a number of other books and publications. Email: joankuyek@sympatico.ca

**Nancy Van Styvendale** is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Native Studies (UofA) who researches in the fields of Indigenous North American Literatures; Indigenous carceral writing; and community-engaged learning.

## Exchanges

In the *Exchanges*, we present conversations with scholars and practitioners of community engagement, responses to previously published material, and other reflections on various aspects of community-engaged scholarship meant to provoke further dialogue and discussion. We invite our readers to offer in this section their own thoughts and ideas on the meanings and understandings of engaged scholarship, as practiced in local or faraway communities, diverse cultural settings, and various disciplinary contexts. We especially welcome community-based scholars' views and opinions on their collaboration with university-based partners in particular and on engaged scholarship in general.

Below, **Sarah Buhler** and **Nancy Van Styvendale**, two of the co-editors of this special issue, talk to **Phaedra Hitchings, Chantelle Johnson, and Stan Tu'Inukuafe**, who are three community-based educators and partners of university CSL projects in Saskatoon. The participants introduce and situate their connections to community service-learning and discuss the challenges and opportunities of community service-learning and partnering with universities from their perspectives. Phaedra, Chantelle and Stan sat down with Sarah and Nancy at the University of Saskatchewan's Community Engagement Office located at Station 20 West, a community enterprise centre in Saskatoon. In the exchange, the participants introduce themselves and their longstanding involvement with CSL projects and university partnerships. They engage in a critical and wide-ranging conversation about the benefits and challenges of partnering and working with universities from their perspectives and experiences in the field.

### **Conversations on the Challenges and Opportunities of Community Service-Learning with Phaedra Hitchings, Chantelle Johnson, and Stan Tu'Inukuafe in conversation with Sarah Buhler and Nancy Van Styvendale**

**Nancy Van Styvendale:** Please introduce yourselves and your connections to community service-learning.

**Chantelle Johnson:** I am the Executive Director at CLASSIC (Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City), which is a community legal clinic here in Saskatoon that provides legal services to people who are living on low incomes. We provide experiential learning opportunities for Law students and also some Social Work and Political Science



**Chantelle Johnson at her desk in CLASSIC**

the clinic that are more systemic in nature than individual client files. Our Social Work students float between the systemic work and the individual client file work on the walk-in advocacy clinic side. And the Political Science students do lots of research and writing to assist our work.

**Phaedra Hitchings:** I'm Phaedra Hitchings and I'm the Regional Coordinator for Frontier College for Saskatchewan.<sup>1</sup> Frontier College is Canada's original literacy organization – it was founded in 1899. We work in places where there are barriers to accessing literacy and numeracy supports, and today that means places like shelters, remote communities, prisons, etc. All of our programs in Saskatoon are within the core neighbourhoods or with people who are currently incarcerated. And then, in Saskatchewan, we also work with summer literacy camps all over the province.



**Phaedra Hitchings promoting literacy and numeracy programs in an event in Saskatchewan**

come from Medicine, Pharmacy, and Arts and Science more generally. We work with lots of people who are interested in going into Education or Social Work and are using

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Phaedra is no longer in this role, having assumed the position of executive director for the Saskatchewan Literacy Network.

community service-learning through their classes to help towards that goal.

I should say that before I worked with Frontier College, I worked at the University of Saskatchewan as a community-engaged learning specialist and community service-learning program coordinator for about eight years. So, I have experience working with community service-learning from that programming side, institutionally.

**Stan Tu’Inukuafe:** I am a social worker at Oskayak High School, Saskatoon’s Indigenous High School. I also work, in different capacities, with an organization called STR8 UP. STR8 UP provides support to men and women who are leaving gangs. In both positions, my experience working with the university is supervising graduate students or undergrad students who are interested in social work primarily, but also undergrad students who come from institutions like Saskatchewan Polytechnic. I have also worked closely with university partners to develop and teach a community-based class called Wahkohtowin, which brings together university students, Oskayak High School students, and members of STR8 UP in a class that focuses on issues relating to justice.



**Stan Tu'Inukuafe in conversation with community partners and students during Wahkohtowin**

**Nancy:** Thank you all. Next, I was wondering if we could talk about motivations—either personal motivations for doing this sort of work with students, or if it’s more of an organizational mandate, then perhaps you could speak to the motivations of your organization.

**Stan:** For me, the motivation is at different levels. From my perspective as a school social worker, my motivation to take practicum students is that they bring fresh ideas. They’re eager to learn, so they energize you when you’ve been involved in the work for a long period of time. From my perspective within STR8 UP, one reason we are engaged with the university is that it is important for our members (who are former members of street gangs) to see that they have a contribution to share that no one else is able to share. There’s a level of knowledge there, and they’re able to see that. From this perspective, we are helping to educate members of the university community, and it also indirectly raises the profile of STR8 UP. Primarily, those are my motivations to be involved, because I believe that the university plays a role in the community, and at different levels.

**Sarah Buhler:** Thanks Stan. Chantelle, what about you? What are the motivations behind

### CLASSIC's involvement in CSL?

**Chantelle:** With respect to the organizational component of the question, at CLASSIC, we have a dual-pronged mandate. Providing training and experiential learning opportunities for students is part of our mandate. For me, personally, when I initially came to the work, I came for the social justice part of our mandate. But I completely agree with Stan that the infusion of energy and excitement that the students bring to the work that we do is really energizing. It's sometimes also exhausting. But I think, over time, we are changing the way our alumni view the law and want to practice law. We know this because it's the alumni who are our number one source of people who want to volunteer in the legal advice clinic, who want to be on our board or on committees helping, and who want to do pro bono work in some other way.

**Sarah:** One thing I hear you saying is that it's not just about getting students to help with the immediate work at hand, but it's a larger vision for transforming, in your case, the legal profession more broadly. So it's a way of getting at that larger social change.

**Chantelle:** And that's the really cool thing that you see with the interdisciplinary nature of the students. When you see the Social Work students and the Law students talking about how interconnected their work is, and when you see them have those "Aha!" moments, it's brilliant. It's great to see when they figure out how that kind of interconnection should be the way of the future.

**Phaedra:** There are so many things that I can relate to in what I've heard already. To add to it, "Why work with universities in particular, compared to other academic institutions?" Universities, I think, perhaps more than some other post-secondary institutions, have fewer opportunities for practical application of what students are learning in theory. I really believe in community service-learning as a way to help students test out what they're learning, and then they can decide: "This is really something I want to do with my life," or "I love this work, but I don't actually believe in this kind of model. I want to help change it," or sometimes they find out this isn't something they want to spend their lives doing. I think that's all really valuable. And I do think that's a gap for universities—they are great at many things, and there are some practical opportunities, but I believe community service-learning complements these greatly.

For Frontier College, all of the ongoing programs are done with mostly student volunteers, and, in Saskatchewan, most of those student volunteers are through community service-learning programs. It makes a lot of sense for what we do. CSL (as opposed to just volunteering) is helpful because it provides structure and consistency for the students, the learning partners, and the organization.

Having students involved also raises awareness about our organization, but, more importantly, awareness of literacy issues and how literacy impacts society and everybody

in it, not just people who have lower literacy levels.

**Nancy:** I am wondering if you can speak to the CSL model and whether it provides something useful to your work, as opposed to the volunteer model? I am thinking in particular of the emphasis in CSL on critical reflection and intentional learning—where students are actively thinking about what they’re doing in the community and the relationships and the work that they’re engaging in.

**Phaedra:** In my experience, I think there could be even more emphasis on critical reflection. The reflection piece is a tough one to build in. I have often met with students to help them reflect on their experiences and what they are learning. I think it helps that I have an idea of the learning goals from a university perspective. I find it interesting when students test out the theories they have learned in the classroom. For example, a student might challenge something we are doing based on something they learned in class, but then this gives me an opportunity to explain why we are structured the way we are and why we do things the way we do. I can explain the real-life constraints that might be preventing us from doing something that theory would tell us we should be doing. It’s an interesting exercise sometimes in battling idealism. Not that idealism is bad, but you have to find a balance between theory and the realities on the ground.

**Chantelle:** We totally see that—especially with the students who come with a social justice bent and they get so discouraged by the systems, and then we say, “But you need to work within the systems that we do have.”

**Phaedra:** I had one student who was angry at the injustice she was seeing. And I encouraged her: “Ask those questions! Figure out what it is that’s bothering you. Figure out where your role is in that.” She was going into Pharmacy. I challenged her: “Figure out what role you can play in making it so that you’re not part of that system that made it so that this happened.”

**Nancy:** It sounds like as community partners you are doing a lot of what I would call “emotional labour” with students.

**Phaedra:** I think so. Not with all of them, but definitely.

**Chantelle:** I have realized that too. There is a need to figure out how to balance that work with students with the work of keeping our doors open!

**Sarah:** Have you had to handle problematic situations with students?

**Phaedra:** Those can be very challenging situations, especially if a student thinks that they

know more than they do. And sometimes students do not value the front-lines wisdom of our participants, of the staff in our partner organizations, or me. There can be resistance to that knowledge—that it’s not valuable, that it didn’t come from a textbook.

**Stan:** Yeah. For example, sometimes we get a student who has gone through their own struggle with addictions. They sometimes are rigid in their beliefs because what worked for them must work for everyone, and they’re not open to new ideas. They approach others through the lens of, “You have to go do this,” whatever “this” might be. They don’t realize that someone else could heal in a different way, or it might take a little longer. So we look for flexibility in the students we work with.

**Sarah:** This conversation connects with our next question, which is: what are your observations about the ways in which the university works with or engages community and community partners? I’m thinking in terms of the expectations that are either spoken or unspoken, or that you take on as part of this work, including the emotional labour.

**Stan:** In my experience, in a few projects I have been involved with, I have identified a need and approached the university. And this meant I was trying to figure out which department would be the right fit for what it is that we were trying to achieve. But my other experience is getting approached by the university or university students who need something, like to fulfill a requirement for example. And so even though I have experience working with the university, I still think there’s an unequal level of power. It often feels like the university will work with us as long as it is on their terms.

**Chantelle:** It’s incredibly bureaucratic.

**Stan:** Yeah, on their terms, right? As much as I think people at the university want to work with the community, I still think, today, it’s on the university’s terms. It’s not really an equal, level playing field.

**Chantelle:** Oh, I completely agree.

**Phaedra:** I would say something very similar, too. We go to the university. It’s very, very rare that the university goes to the community. Very rarely would university partners come and ask what we might need. There is not as much organized appreciation or consultation with community partners, in my experience, as there could be. I think there’s a lot of power that could come out of being in the same room with each other, when all partners involved in a CSL program are together and able to share. I see this with our collaboration with the College of Pharmacy, for example.

**Chantelle:** And in my experience, there are different levels of engagement depending on

who you're dealing with on the university side. With a lot of the bureaucracies, it's on their terms. I think a lot of the assumptions are probably unintentional and based on different levels of privilege. CLASSIC is working on a memorandum of understanding with the law school now to try to better reflect the symbiotic relationship we have with them. It is also useful to have an understanding in place so that when there is turnover on either side, you have something that governs that relationship, no matter who the individuals at either of the organizations are.

**Nancy:** One thing that seems to me to come up all the time is the resources issue and how community partners are often implicitly expected to give time and resources to keep CSL programs running. Are there observations you would like to share about that?

**Phaedra:** I think part of it is that on the university side there is sometimes an assumption that the organizations are the only ones benefitting from CSL. It can take convincing that the university benefits greatly from this partnership also. That part is missing for a lot of people. I think there's a lack of awareness that it is work for the community organizations as well. Yes, there's benefit, but I value that I'm contributing to university student education, also. If I didn't, I probably would not spend as much time with students, especially the ones who have presented challenging situations to us. Because it is part of the education that these students are getting, it's a different kind of endeavour on our part [than working with non-CSL volunteers, for example]. I would not put in the effort I do working with students if I didn't believe in helping the university education of those students.

**Chantelle::** The reciprocity is rarely a consideration, and that's that big assumption again.

**Stan:** My experience with the university is that when a department calls us to do a presentation about our program—where our members tell their stories—sometimes I'm hesitant because I wonder what the purpose is. Are we just coming in there to showcase individuals and you just want to hear it, feel good, and then that's it? Some professors just like that one-off type of stuff. Like, do a little hour, we're gone, we're done. Usually I say no to those requests, unless I know that their students are going to do something with the information.

**Chantelle:** In our case, our organization's funding for the client side of our mandate is subsidizing the experiential learning side of the work we do. There's been the assumption that we're getting a sheer benefit, and there's been the assumption that we absolutely need the students. But in fact we are providing experiential learning, and the people who work at CLASSIC are not only good lawyers, but good educators. Working with students is a lot of work if you're going to do it well. There's a lot of emotional support. And we've saved a lot of people in law school who absolutely hated law school and then found CLASSIC as their reprieve. It's interesting.

**Nancy:** The next question is about the benefits of working with students—I know we’ve already talked about energy and new ideas—as well as the limitations.

**Phaedra:** All of the critiques are not to discount the fact that it is beneficial to have community service-learning partnerships. It is beneficial to have the students be a part of the work that we’re doing. That’s still true. I don’t know why we would do it, if it wasn’t the case. Even if the person doesn’t stick around with us beyond their community service-learning programming, that’s just fine. They have more awareness about what we do and about literacy and how they can integrate that into what they’re doing, or want to do in the future, and that’s wonderful.

**Stan:** For us, it’s very beneficial, and we sometimes see long-term relationships with students who have been involved and a long-term impact. The impact is not always immediate.

**Chantelle:** In terms of benefits, I agree that the longer-term changes are key. We’re now seeing people who have been through our programs and who think differently about their professional area as a result of their time with us. Overall, despite the limitations or frustrations, the benefits tip the balance.

**Phaedra:** In terms of the limitations of working with students, one of the frustrations is that we don’t always know the goals of the community-service learning course. We don’t always even know that they’re approaching us as a community service-learning student.

**Nancy:** Are you finding that instructors are saying that as part of their course, students need to get a certain number of hours in the community, and then students just go and contact organizations themselves?

**Chantelle:** Yes, and I think especially right now, because even if it’s not a requirement, it’s a recommendation [for the course]. If you have an economy like we have right now where it’s really hard for people to get jobs, they want to do absolutely everything they can to put them at an advantage.

**Phaedra:** And it’s not a bad thing to have people join for reasons that are less than totally altruistic. People can still learn from the experience, and we have our screening and training processes to help make sure it’s still a good fit. But communication from the university is really important. I sometimes get students and I don’t know what class they’re in or what the goals of that particular course are.

**Chantelle:** I know. With some students and certain volunteer opportunities it feels like volunteer voyeurism or something, where they just, like, land in.

**Phaedra:** Another limitation is that sometimes students aren't aware of the reality of what community work can look like—that sometimes something is cancelled and you don't get to do your placement that day, and it has nothing to do with them. It's just sometimes that happens. Or something comes together very last minute.

**Chantelle:** Yeah, that fluidity.

**Phaedra:** Yeah. And that really throws a lot of students. And lots of times, too, they can take it as a fault, either in something that they've done or something that we've done or something that the community service-learning programming has done or not done. But this is just the way work happens in our context.

**Sarah:** That leads into our last question, which is how can community service-learning and other community-engaged learning be done in a way that's most beneficial to communities? Do you have ideas or recommendations or things that you've experienced that have been a really positive way that the university has worked with you?

**Phaedra:** For sure. If programs or instructors have a very purposeful intent as to who the partners are, that can make it so that it's a lot easier to have those conversations about what's expected, what's happening, if something's going weird. Same, I imagine, when you [the student] have somebody to contact, you know what's happening. Even if the contact person at the organization changes, you have somewhere to go.

**Chantelle:** I think communication is so important. And sometimes the community-based organizations need to be clearer about their capacity and more communicative about how many students they can take.

**Stan:** Sometimes you get a student and it's a lot more work than you anticipated. We developed an intake form for students to fill out and send to us in advance. That's a process that allows us to filter people, because the questions are designed to see if they're a right fit for the organization. That's how we've adapted. But at the same time, schools sometimes get upset because we're not taking their students. And we give them the reasons, but they're still not happy.

**Chantelle:** It would help to have someone at the university to act as a liaison.

**Stan:** Exactly.

**Phaedra:** I'm sure it's also challenging from the side of the instructors who are trying to navigate a system—a large system. From my experience in community service-learning, I also think tenure-track faculty are often discouraged from getting involved in community

projects, and so that's why the majority of community service-learning happens with sessional lecturers and very new instructors. And then, if those people leave, the program usually goes away, unless there's a coordinating body that helps to keep it going.

I think it would be worthwhile to have a more dedicated conversation amongst community partners and university people to discuss the common things that we need to work well together. There's enough commonality across the community service-learning placements that I think this could be done. This would allow us to say to students, "If you're going to be in a community service-learning placement, here are things you need to know." It's something that's worth considering if CSL is going to be a model that's still pursued, but I recognize that there are educational trends amongst universities and community service-learning is not immune to that ebb-and-flow of popularity.

**Nancy:** In some of the conversations I've had with community partners over the years, there is a sense that standardization is a tricky thing in these relationships...

**Chantelle:** You need to evaluate it and it needs to be applied with discretion, but some parameters would be great.

**Nancy:** Because a lot of this work happens in a very informal way, which can have its benefits and can allow us to work in ways that are not constricted by the bureaucratic structures of the university, but then there also needs to be accountability and consistency.

**Chantelle:** You need a happy medium because, conversely, having autonomy is really good, and not being rigidly structured, but then if something does come up where you don't have anything to govern you, you actually have to spend a whole bunch of time maneuvering the bureaucracy anyhow.

**Stan:** What about personal relationships between community partners and university researchers or instructors? Do you have any comment on the role of relationships between people in the university and yourselves?

**Phaedra:** I think they are very, very key. Sometimes the institution does not understand the importance of this aspect. We need to build a culture of valuing those relationship-building practices rather than only focusing on "outcomes."

**Nancy:** With the continued corporatization of the university, there seems to be a shift away from that valuing of relationship building. There is a focus on outcomes and everything has to be quantified.

**Phaedra:** I think there is a strong push for this, to make limited funds go further, and to justify spending money where they do. It's hard to convince them that building relationships is in

the best interests of the business of the university.

**Stan:** I firmly believe that relationships are important. We need to know if we can trust the people we are working with. And that develops over time. That's the key: time.

**Chantelle:** I feel like the thread throughout our discussion today has actually been communication, trust—and that's all relational.

**Nancy:** That's a perfect note to end on. Thank you all for taking the time to meet with us today.

### About the Participants

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*Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning* is Canada's online, peer-reviewed, multi-disciplinary journal committed to profiling best practices in 'engaged scholarship' informed by community-academic partnerships in research, teaching and learning.

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- to promote and support reciprocal and meaningful co-creation of knowledge among scholars, educators, professionals and community leaders, in Canada and worldwide
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