The Development of Community-Engaged Scholars Through Course-Based Learning: A Student Perspective

Thomas Armitage and Leah Levac

ABSTRACT   This manuscript chronicles the development of three graduate students as community engaged scholars, from the perspective of one of the students. With the support of the course instructor, a student (Thomas) and the instructor (Leah) discuss students' development during their enrollment in a graduate course in community-engaged scholarship (CES) at the University of Guelph, a large comprehensive university in southwestern Ontario. Drawing from students' reflection papers and progress reports, this article highlights students' thoughts on communities' perceptions of scholars; differences and similarities between community-engaged scholarship and more traditional forms of social science research; and challenges and opportunities of collaboration. Data highlighting students' experiences with power relations, understandings of the need for adaptability within their respective partnerships, and acknowledgement of differences between community and academic roles in community-engaged research projects are also presented. Finally, the effects of large groups and imbalanced stakes on projects, and the influence of class-oriented timelines are discussed. The manuscript is written by, and from the perspective of Thomas Armitage, one of the students in the graduate course, in collaboration Leah Levac, the course instructor.

KEYWORDS   community engagement, student development; learning outcomes; course-based learning; CES reflections; community-engaged scholarship

The Development of Community-Engaged Scholars

Community-engaged scholarship (CES) "involves the researcher in a mutually beneficial partnership with the community and results in scholarship deriving from teaching, discovery, integration, application or engagement" (Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship, University of Guelph; adapted from Jordan, 2007). It aligns with concepts such as civic engagement, in which people and communities work together to improve the quality of life in a given community through the sharing of knowledge, skills, values and motivations (Ehrlich, 2000), but focuses explicitly on applying the tenets of scholarship, such as requiring a high level of disciplinary expertise, being replicable, and having significance (Diamond & Adam, 1993), to the work of social change.

A growing body of literature presents case study examples of community-engaged scholarship and focuses on the methodological and theoretical development of CES, but limited attention has been paid to students' perspectives on their development as community-

engaged (CE) scholars. Articles that focus on student learning and development tend to approach the topic from the perspective of the institution (i.e., the university) or the instructor. For example, Hollander (2011) and Saltmarsh (1996) explored how universities approached educating students on civic engagement and service learning, and Terkla *et al.* (2007) investigated how students' perspectives on community engagement changed as a result of participating in CES initiatives. Stocking and Cutforth (2006), Rosing and Hofman (2010), and Chapdelaine and Chapman (1999) looked at instructors' approaches to CE pedagogy; and Furco (2010), Jung (2011), and Ash *et al.* (2005) assessed learning outcomes associated with CES projects. Reflections on learning outcomes and assessment through course-based community engagement also exist (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009), but these too tend to be written from the perspective of the researcher rather than the students being assessed.

In a recent article, Cutforth (2013), a tenured professor with over 18 years of experience undertaking CE research, presented an auto-ethnography of his own development as a community-engaged scholar, analyzing the motivations, influences, and experiences that have shaped his career. His article offers valuable insights into the development of CE scholars, and will be complemented by this manuscript, which focuses on the perspectives of graduate students in their initial stages of CE scholar training. To contribute to this growing field, the authors of this article ask, "What are the critical elements of training CE scholars from the perspective of students?", "What are key challenges that students face in the early stages of their training as CE scholars?", and "What are potential strategies for mitigating these challenges"?

Graduate Student Training in Community-Engaged Scholarship at the University of Guelph

The University of Guelph boasts a multi-faceted and internationally recognized CES community, emanating from its long tradition of rural extension work and community outreach, and more recently, from the work of the Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship (ICES), located in the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences. One of the many initiatives of ICES was the development of a graduate-level training course, conceived and developed by the Director of ICES and an established faculty member and administrator, and more recently offered by a new faculty member, an assistant professor of community engaged scholarship and collaborating author on this manuscript.

The course is designed to expose students to principles and processes, and methodological and theoretical orientations of CES, which are then applied in the design and implementation of a community-engaged research project. The course is part of a larger strategy aimed at filling the growing need for professionals who are dedicated to navigating complex university-community partnerships for the purpose of conducting scholarship aimed at addressing complex community challenges. Knowledge mobilization and dissemination are integral components of CES, and are highlighted as part of the graduate course. The course draws on the work of several scholars, including Minkler and Wallerstein (2008), whose comprehensive edited collection highlights a range of considerations related to community-based participatory research for health, including some of its challenges and opportunities. While the emphasis of the course at the University of Guelph is not on health, Minkler and Wallerstein offer a thorough overview of the historical and theoretical development of community-based participatory research (CBPR), as well as a clear indication of the origins and purpose of

the principles that guide CE research, making sections of the book particularly useful as foundational materials for training CE scholars.

The course, which has been offered four times under the direction of three different professors and staff members, has evolved to include the following learning outcomes: explain the principles and processes of CES; apply the principles and processes of CES in the design and implementation of an actual community-engaged research project; recognize and distinguish between community and academic roles in community-engaged research projects; develop and manage an equitable relationship with a community-based research partner; and practice knowledge mobilization and reciprocity by delivering a product that is usable by a community organization or other non-academic partner.

The opportunity to meet these learning outcomes is facilitated through a series of seminars offered every second week over the course of a 12-week term, and by pairing each of the students with a community partner organization with a short-term research need. Typically, each community partner has an established relationship with ICES[1], which helps to facilitate the process of identifying appropriate partners and projects with which students can engage. Once paired, students meet with their community partners to 'scope' the project. This includes discussing the terms of the arrangement and establishing reciprocity and responsibilities, project goals, the final product, and mutually agreeable timelines.

As part of the course, students were asked to complete reflection reports and progress reports that helped guide them in their development as CES scholars. In these reports, students were asked to set learning goals that complemented the course learning outcomes, and to reflect on their progress towards reaching their goals and the course learning outcomes. They were also responsible for completing an ethics application, and producing a final product of benefit to the community, as mutually agreed upon with the community partner.

Participants and Methods

Approximately twenty students have completed the CES graduate course at the University of Guelph since the course's inception. This paper draws on the reflection papers and progress reports of three of the students who were enrolled in the class in 2014, including Thomas, co-author of this paper. Students in the class came from several disciplinary backgrounds, including geography, political science, sociology, and family relations and human development, and were both masters and doctoral students. Over the years, including in 2014, more women than men have participated in the course; one man (Thomas) and two women students participated in this study.

The projects of the three students included in this study were diverse in topic and desired outcome, but in all cases, students worked with historically marginalized communities, including people living in low-income housing, and youth facing barriers to employment. Students' projects aligned with the core purposes of community-engaged scholarship, including solving complex problems, improving public policies, and encouraging or supporting local innovation, all while valuing local knowledge (Ochocka & Janzen, 2014). For this paper, students were recruited via email after final grades were submitted, and according to a protocol approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Guelph. The information letter sent to

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[1] Another critical function of ICES is to build and hold community relationships; this approach helps to facilitate more meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships and research outputs over the long-term.

students outlined the project and its purpose, and invited them to share the reflection reports and progress reports they submitted for grading at the end of the semester.

The findings are based on a thematic analysis of qualitative data gathered from the three participating students' reflection papers and progress reports. The important role of reflection in learning is well documented (see for example, Fink, 2003; Kolb, 1984; Zull, 2002). Students' reflection reports and progress reports (which are also necessarily reflective in nature) are thus valuable sources of data for considering students' perspectives on their own development as CE scholars. Students' reports highlighted specific experiences and examples encountered in their fieldwork and tied the experiences to aspects of the course, such as insights about CES gained through the course readings; knowledge gained about the community, organization, or research topic through seminar discussions; problems encountered or solved; and insights about CES gained through field work. For example, students reflected on Wallwork (2008) and Flicker et al.'s (2007) articles on community-based research ethics when considering how best to meaningfully engage with community participants, and how to reconcile university ethics protocols with communities' needs.

The authors read students' reflection papers and progress reports several times to search for similarities and differences in students' experiences. Following the creation of a preliminary coding scheme based both on the course learning outcomes and students' identified goals, students' writing was imported into NVivo so that codes could be applied across data. The authors examined students' experiences both in relation to their own learning goals, and in relation to the course learning outcomes. Within these categories, the authors identified sub-themes based on students' reflections.

Findings and Discussion

The students reflected on their development as CE scholars in relation to the course's five learning outcomes, and in relation to their own learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are addressed categorically, each with its own subthemes based on the ideas that emerged through their reflections. Their experiences with achieving their goals are considered in relation not only to course learning outcomes, but also to precedents set in the literature.

Learning Outcome 1. Explain the Principles and Processes of Community-Engaged Scholarship

Within student reflections related to the principles and processes of CES, they all discussed: (a) communities' perceptions of scholars and resulting methodological choices; (b) differences and similarities between CES and traditional forms of social science research; and (c) the challenges and opportunities of collaboration.

Communities' perceptions of scholars and resulting methodological choices. Students' experiences gave them a better understanding of historically-based tensions between academic institutions and community partners. Rubin *et al.* (2012) review the reputation of traditional research to reveal aspects that are perceived negatively: exploiting communities for personal gain; developing solutions that are not appropriate for the community leading to a waste of resources; leaving communities with the feeling that they are over-researched, coerced, or misled into participating; releasing data that the community considers sensitive; and releasing results in a format that is inaccessible to the community. It is these types of perceptions that the students felt they

needed to overcome to gain the trust of the communities with which they were working. One student experienced these negative sentiments first-hand, with distrust of academics leading to a loss of participants:

> Two of my interviewees expressed a strong distrust in, and lack of patience for, researchers. One of the interviewees was adamant on clarifying that this information was only to be used by the [community partner], whereas the other was not convinced that it would be and refused to share any information she felt would be taken and used inappropriately. Their past experiences had brought about resentment towards researchers that couldn't be dissolved by clarifying our adherence to ethics.

This experience exemplifies that intent alone—even when matched with a personal commitment to mutuality and adherence to university ethics protocols—cannot always overcome a community member's negative perceptions of research or researchers. One can claim the label of CE scholar and express a genuine commitment to mutually beneficial partnerships, but community members can remain distrusting because of the scholar's university affiliation. Knowing that such distrust may exist, and being prepared for resistance, is critical within CES. Methodological decisions can help to respond to these instances of distrust. For example, one student opted to use focus groups as the method of data collection because the dynamics of a focus group can shift the power away from the lone researcher and toward the larger group of participants (Wilkinson, 1998). This student's choice was additionally appropriate because there was a considerable age gap between the researcher and the participants. Power imbalances resulting from differences in age between an adult researcher and youth participants in a focus group setting can be partially alleviated through strength of numbers on the side of participants (Wilkinson, 1998). Another student noted that reflecting on perceptions of scholars and power dynamics prior to the data collection phase resulted in successful focus groups with no resistance from the participants living in low-income, even though they had expressed feelings of survey fatigue to the community partner in the past.

Differences and similarities between CES and traditional forms of social science research. One key difference between CES and traditional forms of social science research relates to meeting multiple interests. The challenge of meeting multiple community interests was a key learning point for the students. Not only was their work intended for a wider audience than their academic peers, but their work was not limited to a single partnership between the university and a community partner; rather, it required collaboration with a number of stakeholders to ensure a satisfactory outcome. One student noted:

> This [final product] intends to do more than just inform the public, but to gather a more diverse group of individuals and open up a space for further discussion. The [community partner] is planning to [disseminate the final product] with the intention of sparking community dialogue around the changing role of the [community partner]. Through this interactive process the [community partner] hopes to expand their understanding of community needs and desires so that they

integrate a wider range of community voices into their strategic planning.

Another student reflected on how the university is traditionally the place where knowledge is stored and accessed after projects are complete. In the case of the CES project, however, the data and results will be held by an organization affiliated with the community partner. The idea that the university must be the knowledge holder, and that the university-based researcher must be the expert, are common views that CES works to counter.

Students also noted similarities between traditional social science research approaches and CES. Perhaps more precisely, they noted instances where CES approaches are already integrated within some traditional social sciences. For example, the evolution of the partnership that grounds my (Thomas') Master's thesis research mirrors the development of my project for our CES class. In both cases, the research question evolved as a result of conversations between the community partner, my advisor, and me. Ultimately, both projects were scoped according to the time available (6 months for the course-based project and 20 months for the thesis project). The scope was determined through a series of in-person and telephone meetings. The final products to be delivered to the community partner were, in both cases, in line with the needs of the community, and included plain language documents and presentations to board members and interested community partner staff members. Both projects are in keeping with the shorter timelines Keller *et al.* (2006) indicate are often associated with CES and social-based action, as even 20 months is shorter than the time some researchers take to develop their particular bodies of scholarship. Other students in the course had similar reflections on how the CES experience differed from their expectations of traditional social science research in terms of the time allotted to the project.

Challenges and opportunities of collaboration. Community-engaged scholarship is called upon when a community recognizes a need for information, and approaches a university to collaborate on knowledge acquisition and mobilization (Onyx, 2008). Together, they determine the important questions to be asked, and the methods to be used to acquire and interpret data (Onyx, 2008). With this in mind, we each reflected on the value of the contributions from our community partners throughout the research process. In each case, we found the relationship to be reciprocal, with our efforts consistently being matched by the efforts of the community. One student reflected:

> The relationship that grew board members [from the community partner] who became involved in the project brought with them rich skill sets, including in research, [discipline]-based facilitation, effective communication, and project management. Although they brought ample experience to the table, they were appreciative and respectful of the skills that I could contribute to the process. They immediately recognized the skills, energy and resources that I could invest.

Each of our community partners contributed resources of one kind or another through the various research phases; partners' contributions were crucial to the development of the projects. Each project also encountered hurdles and roadblocks that required adjustments. For example, one student entered her/his partnership after work on the project had started, including with the adoption of a survey tool. The survey tool initially adopted by the community

partner was not fully tailored to the goals of the project, an issue that seemed to be overlooked because of the community partner's limited experience with survey-based data collection. This presented both a challenge and an opportunity for the student, who was able to offer guidance on the development of the survey, but who wanted to do so without being seen as trying taking over the project. Through a series of careful discussions, the student was able to highlight some potential improvements to the survey, and then had an opportunity to contribute to the project by developing a more tailored survey with input from the community partner. In another instance, one of the students noted how collaboration led to the participation of a group of people facing economic hardship:

> a challenge of participatory action research [is] local actors' reluctance to address experiences because of stigmatization. However, this reluctance did not appear to occur during my experience. The willingness of the [target] group members to share their perspectives and experiences is evident in the fact that the meeting was over twice as long as planned.

On further reflection, the student makes it clear that in this case, the participation of historically marginalized community members likely resulted because of their trust in the community partner organization, which had a reputation for being genuinely interested in the experiences of community members. Had the research not been conducted in collaboration with the community partner, it is likely that the members of the marginalized group would not have participated, which would have rendered the study unviable.

Because of the course readings and assignments leading up to the students' respective partnerships and fieldwork, they were anticipating these types of challenges. As a result, they were able to enhance their own trustworthiness by leveraging their relationships with their community partners. Having exposure to commonly noted challenges and benefits of CES also allowed them to be more critical of their own experiences as they were occurring, and enabled further depth in their reflection reports. For example, students' other observations were in keeping with Onyx's (2008) work, which makes note of several barriers that exist for communities trying to access university-based knowledge, including patent systems, inaccessible language, and technology.

Learning Outcome 2. Apply the Principles and Processes of Community Engaged Scholarship in the Design and Implementation of a Community-Engaged Research Project

To begin their projects, students received packages containing information about their community partners and the issue or issues the partners wanted to address through the research. The Manager of Community Engaged Learning from ICES accompanied each of the students to their first meetings with their community partners, during which they discussed project goals, roles, outcomes, and timelines. Given that the students were new to CES, the Manager's presence was valuable in ensuring that goals and outcomes were achievable, and that roles and timelines were clear and appropriate. The course instructor (Leah) then reviewed the resulting agreements and provided feedback. Perhaps because this process of designing a CES project was carefully managed and supervised, the students did not pay particular attention to this learning outcome in their reflections; however, the subject of flexibility during the implementation of the project was common in their reflections.

The willingness and ability to adapt to changing circumstances and new information was important in each of the projects. All three students encountered circumstances that required changes in the research approach and, as a result, amendments to project ethics protocols. In one case, the community partner, a partner organization, and the student reflected on the feasibility of reaching a particular demographic in the time available and ultimately realized that the target group needed to be changed. Two students needed to modify the recruitment process to accommodate the community partner's needs. One student summarized the project's fluidity accordingly:

> We realized the need to redesign our research methodologies to account for our time and resource constraints. This required us to submit a change request to the ethics board, and make necessary adjustments to the project proposal. This awareness and response to influential factors demonstrated our strong flexibility and dedication to the research process.

Participating students also recognized the need to be flexible with their time and responsibilities. As the projects progressed, students found themselves tasked with more responsibilities than they anticipated at the outset of the project. This issue is explored within the next learning outcome.

Learning Outcome 3. Recognize and Distinguish between Community and Academic Roles in Community-Engaged Research Projects

In the early weeks of the course, the instructor (Leah), through her own experiences with CES, discussed that researchers involved in community-based projects inevitably develop some attachment and sense of responsibility, not only to the success of the project, but also to the community itself. The students' experiences aligned with this claim. They all noted that they volunteered a considerable amount of time to the project outside of their scholarship responsibilities.

Due in part to the timelines imposed by integrating the CES projects into a university-based course, each of the students volunteered some of their time to their respective projects without the course acting as an incentive. In two cases, the project's goals were not met by the time the course was over, and in both situations the students continued working on the projects in the agreed-upon capacities established early in the project's lifecycle. In addition to continuing with the project after fulfilling the course requirements, there were instances where students felt like volunteers rather than researchers. For instance, after completing a preliminary literature review for the project, I (Thomas) felt as though I had become the main "knowledge holder" for the project. In turn, I felt my responsibilities in the project increase. There were several instances when I was asked to represent the project at conferences and community events. These requests made sense because of my knowledge of the community's needs and my understanding of how the project would unfold. I was best positioned to gather pertinent information from seminars and conversations with community members, and make connections with industry leaders for the purpose of developing promotional strategies, even though neither task was directly related to the scholarship components of my work. These activities were not unwelcome, as I had developed an affinity for the project and wanted to do anything within my capacity to ensure its success. Still, it is worth noting that this level of

engagement placed additional demands on my time and responsibilities as a student. Another student reflected on having done a lot of work outside the research component:

> My role in the organization took on the form of a volunteer more than of a traditional researcher. I attended the board meetings, took on the role of minute taker, attended events, and of course managed the progress of the research project. This helped me better understand the inner workings of the [community partner]. I also volunteered at various other organizations while simultaneously working with the [community partner].

The same student, in addition to noting the additional tasks undertaken, also reflected on the value of these contributions:

> I felt that I contributed to the strengthening of bridges between other organizations and the [community partner]. Because the staff and funding that supported the organization was insignificant, my efforts were well received. The opportunity to be more involved provided a means to build more trust between myself and [the community partner] staff and board.

In no way did any of the students feel coerced into volunteering their time, and none of them felt that the situation resulted from inequities in their projects. Still, the integral role of their volunteerism to the success of their projects implies that it is difficult to accurately define academic researchers' roles early in the establishment of a community-engaged research project. Israel *et al.* (1998) note that finding a balance between research and action can be difficult and thus requires specific attention. In the planning stages, it is important that the university researcher and the community partner agree upon mutually beneficial terms for the project (Altman, 1995), but defining these terms appears to be acutely difficult to predict. The university researcher does not need to make a choice between doing research and participating in an action process, but must budget her or his own time accordingly (Israel *et al.*, 1998). Also, Boyer (1990) notes that the process of scholarship is more dynamic than simply acquiring knowledge and applying it. Theory can inspire application, and application can inspire theory (Boyer, 1990). By having volunteered a considerable amount of time and knowledge, each of the students had an opportunity to experience this phenomenon. Attention to these details represents a key component of developing an equitable partnership, a topic addressed in the following section.

Learning Outcome 4: Develop and Manage an Equitable Relationship with a Community-Based Research Partner

The development of equitable partnerships occurred in our projects, but not without some struggles. In our reflections, all students noted circumstances that led to successful partnerships, and also the need to be mindful of power relations, not only in terms of how they develop and manifest, but also in terms of how they influence project outcomes.

Circumstances leading to successful partnerships. As noted earlier, feeling that project duties are shared equitably amongst all partners is critical to maintaining an equitable relationship. Throughout

my project, I (Thomas) felt that the results of my efforts were useful to the community. All of the products associated with my CES project have been useful to the community partner. Concurrently, my primary community contact for the project made similar or greater contributions to the project's overall success. For example, she had connections to [another community organization] that effectively eliminated barriers to my recruitment efforts, took responsibility for the financial requirements of the project, and made connections to institutions that promoted our work. Another student had similar experiences, where each step of the process included equitable contributions:

> Although the main contact for [the community partner] and I did not meet during the previous visit, we managed to identify the organization's needs, map out our research methodologies, write up the interview questions, and discuss the ethics application. We were both accountable to various components of the project and we held true to our commitments. In the spring I met with the [community partner] staff that would be most active in this CES project. Not only were they very knowledgeable about the history and workings of the organization, they were also experienced as researchers and facilitators. In my experience, this transdisciplinary background helped us build a more equitable partnership because everyone brought a unique skill set to the table.

In sum, the project partners' contributions matched the students' contributions, and were integral to developing and completing the projects. Although the projects were not beset with interpersonal struggles, issues of power did present themselves as a challenge to be overcome.

Power relations and project outcomes. The students experienced some issues with power imbalances. For instance, for the focus group sessions I (Thomas) led, I was required to recruit students from local high schools using in-class presentations. The purpose of the focus groups was to understand young peoples' experiences with employment and belonging in their neighbourhoods. Our original ethics application indicated that I would be the sole recruiter for these focus groups. As such, only I could deliver consent forms to students by way of their teachers. This caused a minor roadblock to the community partner's recruitment efforts. While I viewed the focus groups primarily as form of data collection, the community partner viewed them as "information sessions", hoping that participating youth would subsequently be interested in participating in community-based programs. Due to the discordant views on the purpose of these sessions, and perhaps also due to a lack of understanding of the university's ethical protocols, I fielded multiple requests to modify the format of the focus groups, including, "Can we have employees present at the focus groups to develop a sense of community and familiarity?", and "Can you give me a copy of the consent form so that I can distribute it to parents?". Though I could not accommodate the first request because of privacy concerns, I did successfully amend the ethics process to include the partner organization's newly hired youth facilitator in the process. As well, realizing the appropriateness and benefit of having the community partner recruit participants, I also amended the ethics application to allow the project partner to distribute the consent forms. My goal of being accommodating without compromising the academic integrity of the project required negotiating at least three sets of power dynamics: between me and the community partner, who had to seek my

'permission' to make changes to the process; between me and the university's research ethics board, who held the power to approve or deny my proposed recruitment amendments; and between me and participating youth, whose privacy was of primary concern.

Addressing power distributions within CES projects is widely discussed in the literature, and critical to establishing equitable partnerships. This need arises from the concern that one or more parties within a partnership can dominate the decision-making process (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008), which can in turn affect the outcomes and abilities of a community-based organization to affect the change they would like to see, or to acquire the data they seek. The potential imbalance of power, and perhaps the reputation of university-community relationships, has led to some community members' skepticism of whether such a relationship can be managed equitably (Israel *et al.*, 1998). Sources of imbalance can be based on a number of factors, including education, income, race, ethnicity, and gender, all of which, if ignored or improperly addressed, can lead to unproductive partnerships (Buchanan, 1996). It is important to note that the solution to addressing power imbalances is not necessarily for partners to decide that they will split project tasks equally. As Israel et al. (1998) ask, "Is it most appropriate to train community members and health practitioners to analyze data, or is it more valuable to focus the use of scarce time and resources on involving them in interpreting and making sense of the data?" (p. 183). Dalal *et al.* (2009) suggest the latter is likely to be the more effective route. Delegating leadership and tasks according to strengths and interests of partners allows individuals to focus on areas where they have strengths, rather than having to spend time familiarizing themselves with new knowledge and methods. This is not to suggest that CES cannot be a place of learning and skill development, since there may be times when the project requires multiple people to handle data, conduct interviews, make presentations, and write. In some cases, the more experienced members of the project can train and support less-experienced members (Dalal *et al.*, 2009). In this way, positions of power can be reversed, where the university researcher may hold more power in the generation and collation of data, but the knowledge generated may be held and disseminated by the community partner (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008).

Learning Outcome 5: Practice Reciprocity of Process/Outcome by Delivering a Final Product that is Usable by a Community-Based Organization

We all, as students, intended to produce a final product of use to our community partners. We all succeeded in this to some degree. However, inefficiencies in the research process, team members with imbalanced stakes in different aspects of the project, and difficulties meeting class-oriented timelines all affected the production of useful final products.

Inefficiencies of large groups and imbalanced stakes. All students experienced difficulties in keeping to agreed-upon deadlines developed at the outset of the project. While having difficulties adhering to schedules is not unique to CES projects, students did note this as a challenge in completing their final products. The size of the group and the priority of each member of the partnership seemed to contribute directly to project delays. One student described this as follows:

> I anticipated that the more people working on the documents, the quicker everything would progress. I began to tease apart what may have contributed

to the slow progress, and I can partially attribute the lack of adherence to the project timeline to the fact that most work requiring input from multiple project partners only took place during meetings. Various committee meetings occurred once a month for two hours and involved discussions of other projects in addition to the [CES] project. Drafts of the survey were distributed during the meeting and committee members had only a few minutes to review the survey and make comments. Perhaps in the future, progress could mirror that of the project timeline if stakeholders completed tasks outside of the meeting. However, I understand that everyone is busy and perhaps it is too much to ask stakeholders to complete work outside of the designated meeting times.

Two students noted tensions surrounding the differing value placed on certain aspects of their projects. In some instances, students found that their priorities as students were not the same as the partners' priorities. Although discussed in some detail above, one example of this is that student timelines did not always accord with the needs of the communities for quick turnaround at unpredictable times. Despite the fact that students and communities shared mutual goals associated with the successful outcome of the project, they were ultimately responding to different limitations and expectations depending on their respective institutional constraints and cultures.

As noted above, reciprocity is one key to developing and maintaining equitable relationships (CAMH, 2008). This requires the researcher and community partner to follow pre-determined steps to develop a research question, goals, timelines, responsibilities, and a communication plan (Adams et al., 2006). Following these steps and maintaining communication throughout, including setting up dates to receive feedback on work, resulted in fewer hiccups in the partnerships than might otherwise have been expected. This issue is perhaps unique to course-based CES, since outside of the bounds of the classroom, students' deadlines would have been more flexible, and the pace for feedback would have been in better keeping with the needs of the initiative and not the needs of the student.

Class-oriented timelines. Partly to address the aforementioned challenge, the CES graduate course is spread over two semesters to accommodate the scale and scope of the projects being undertaken. This is done with the reasonable assumption that the length of a typical term (12 weeks) is inadequate to complete a CES project. Even though this gave the students just over six months to complete their projects, two of their projects were not completed on time for various reasons, while the third was complete from the student's perspective, even though the partner's final feedback was outstanding at the termination of the course. The fact that two of the projects are ongoing has led two of the students to remain in contact with their project partners, and await final tasks. Even though their final products were not necessarily complete by the end of the course, each of the students felt that they had addressed each of the learning outcomes at least in part, and none felt that the grade received or ability to meet the learning outcomes was hindered by an incomplete final product. Still, their experiences with timeline mismatches led them to recommend that in the future, the course should be offered as a full credit course instead of a half credit course, and that even more caution should be taken when scoping projects at the outset, thereby reducing the possibility of students spending more time on their projects than is customary for a graduate level course.

Contributions and Future Possibilities

This paper presents graduate students' perspectives on their training as CES scholars through a CES graduate course that included both theoretical and practical elements. The paper contributes to the literature by adding the perspective of trainees to their development as CE scholars, and by highlighting points of tension in students' training that can be attended to by others involved in the work of training CE scholars. The authors' analysis of students' reflections highlights instructional and practical elements that were critical to students' development of CES knowledge and skills. For instance, students described being able to anticipate and respond to challenges in CES because they had been exposed to literature on communities' perceptions of scholars, the similarities and differences between CES and traditional forms of social science research, and the challenges and opportunities of collaboration. In each case, students were exposed to these concepts in class, and then experienced these concepts within their respective community-based projects.

Students also noted that the requirement to reflect on their experiences in relation to the course learning outcomes served to enhance their development as community-engaged scholars. The complexity of students' projects was necessary to expose them to the learning outcomes established at the outset of the semester. This is somewhat paradoxical since the complexity of the projects also led to students' struggles with negotiating reasonable timelines and scoping appropriate roles for themselves within their partnerships. Thus, the five learning outcomes that serve as a framework for analysis in this paper are useful for guiding students' holistic development as CE scholars, but must be approached with caution in order not to overwhelm students. Special care should be taken to match the scope of the project to the student's time and compensation (i.e., credit allocation).

Despite the value offered by the CES course, there are some elements of CES students identified as lacking in their training. In particular, students felt unprepared to navigate the university's ethics protocols, and would have benefited from more training in this regard. Having community partners participate in this training could have mitigated some of the challenges students faced in the development of their ethics protocols. They also felt that more attention could have been paid to the possibilities of publishing their findings for academic audiences. As Israel et al. (1998) note, CES makes numerous contributions to society, including its production of useful and relevant data that can be used by both partners, and recognizes that the knowledge generated should be available for use by all project partners. Because the emphasis of the course was heavily on partners' needs, students did not attend to the possibility of using the data for their own/future work. If they had been encouraged to reflect more thoroughly on these points, the data gathered might have been useful beyond the confines of their class-based projects. Another element that Israel *et al.* (1998) note is that community partners are partners in, rather than subjects of, research. Students developed their research questions and approaches with their community partners; however, this development did not include much participation from the research participants themselves, running the risk of community members remaining more subject than participant. This would have been a useful tension for students to reflect on more carefully, both in terms of its implications and its resolution.

While the sample size in this research is small, the reflections from three graduate students on their development as CE scholars open the door to future research, including through highlighting the importance of considering the training of CE scholars from the perspective

of trainees. Incorporating more participants in future studies will allow more nuanced findings and consideration of how variations in partnerships (based on either the student or the partner) might impact students' training. The reciprocal contributions of students and their community partners to each other beyond the agreed-upon research relationship are another area for future research. Finally, future research could consider how students' early training as CE scholars contributes to their longer-term practices as researchers, regardless of whether or not they pursue CES.

Conclusion

Efforts to train community-engaged scholars through graduate level course work, specifically including actual community-based research projects, are an important and effective component of a larger strategy to develop CE scholars. From the perspective of trainees, the opportunity to reflect on personal development in relation to core learning outcomes, and the opportunity to negotiate the complexities of partnerships are particularly valuable training experiences. Navigating university research ethics protocols with community partners is especially challenging, and additional training in this area would have been useful. This research raises important questions about a number of factors related to CE research, including how or if students' timelines could be better matched with community partners' timelines; whether a particular community's perceptions of scholars can be managed or improved as a result of a CE approach to scholarship; and how students could be better prepared for potential tensions surrounding power, equity, and differing priorities. This paper offers a model for exploring students' perspectives on their development and growth as CE scholars, and sets the stage for future research aimed at better understanding students' development as CE scholars, the role of CE scholar training in students' future research trajectories, and the reciprocal contributions between students and community partners beyond the specific project.

About the Authors

Thomas Armitage *(corresponding author)* is an M.A. Candidate in the Department of Geography at the University of Guelph. He is studying distribution within local food systems and has a professional background in urban agriculture, which he has used as a means for community development. Email: tarmitag@uoguelph.ca

Leah Levac is an Assistant Professor in Community Engaged Scholarship in the Dep't of Political Science at the University of Guelph. Leah has worked with numerous organizations to undertake community based research focused on the engagement of marginalized publics in public policy development and community decision-making. She focuses specifically on women's and young peoples' engagement.

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