



Engaged Scholar Journal

community-engaged research, teaching, and learning

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ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP
& THE ARTS

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From the Guest Editors

Engaged Scholarship and the Arts

Kathy Bishop, Catherine Etmanski, M. Beth Page

Singing and songwriting; graffiti, protest art, and mobile art installations; oral, digital, video, literary, métissage, and mixed media storytelling; drawing, photography, and other visual arts; Witness Blanketing and body mapping; embodying Indigenous literatures and expressing values through metaphor; dancing, performing, and more—as you will read in this special issue, these creative actions have become essential to the practice of engaged scholarship.

Engaged scholarship has a history of being integral to, not isolated from, pressing issues of our times. Engaged scholarship in Canada has a rich tradition, with roots reaching back to institutions such as “Frontier College (1899), university extension (University of Alberta, 1912), [and] the Antigonish Movement at St. Francis Xavier University (1930s-60s)” (Hall, 2013, p. vii). Engaged scholarship has likewise included universities’ responses and commitment to the transformational social movements of the 1960s, 70s, 80s, and beyond (Hall, 2013). In present time, the *Engaged Scholar Journal* plays a leading role in advancing engaged scholarship through exploring the intersection of community engagement with learning, teaching, and research in interdisciplinary contexts. The focus of this special issue is engagement through the arts.

Throughout North America, the field of engaged scholarship and the scholarship of engagement have been positioned as a foundational means for post-secondary institutions to fulfil their civic responsibilities. For example, in 1996, Ernest Boyer argued that “the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems, and must affirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement” (p. 18). Similarly, Cynthia Gibson (2006), suggested that “engaged scholarship can enhance the credibility, usefulness, and role of universities as important institutions in civic life” (p. 20). With this context of civic engagement as our background, we specifically asked contributors to share their experiences and describe how the arts are currently supporting engaged scholars in addressing today’s interconnected and seemingly



Kathy Bishop



Catherine Etmanski



M. Beth Page

intractable socio-political, economic, and environmental problems and opportunities. We were thrilled with the response.

Arts-based Engagement

If we are to identify new ways forward, the complex nature of today's challenges will require our collective creative capacity to address. This need for new ways of thinking, being, doing, and knowing has inspired some engaged scholars to enter into the realm of experimentation, co-learning, creativity, and innovation—spaces where they don't know the answers and where their current knowledge may be incomplete or even wrong. Amabile (1988) defined creativity as “the production of novel and useful ideas by an individual, or group of individuals working together. Innovation is built on creative ideas as the basic elements. Organizational innovation is the successful implementation of creative ideas within the organization” (p. 126). Furthermore, The United Nation's *Creative Economy Report 2010* promoted “adequately nurtured creativity” for economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability (p. xix) while the Conference Board of Canada (2008) stressed the need “to ensure communities have the means necessary to support creativity and diversity” (p. 53). Arts-based approaches to scholarship are tried and tested ways of promoting creative, embodied, sensory experiences, engaging multiple audiences, disrupting our habitual, linear-rational ways of working, and sparking new ideas. As such, the contributors to this special issue invite readers to imagine new possibilities for generating solutions to the pressing issues of our times and co-learning into the future (Scharmer, 2007).

When considering the learning and teaching aspect of engaged scholarship, Joseph Raelin (2016) noted that “more attention needs to be paid to learning formats that encourage learners to momentarily think out of their context or frame of reference in order to challenge existing assumptions and beliefs” (p. 149). He went on to add that students could “learn through their own problems” (Raelin, 2016, p. 149) as they worked collaboratively with others. As a way to learn through problems, John Dirkx (1998) suggested that it is possible to use intuition, feelings, personal images, metaphors, and myths to explore the connections between what is happening inside ourselves in relation to our outer experiences. In this way, coming together through arts-based practices can support learners in generating a sense of empowerment and desire to effect change.

Creative and arts-based practices can offer unique ways to tap into our innate creative potential as humans. As Darlene Clover and Joyce Stalker (2007) suggested, “when people bring creative works of art into existence they become active producers and transmitters of culture and identity, rather than simply passive consumers of a ready-made, often culturally homogeneous world” (p. 14). However, in contemporary North American society, art has mostly become a product to consume rather than a natural right of human expression (Diamond, 2004; 2007). For some, this repression of the creative spirit is seen as a form of oppression and, hence, reclaiming the arts can lead to healing, building community, and increasing our abilities to communicate and connect using a broader range of strategies (Etmanski, 2014).

As is understood by grassroots activists, corporate marketing teams, and politicians of

all stripes, the arts are central to communicating powerful messages. Because symbolism can bypass rational defence mechanisms and go straight to the heart, creative and arts-based practices have a role to play in revealing our shared humanity and building understanding, empathy, and trust—useful foundations for most engaged scholarship endeavours (Etmanski, 2014). Moreover, engaged scholars who employ creative and arts-based strategies recognize “in the creative process the integration of intuitive and rational modes of understanding through engaging the whole of the person (emotions and intellect)” (Simons & McCormack, 2007, p. 297). Employing arts-based and embodied methods can bring to the surface pre-conscious or previously unarticulated concerns and desires (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kasl, 2006), sometimes bypassing the censorship of the brain (Jackson, 2002). When facilitated skilfully, then, creative practices can support greater self-awareness and *ah-ha* moments of insight (Etmanski & Bishop, 2017).

In this special issue, we invited submissions exploring successes, challenges, and possibilities for moving beyond delivery of content to active engagement with learning, teaching, and research in a holistic, embodied, and multi-sensory way. The articles and reports from the field are helpful for scholars and practitioners alike: they are grounded in scholarship, and include concrete examples articulating lessons learned. The books we selected for review offer further reading on the subject. Here is a taste of what’s to come.

Essays

Our essay section begins with Kathy Bishop, Catherine Etmanski, M. Beth Page, Brian Dominguez, and Cheryl Heykoop offering a window into their diverse experiences with *métissage*, a creative storytelling method that can be used for engaging people in research, learning, teaching, and community or organizational development. They provide a theoretical overview, a practical description of insights and processes when facilitating *métissage* workshops, some key lessons learned, and conclude with an example of a *métissage*.

This is followed by Sarah Marie Wiebe who argues that stories are never simply or *just* stories, but in fact have the potential to be radical tools of change for social and environmental justice. She offers three mixed media storytelling projects that involve the co-creation of digital stories with Indigenous communities in Canada. She speaks to how stories can intervene on dominant narratives, create space for counternarratives and, in so doing, challenge the settler-colonial status quo in pursuit of decolonial futures.

Then, Myron Neapetung, Lori Bradford, and Lalita Bharadwaj offer a participatory artistic animation video on the lived experiences of Elders and safe water on reserves in Canada, in Yellow Quill First Nation, Treaty Four Territory. The authors demonstrate how the collaborative research process and co-created video enhanced community-based participatory knowledge translation and sharing.

Next, David Monk, Bruno de Oliveira Jayme, and Emilie Salvi consider the power and potential of art for public engagement and its use in social movement learning and change, exploring representations of protest art and public art exhibitions. The authors frame social movements as important sites of scholarship and learning. They contextualize their writing

with stories of mobile art exhibits in Sao Paulo, the anti-Bill C-51 protests in Lkwungen territory (Victoria, BC), and the ‘maple spring’ in Montreal (Tiotia:ke in the language of the Kanien’kehá:ka).

In the subsequent article, Kayla Jubas and Kimberly Lenters present graffiti texts as examples of how graffiti can become pedagogical. Place, space, and identity are taken up as sociomaterial phenomena, whose meanings develop as people, texts, physical structures, and various cultural artifacts come into contact with one another. Graffiti as pedagogy also have the potential to expose ideologies about what is (ab)normal and (un)desirable that circulate throughout and across societies. They identify three pedagogical purposes that graffiti artists and educators might employ: contemplation, reflection, and action.

Considering place in another way, Amie Thurber and Janine Christiano explore the role the arts play in sustaining place attachments, restoring relationships, and building knowledge of place in gentrifying neighbourhoods. The authors identify that the strongest community building interventions bridge approaches—engaging artists as/and researchers, educators, and community leaders while mobilizing residents as participants in knowledge/cultural production. They conclude with recommendations for future research that attends to issues of equity, process as well as outcome, and longitudinal effects of *more than material* interventions in gentrifying neighbourhoods.

Virginia McKendry then explores how an action research project to advance inclusive leadership at Royal Roads University in Victoria, British Columbia, adapted a visual data elicitation method and used metaphor analysis to reveal opportunities to align espoused, communicated, and enacted values. The research highlights that arts-based action research effectively equips academic and administrative leaders to transcend deficit-based problem solving to approach organizational development with the creative energy that arts-based research inspires.

Shelley Jones moves us into the global arena with her project conducted with teachers in rural Northwest Uganda. Multimodality was employed as a “domain of inquiry” (Kress, 2011) for social semiotics (meaning-making within a social context). Participants both represented gender inequality as well as imagined gender equality. Findings from this study show how a multimodal approach to communication, using drawing in addition to spoken and written language, established a democratic space of communication.

In their article, Moshoula Capous-Desyllas, Sarah E. Mountz, and Althea Pestine-Stevens represent the visual voices of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer) former foster youth through photovoice in order to engage various stakeholders, diverse communities, and the participants themselves. The authors shared their findings and incorporated social change efforts through the dissemination of the visual data in various formal and informal spaces.

Also on the theme of voice, Tamara Plush and Robin Cox talk about the power of song for youth post-disaster recovery in the context of the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfire in Alberta, Canada. Their community-engaged research process underscores the power of music creation as an empowering method for enhancing youth engagement. The young people’s musical

reflections revealed insights on their priorities for a resilient community after disaster.

In the next article, Kelsie Acton asserts that arts-based research may be useful in disability communities where people may prefer to communicate artistically or through movement, rather than through spoken word. The author examines the gap between assumptions of how research *should* be conducted and the reality of the field, specifically: the tension between university research ethics and the ethics of the CRIPSiE (Collaborative Radically Integrated Performers Society in Edmonton) community. The differences between the value of the rehearsal process and the performance as sites of data collection, and, the assumptions that had been made about necessity of a singular research question are discussed.

Integrating the community into the classroom, Nancy Van Styvendale and JD McDougall reflect on the experience and outcomes of a community service-learning class on Indigenous literatures. This case study illustrated how community-engaged and *communitist* (a term pairing community and activist) service-learning provides an embodied theoretical framework through which to read literary representations of Indigenous experience, and how literary texts provide theories for interpreting and critically analysing experience.

Reports from the Field

Carey Newman and Catherine Etmanski begin this section by focussing on Carey's work engaging people across Canada in a project titled, *The Witness Blanket*. This project has culminated in the creation of a monument, national tour, documentary film, and novel agreement between an artist and a Crown Corporation. Carey provides insight into the process of collecting artefacts from communities across Canada and his lessons learned on the importance of including all voices and stories, and the power of collective truth. An excerpt of one of the details of *The Witness Blanket* is included as the cover image for this special issue, with thanks to Media One Inc. for use of the photograph.

Creating another type of storied community blanket, Kendra Stiwich, Lindsay McCunn, and Chantey Dayal discuss the "OurSchoolOurStories Project" which aimed to increase place attachment in the parent population at a small elementary school through arts-based narrative activities. In circle, women shared many stories and needle-felted squares with what the school meant to them, thus creating a needle-felted community blanket. Participants were able to share much about their place identities, which allowed for social connection, and a sense of integration within the group.

With a shift from place and connection to disrupting and altering oppressive relations, Doris Rajan, Roshanak Jaber, and Shahrzad Mojab confront sexual violence through dance and theatre pedagogy. They examine how community-engaged research and performance arts-based approaches can be used to challenge and provoke ways of understanding and thinking about how to disrupt and alter oppressive relations.

Tackling the issue of women living with HIV, Sara Greene, Marvelous Muchenje, Jasmine Cotnam, Kristin Dunn, Peggy Frank, Valerie Nicholson, Apondi J. Odhiambo, Krista Shore, and Angela Kaida utilize body mapping. Body mapping enabled participants to tell their stories in the face of intense stigma around HIV/AIDS. This reflection illustrates a collective

and iterative process of learning, teaching, and doing body mapping workshops.

Utilizing another form of performance art, Jessica Litwak's report from the field describes methods of audience engagement as a means of social engagement, and the implications for practice. It explores how artists can galvanize and empower audiences by creating experiential communities pre, during, and post-show.

Book Reviews

To provide a wide representation of arts and engagement we chose four books to be reviewed: Tara Atluri's (2018) *Uncommitted Crimes: The Defiance of the Artistic Imagination* (reviewed by Nikki Bade), Kathryn Goldman Schuyler, John Eric Baugher, and Karin Jironet's (2016) *Creative Social Change: Leadership for a Healthy World* (reviewed by Brian Dominguez), Shauna Butterwick and Carole Roy's (2016) *Working the Margins of Community-Based Adult Learning: The Power of Arts-Making in Finding Voice and Creating Conditions for Seeing/Listening* (reviewed by Cortney Baldwin), Susan Erenrich and Jon Wergin's (2017) *Grassroots Leadership and the Arts for Social Change* (reviewed by Vanessa Daether).

Closing Thoughts

As you travel through this collection of essays, reports from the field and book reviews, we invite you to see the common threads that cross all writings as well as where they may diverge. This collection offers the reader new forays into creative processes across various contexts. You will experience an interweaving of theory of practice for different purposes, such as learning how to facilitate workshops; garnering radical tools of change for social and environmental justice; challenging dominant narratives and changing the status quo; delving into place, space, and identity; restoring relationships, enhancing leadership, and taking action; communicating and giving voice; expanding community; and accessing the power of an audience. You will see many examples of engaging people in research, learning, teaching, and community or organizational development through the arts.

Filled with rich theoretical insights and concrete examples, this collection is useful for scholars and practitioners alike. Concrete examples speak to issues such as safe water provision, decolonization, gentrification, gender inequality, values-based organizational development, post disaster recovery, sexual violence, living with the stigma of HIV/AIDS, and LGBTQI2SA+ identity, and more. This collection speaks to the engagement of artists, researchers, educators, community and academic leaders, youth, women, and people with disabilities across contexts as diverse as academic conferences, classrooms, texts, cultural monuments in Canada, Treaty Four Territory, Brazil, and Uganda. Ultimately, we invite you to open your heart, and mind, to what these scholars have demonstrated is possible in the world of engaged scholarship and what may be possible for you.

Kathy Bishop, Catherine Etmanski, and M. Beth Page

May 2019; Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Traditional lands of the Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) and Lkwungen (Songhees) families

About the Authors

Kathy Bishop is an associate professor and a program head in the Master of Arts in Leadership program at Royal Roads University. She is an inspiring, action-oriented scholar-practitioner, consultant with her own business, and values-based leader. She utilizes a variety of creative, experiential, participatory, and transformative learning methods. She contends that engaging creatively and collectively through different ways of doing and being can lead to innovative solutions to complex local and global challenges and opportunities. Email: kathy.bishop@royalroads.ca

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Kimber Andrews	Alexandra Fidyk	Randee Lawrence
Kathy Bishop	Heather Forest	Jessica Litwak
Laurel Borisenko	Nicholas Forge	Heather McLean
Shauna Butterwick	Victor Friedman	Carrie MacLeod
Lynn Caldwell	Melanie Goodchild	Monica Prendergast
William Carol	Mia Husted	Tim Pretki
Darlene Clover	Ana Christina Da Silva Iddings	Ahava Shira
Alicia Crumpton	Kathleen James-Cavan	Anita Sinner
Sara Florence Davidson	Karin Jironet	John O'Toole
Diane Driedger	Henry Johnson	
Catherine Etmanski	Stephen Kroeger	

Issue Statistics

A. Authors and Submissions

Authors and Co-Authors	
University-based	37
Community partners	11
Total	48

Article Submissions	
Original proposals for peer and editor review	45
Articles submitted for editor review	7
Articles submitted for peer review	27
Peer-reviewed articles accepted for publication	12
Editor-reviewed articles accepted for publication	5
Book reviews submitted for editor review	4
Book reviews accepted for publication	4

Geographic Distribution (Corresponding Authors Only)	
Eastern Canada	
McMaster University	1
University of Toronto	1
Western Canada	
Royal Roads University	8
University of Alberta	2
University of Calgary	1
University of Saskatchewan	1
University of Victoria	1
Vancouver Island University	1
International	
California State University Northridge, USA	1
Gulu University, Uganda	1
Portland State University, USA	1
University of Hawaii, USA	1
Non-University Based	1
Total	21

B. Peer-Reviewers and Peer-Reviewing

Peer Reviewers	
Total invitations to peer review	126
Number of peer reviewers who accepted invitations	31

Geographic Distribution (Peer Reviewers)	
Eastern Canada	
Concordia University	1
University of Waterloo	1
Western Canada	
Regent College	1
Royal Roads University	2
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University of Alberta	1
University of British Columbia	1
University of the Fraser Valley	1
University of Manitoba	1
University of Saskatchewan	1
University of Victoria	4
Non-University Based	2
International	
Australia	
Griffith University	1
University of Otago	1
Non-University Based	1
Europe	
University UCC Copenhagen, Denmark	1
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Essays

Narrative Métissage as an Innovative Engagement Practice

**Kathy Bishop, Catherine Etmanski, M. Beth Page, Brian Dominguez,
Cheryl Heykoop**

ABSTRACT Métissage is a creative method that can be used for engaging people in research, learning, teaching, and community or organizational development. As five authors, we offer a window into our diverse experiences with métissage, providing a theoretical overview, a practical description of insights and processes when facilitating métissage workshops, some key lessons learned, and an example of a simple woven narrative of our experiences with métissage.

KEYWORDS métissage, storytelling, engagement, arts-based method

Qualitative research, in particular narrative, is all about context and relationships. However, how we think about those relationships and the subsequent forms of analysis and interpretation need to be interrogated. We currently deconstruct lived experiences into parts and then look for relationships. What would it mean to read a life outside narrative, to let the network of relationships construct the narrative? This would radically alter narrative by disrupting the categories of subject/object, time/space, past/present/ future, and body/mind/spirit. (Hendry, 2007, p. 492)

In response to Hendry's (2007) question, "What would it mean to [...] let the network of relationships construct the narrative?", this paper's purpose is to describe one method offering the potential for doing just that. Métissage, as will be described below, is a creative method used for engaging people in research, learning, teaching, and community or organizational development. As authors (Kathy, Catherine, Beth, Brian, and Cheryl), we have facilitated, participated in, and observed métissage in classrooms, during conferences, in virtual spaces, in meetings, in connection with other University or community-based events, and as research. Some of us have facilitated together in different team configurations, and some of us have facilitated individually. In this paper, we offer readers a window into our diverse experiences with métissage.

We begin by providing a theoretical overview, followed by a practical description of the processes and insights we have come to understand are useful when facilitating métissage workshops. These include setting the stage, selecting the writing prompt, refining the processes of writing, editing, sharing stories, creating the conditions for listening and dialogue,

recognizing the impact on listeners, and closing the workshop. Following this synopsis, we offer a few key lessons we have learned through experimentation that have served to refine our individual and collective practice. Finally, to illustrate *métissage* in action, we offer an example of a simple woven narrative of our experiences with *métissage*, drawn from our work in different contexts.

Theoretical Foundations of *Métissage*

The theory and practice of *métissage* has gained momentum in Canada over the past decade, primarily through the work of Cynthia Chambers, Erica Hasebe-Ludt, Carl Leggo, and Anita Sinner (see Chambers et al., 2008; Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009). It has expanded at the University of Victoria (UVic) through the work of Wanda Hurren, Antoinette Oberg, Kathy Sanford, and Sheila Simpkins, among others. Simpkins employed *métissage* in her UVic doctoral work to promote peaceful dialogue between Kurdish and Arab students in Kurdistan, Northern Iraq (Simpkins, 2012) and introduced this method to Catherine in 2009. Since then, we have expanded the use of this simple, yet surprisingly powerful method through our work at Royal Roads University (where four of the five authors teach and one is a doctoral student).

As Etmanski, Weigler, and Wong Sneddon (2013) have described, by its very nature, *métissage* defies categorization and concrete definition. The root of *métissage* - *métis*, or *Μῆτις*, comes from the Greek Titaness and wife of Zeus, who was known for her wisdom, skill, and powers of transformation (Chambers et al., 2008). The root of *métissage*—*métis*—is derived from the Latin word *mixtus* or *mixticius* meaning *mixed*. Historically, *métissage* referred to weaving together cloth of two different fibers (Chambers et al., 2008; Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, Leggo, & Sinner, 2013). As a method of creative engagement, it is “a way of merging and blurring genres, texts and identities; an active literary stance, political strategy and pedagogical praxis” (Chambers, Donald, & Hasebe-Ludt, 2002, para. 1). *Métissage* draws from the traditions of life writing, storytelling, theatre and—symbolically—from the art of weaving or braiding (Chambers et al., 2008; Etmanski et al., 2013). Through the sharing of stories, it also provides an opportunity to claim and reclaim multiple identities, as well as explore liminal or in-between spaces (Chawla & Rodriguez, 2011) and contradictory ways of being, knowing, thinking, doing, and relating. As Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) stated, “There is danger in a single story. The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (13:05). As such, through the practice of weaving together multiple stories, *métissage* celebrates non-linearity and disruption while finding common threads across stories, which serves to honour both unity and diversity in the individual and the collective.

Métissage can be understood as an arts-based method insofar as writing is, as Margaret Atwood claimed, one of the most accessible art forms: “There’s one characteristic that sets writing apart from most of the other arts—its apparent democracy, by which I mean its availability to almost everyone as a medium of expression” (Atwood, 2002, as cited in Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, Leggo, & Sinner, 2012, p. xx). Beyond its storytelling component, *métissage* is particularly artistic when authors take the time to craft and refine their narratives

and attend to the aesthetic as they move beyond the catharsis of personal writing. Therefore, as with any art form, *métissage* has permission to be beautiful and meaningful for its own sake. As a result of this storytelling and aesthetic dimension, *métissage* presents a new possible means for researchers to represent findings, either verbally, written, or in other artistic forms (e.g. music, dance, silence). It can also enable different ways of knowing. In particular, it can be understood as an “expressive way of knowing” (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kasl, 2006), which is similar to Heron’s (1992) presentational knowing. In addition to valuing the aesthetic for its own sake, this way of knowing has a useful purpose as well, insofar as it relates to the educational (learning and teaching) value of *métissage* which can happen,

when conceptual processes interact with imagination and intuition so as to enable learners to perceive patterns. Presentational ways of knowing include engagement with music, all the plastic arts, dance, movement, and mime, as well as all forms of myth, fable, allegory, story, and drama. (Davis-Manigaulte et al., 2006, p. 27)

As such, *métissage* can be employed as a method for engaging people in a heart-centered, holistic approach to research, learning and teaching, and community or organizational development, among other practices.

As a research practice that is part auto-ethnography and part performance, *métissage* resists the paradigmatic discourse of positivist research which seeks to dissect parts and remain objective and dispassionate. Positivists reject “emotional intimacy, verisimilitude, shared experience, narrative truth, the figurative and self-reflective use of language, the use of the scenic method, multiple points of view, realistic dialogue, multiple voices, treating facts as social constructions and minimal theory” (Denzin, 1997, p. 253). In contrast, post-structuralists and interpretive ethnographers hold different epistemological models of truth and, therefore, draw from different methods of inquiry. Hayes and Yorks (2007) noted that,

because the arts have the potential for bringing into consciousness tacit, prelinguistic, preconscious knowing (Yorks & Kasl, 2006) and creating empathic connection among people with diverse and contradictory experiences, they are a powerful medium for fostering critical subjectivity and critical intersubjectivity. (p. 93)

It is this critical subjectivity and intersubjectivity that offers possibilities in answer to Hendry’s (2007) question, “What would it mean to read a life outside narrative, to let the network of relationships construct the narrative?” (p. 492). *Métissage* creates a space for critical reflection on the self as well as intersubjective knowing of self in relationship. As such, *métissage* becomes more than a method; it can also lead to a relational way of being in and perceiving the world.

Métissage does not seek to “Deconstruct [the narrative(s) of] lived experiences” (Hendry, 2007, p. 492); instead, as an artistic practice, it creates a generative and liberating learning space that assists people in seeing past the psychological, social, and culturally imposed boundaries

of their life worlds (Hayes & York, 2007, p. 91). Furthermore, as a practice in which people can come together and hear multiple and different viewpoints, experiences, and realities, it has the “ability to transform” (Chambers et al., 2008, p. 141) by generating a space that allows for both individual stories and shared experiences to emerge. This can serve to garner new understandings and potential actions that can lead to individual and/or collective change. In this way, “the arts are not [always] an end in themselves but [can also be] an entryway for empowering people to author their own community intervention” (Hayes & York, 2007, p. 91). As an innovative practice, *métissage* can enable a change intervention by “tapping into experiential knowing to bridge barriers and join people together in community” (p. 95) and therefore creates both an event and artifact.

Given this method challenges positivism and celebrates ways of knowing through story, several Indigenous and Métis scholars have contributed to the scholarship and practice of *métissage*. For example, *métissage* has been described as a decolonizing research sensibility (Donald, 2012), an interpretive Indigenous approach (Lowan-Trudeau 2012), and a Métis manifesto (Kelly, 2012). Although *métissage* is not solely an Indigenous or Métis practice, as non-Indigenous scholars, we are mindful to acknowledge how the French word *métissage* (referring to people of mixed ethnicity) has given rise to the cultural group, Métis. We also acknowledge the ongoing effects of colonization, including how racism continues to impact Métis and Indigenous communities. Once when Kathy was facilitating, a participant suggested we consult with Elders about how to describe this practice, which we did prior to writing this article. The advice we received was to clearly differentiate between Métis culture, which is not ours to describe, and the practice of *métissage* as an arts-based engagement method, which we have described here.

In a tangible sense then, the practice of narrative *métissage* invites the authoring of individual narratives—personal stories, anecdotes, reflections, poetry, and so on—and then interweaves the individual’s narratives with those written by others. As Stauffer (2014) described, narrative data might include letters, written stories, and journals, to name but a few examples. When presented in written form, this narrative data can be woven together with theory, poetry, photographs, and more. When performed orally, narrative *métissage* can be similar to Readers’ Theatre, where people read openly from their scripts, with minimal attention to staging or costumes—though these too are welcome. Projected still images, video, and other creative possibilities may complement the reading as well (Etmanski et al., 2013, p. 126). Through this weaving or braiding of narratives, a single text with multiple authors is generated, often to be read out loud.

As authors, our practice has also been informed by narrative inquiry (Page, 2016). Like narrative inquiry, narrative *métissage* privileges the teller’s experience and uplifts participants as the experts in their experiences (Josselson, 1995). Stauffer (2014) addressed three theoretical strands of narrative inquiry, which are relevant here. These included the work of Jerome Bruner, who described narrative as a uniquely human approach to knowing. Specifically, Bruner (as cited in Stauffer, 2014) suggested, “Narrative forms of thought have to do with ways in which we make sense of lived time, deal with the ambiguities of daily life, and construct our

conceptions of ourselves” (p. 166). The second strand followed the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and stemmed from the focus on experience documented by John Dewey. In their view, narrative was both method and phenomenon (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to Stauffer (2014), Clandinin and Connelly sought “to understand how people use story as a means of interpreting experience, how they construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences, and how people live and relive, and tell and retell, their stories” (p. 170). Finally, the third strand, based on the work of Bakhtin, came from literary nonfiction and, through storytelling, sought to raise questions to facilitate conversation about current experiences or issues of importance (Page, 2016, p. 52).

These three strands offer insight into the diverse and contested terrain of narrative inquiry as a research methodology (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Page, 2016; Polkinghorne, 1995; Stauffer, 2014). For the purposes of understanding narrative *métissage*, we appreciate the perspective of Jerome Bruner (1991), who suggested, “The central concern is not how narrative as text is constructed, but rather how it operates as an instrument of mind in the construction of reality” (pp. 5–6). This approach to narrative allows participants to share their own stories and listen to those of others, without questioning their inherent accuracy or validity. In so doing, narrative *métissage* serves as a process of uncovering and co-constructing knowledge about self, other/others, and the world (Etmanski et al., 2013). As such, the ontology of *métissage* embraces the messiness of reality and narrative complexity of human life.

Practical Applications of Métissage

Having provided an overview of the theory behind *métissage*, we now turn to the practice itself. In the sections below, we offer insights from our experience as facilitators in a range of settings. However, since this is a creative method, we encourage you to adapt these guidelines in your own contexts. We offer these as suggestions based on what has worked well for us, but these ought not be considered directions. Rather, they are invitations with which you can experiment and play.

Setting the stage

As facilitators, we take the time to set the stage so participants have enough information to feel comfortable, or at least not resistant, to engage in the activity. We do this by offering a brief explanation of what *métissage* is along with its historical roots. Grounded in the theory above, we describe why it can be a powerful tool in general, for example, because it celebrates disruptions, recognizes the messiness of life and nonlinear realities, highlights universal threads across stories, respects the individual and the collective, and provides opportunities to claim and/or reclaim multiple identities, liminal spaces, and sometimes contradictory ways of being, knowing, thinking, and doing. We also make links with the specific context or topic of the workshop.

At the outset, we tend to emphasize two key points underlying the process: firstly, that this practice is an invitation and, secondly, that we are co-creating the space. As facilitators, we

express that no one should feel forced to participate in an activity. We also clarify that although we invite people to decide how they will show up, this does not mean we are suggesting they opt-out. Rather, the way they opt-in can take many forms, such as taking on the role of an active observer who can contribute unique insights into the process. Furthermore, since as facilitators we agree we cannot assume what a safe space may look like for all participants (Etmanski, 2014), we ask participants to co-create a brave space (Arao & Clemens, 2013) with us. This acknowledges that at times we may feel uncomfortable or choose to take risks, or that we may enable spaces of grace where we accept people however they show up, trusting the process will deepen our understandings and connections.

At this point of setting the stage, we then give an overview of the process which will involve writing, editing, weaving, sharing, listening, dialoguing, and closing the session. We also find it is effective to model by letting participants listen to and experience a *métissage* we have written ourselves. This is not a necessary way to proceed. At times, we have also chosen to write our *métissage* along with the participants. However, we have found that writing and then reading aloud our own *métissage* prior to the workshop is a way of connecting more deeply as facilitators. For example, we have found we often learn something new about our colleagues, whether we have just met or have known one other for years. Also, by creating our own *métissage* prior, we have found as facilitators that we are able to maintain a strong focus on facilitating, rather than participating and facilitating which may divide our attention during the session. If you are facilitating a *métissage* session on your own and would like to provide an example, you may also choose to offer the one we created about the power of *métissage*—written individually and then woven together—which we have shared at the end of this article. Alternatively, you may decide to get creative, as Catherine did, by weaving together fictional characters’ narratives excerpted from novels. To begin though, we always offer prompts to support individuals in writing their stories. This serves to both focus their writing and offer inspiration.

Selecting the writing prompt

In our work as facilitators, we have come to understand the importance of offering a juicy prompt. Any kind of writing prompt is, of course, possible to use; however, we have found that an ambiguous prompt with multiple, even potentially contradictory interpretations, can sometimes stimulate more creative responses. For example, when Catherine was first introduced to narrative *métissage* by her students in 2009, they offered the writing prompt “standing outside”. Used with permission, this prompt has proven to be productive for us in a range of settings. Other prompts we have experienced include “on the edge” (or at times, “out on the edge”) and “the words I didn’t speak” (with thanks to feminist arts-based educator, Darlene Clover). We also adapt to the particular context and make use of additional prompts in the moment, depending on the discussion in the room. For example, at a conference titled, “Narrative Matters”, Kathy, Catherine, and Brian simply used the prompt “Why does narrative matter?” For this very article, we utilized “the power of *métissage*” as a prompt, the results of which readers will see below.

Generally speaking, a prompt serves to unite participants around a particular theme. Using the same writing prompt for different people can help to reveal both similarities and differences in the room—not only in terms of people’s experiences, but also in relation to how they interpret the prompt, as well as in their writing styles. That said, there have been times when different people have written in response to different prompts, and this too can yield some interesting results. However, our preference has evolved to group people around the same prompt. At times, we will offer a variety of prompts, enabling participants to choose the one that resonates most for them. After this, we can group participants according to the prompt they have selected.

Refining the process of writing

There are a range of possibilities for writing narratives that ultimately become woven into a métissage. When our intention was to create a presentation of an already woven narrative métissage, it has been helpful to agree upon and send out the prompt in advance, and then spend some individual time writing before reading the métissage out loud together. This way, participants can edit their words in advance of sharing them with others. In the context of facilitating shorter workshops (i.e., less than three hours), we have found that setting a limit of approximately 300 words or fewer has been helpful, depending on how many people are participating.

When we have conducted a workshop where the writing occurred on the spot, we have found it helpful to explain the concept of *free writing*. As mentioned above, narratives could include stories, poems, letters, and more—and we have even experienced one person include a physical gesture, and another break into song. To access these creative narrative possibilities, the free writing process we suggest entails writing, non-stop, without filtering one’s thoughts, for a timed period. To set the tone and atmosphere for free writing, we often start with a poem or quote, such as the one Cheryl likes to use, by the late Ojibway Elder, Richard Wagamese (2016):

Write spontaneously every day for fifteen minutes. First, get settled. Breathe. Big, deep, full breaths, taken slowly. Clear your mind of words. Be wordless. Then, open your eyes and write whatever comes out of you, and keep writing without taking your hands from the paper or the keyboard for fifteen minutes. Don’t worry about punctuation or spelling. Just write. Every day. Fifteen minutes. Regardless. Watch what happens to your level of craft when you work on a project. Why? Because stories live in our bodies and we need to feel our fingers moving in the process of creation every day. Your hands are your interpretive tools. They bring your spirit out in words and language. (p. 68)

During this free writing period, participants’ perceptions of time can shift, so they often do not need long to get a few thoughts out on paper. In an hour and a half to two-hour workshop, we have found that five minutes is plenty of time to come up with a sufficient narrative to create a shared experience of métissage. Again, we encourage people to flow with their

writing, and just keep writing until the timed period is over. To avoid self-censorship during this writing period, we let them know in advance that they will have an opportunity to edit out sections prior to sharing their narratives with others. We invite them to make an intentional choice about whether they would like to keep their narratives light-hearted, or to delve more deeply into their personal experiences.

Refining the process of editing

Following this free writing period, we invite participants to re-read for themselves what they have written and decide which of this is meant for their own eyes and ears only, and which sections they would feel comfortable sharing out loud. As they will ultimately be weaving their narratives with those of others, as they are editing, they need to find two or three breaks where they could temporarily pause the reading of their narratives to enable other people to interweave their own. As such, we encourage participants to look for natural breaks in their narratives. These sections do not need to be uniform in length, nor does the anecdote or story need to be neatly wrapped up inside a segment. In fact, some powerful segments are only a few words long, or contain no words at all, or are incomplete stories that leave the audience in suspense until the next time that speaker comes around in the braided text.

In a workshop setting, participants can spend another five minutes or so completing this individual editing task to get their narratives ready to share with others. The point here is that we are not seeking perfection. We encourage people to only share what they feel comfortable sharing and not get too attached to the meticulous process of crafting their words. If they choose to publish their *métissage* at a later date, they will likely need to spend more time editing, but for a short workshop we recognize the readings will likely be a fleeting, albeit powerful, moment in time. If they are writing their narratives outside of a workshop setting, the facilitators can either ask participants to identify the speaking breaks, or can look for breaks themselves.

Refining the process of weaving

Once the narratives are complete, the usual next step in a workshop setting is to work in small groups to share stories, weave them together, and create a woven *métissage*. There are ways to streamline this part of the process if you are short on time; however, these small group conversations can provide rich opportunities for dialogue and deepening relationships. As such, we have found it helpful to allow a longer period (e.g., 15 to 20 minutes) to complete this weaving and some participants always ask for more.

Since this is a creative method and we like encouraging creativity in how people come together, we feel ambivalent about giving concrete directions at this stage. The extent to which we lay out the steps, or let them emerge, is normally dependent on how many participants there are and how much time is available during the workshop. It also depends whether we have modelled a narrative *métissage* in advance. We know modelling can limit creativity, but it also provides some reassurance when people are at the weaving stage since they have an impression of an approach they could adopt.

As general guidelines, we find it helpful to suggest a structure and then ensure they know

that there is flexibility within that structure. Often, we suggest that each person read their narrative in its entirety without stopping at the identified breaks. Once they have heard each person's complete narrative, they will see where the points of connection are and which sections from each person they might want to juxtapose by placing them next to one another in the reading. In this way, they can decide who goes first, who goes next, and so on until all group members have read all sections of their narratives.

A more linear way we sometimes suggest is simply by identifying Person A, Person B, and Person C in a group of three, for example. If they do this, and they each have their narratives divided into three sections, they can weave their stories together simply by reading in order: Section 1, Person A-B-C; Section 2, Person A-B-C; Section 3, Person A-B-C. However, after they have heard one another, they will sometimes wish to change this order based on the content, or based on the realization that someone has divided a narrative into four or five sections instead of three, or perhaps because someone has written a poem or a song and this is better placed last, or for a range of other emergent reasons.

The key point here is that small groups of about three to five people work together to prepare a joint woven narrative which they feel comfortable sharing with a wider group. As facilitators, we find that participants often want to spend time in this part of the workshop and that we need to keep them flowing along. What we know—and what participants do *not* know, as they try to create a perfect *métissage*—is that we need to ensure sufficient space for the reading and dialogue that will follow. We give enough space so that relationships can deepen; however, we also encourage participants to be efficient in the interest of the greater purpose of our time together.

Refining the process of sharing stories and creating conditions for listening

When it comes time for each group to share their *métissage*, we determine the order of the groups by asking who would like to go first. Then, we offer three points for consideration. Firstly, based on an earlier insight from our Artistic Director colleague, Will Weigler, we speak to the aesthetic choice of whether to leave or not to leave much space between each person's narrative to give the effect of interrupting one another—just as our lives are often interrupted by others (Etmanski et al., 2013).

Secondly, as participants often feel the cultural urge to applaud after each reading, we do ask that they hold any applause until all participants have read their contributions. This allows the full stories to be expressed and heard and allows the applause to honour the whole rather than individual groups. This also minimizes the tendency to compare and compete, or set an expectation of performance accompanied by applause. Thirdly, we acknowledge that it is a true gift to receive another's story. We ask that people actively listen to one another's stories with a level of sacredness and respect.

Finally, in order to open people's ears and hearts to be better prepared to receive the stories, we have found it useful to invite participants to pause for a moment before the reading, feel grounded in their seats, and take three shared breaths. The importance of setting the stage in this way lies in enabling participants to really hear the stories that are shared and to honour

the stories as gifts from the teller with the present moment awareness that can be cultivated from taking three intentionally deeper breaths.

Refining the process of dialogue

After the métissage is complete, we allow a pause for participants to absorb the stories by taking a moment of silence. We encourage participants to take in what they heard and feel how the stories have landed inside for them. As facilitators we are mindful of the energy in the room. Because personal details are sometimes disclosed through the telling, people may feel vulnerable, or deeply touched by hearing another's story. As such, we begin gently, softly, and do not move to a large group analytical conversation too quickly. We often invite participants to turn to the person next to them and share one thing that struck them or that they noticed. In this way, participants are able to gather their thoughts and engage in a more intimate dialogue which they might not do in the larger group immediately. We then bring the dialogue back to the full group. We debrief the conversation according to the theme of the session, based on participants' observations about what happened in the experience of writing, editing, weaving, sharing, and listening through métissage.

Round 1: After Reading of Facilitators' Métissage:

Pause (Allow a pause after reading, notice the shift in energy, then quietly engage).

Pair & Share (We invite you to turn to the person next you and share one thing that struck you or that you noticed?)

Group Dialogue: (After pair & share, engage in large group conversation asking overall: What happened? What did you notice? What came up for you; either personally or symbolically?)

Some deeper process questions that might be used:

1. What themes did you notice among the narratives?
2. Did you notice any anomalies?
3. What did you learn from these themes or anomalies?
4. How did the various stories resonate with you?
5. Did anything surprise you?
6. Did you notice any differences (e.g., based on gender or culture)?
7. Did anything confirm what you currently are thinking about [Workshop Topic]?
8. What did you learn about [Workshop Topic/Writing Prompt/Métissage itself]?

Round 2: After Reading of Participants' Métissage:

Group Dialogue: Revisit earlier questions if appropriate, e.g., What did you notice? What came up for you either personally or symbolically?

Some deeper process questions used:

1. Did you see yourself reflected in another's story?
2. What did you learn/ about métissage as a method or as a process of uncovering and co-constructing knowledge about self, others, and the world?
3. What was the difference between hearing the facilitators' story and telling your own story?
4. What does any of this tell us about [Workshop Topic]?
5. Might you apply what you learned about content or the process? If so, how?

Figure 1. Sample reflective questions

Recognizing the impact on listeners

As described by Etmanski et al. (2013), listeners frequently report at least two (of many potential) categories of experience upon witnessing or participating in crafting a *métissage*. First, as story-tellers speak, listeners are often able to see themselves reflected in the stories. This can allow for greater self-knowledge in multiple ways. For example, people's experiences may be validated through the understanding that they are not alone, or, conversely, listeners might reframe their own experiences through hearing a different perspective on a similar topic. They may even gain some awareness about the hurtful effect their behaviour could have on others. In addition, stereotypes and assumptions often become dismantled as we learn more about people's life experiences (e.g., contesting preconceptions that social privilege precludes pain). People can feel greater compassion and empathy as the complexity of another person's life unfolds before them. In this way, the *métissage*, like other arts-based methods, moves from expressing individual stories to becoming "a means of conveying truths about the human condition" (Furman, 2006, p.138). These personal narratives are not didactic or necessarily intended to convey a particular message. Rather, as points of connection are made between the tellers and the audience, people can extract their own meaning and apply these *truths* in their own contexts (Etmanski et al., 2013).

Closing the workshop

Facilitators have different ways they like to close their sessions. After a rich dialogue that often leads to deepened relationships, we ask participants to speak one word or a short phrase into the space. This word can capture what the experience was like for them, or, time permitting, allow for a longer wrap up.

Lessons Learned through Facilitating in Diverse Contexts

The above section explains what we do and offers a little context for why we do it. In this section, we offer some key lessons we have learned through the grace of participants about: clarifying the process, working with emotions, and adjusting to the context.

Clarifying the process

Although we have experientially come to appreciate the power of *métissage*, as facilitators we also take great care to help participants understand the process upon which they are about to embark. As mentioned, we often reiterate that this is an invitation; they can choose how much they want to challenge themselves. We offer that we are each responsible for taking care of ourselves while at the same time considering how we might co-create brave spaces or spaces of grace, thereby extending that care to others. Sometimes we experience resistance from participants, especially if they do not feel that they fully understood what the process would entail. As such, we invite them to flow with the process or choose how they will participate, reiterating that being an observer can be a powerful role; assuring them we will revisit their insights and observations in the debrief. We also offer ideas for consideration to participants depending on what may arise. For example, to avoid a culture of *one up-person-ship* developing, we reiterate that each person brings unique and important stories and ways of telling. We

encourage people to claim who they are and know that “everything belongs” (Rohr, 2013, p. 16). We frequently speak to the fact that we may choose to share different stories depending on who we are with, whether colleagues or strangers.

Working with emotions as they emerge

We recognize the power of arts-based practices to take people to deeper places inside themselves and, sometimes, rather quickly (Etmanski & Bishop, 2017). Through enabling participants to speak their own stories and listen to others, participants can be moved to a profound level of feeling and connection. Depending on the person and the topic, the content shared may be difficult for some people and strong emotions can be evoked. In addition to stressing the need for people to take care of themselves, as well as their decision to keep their stories as light or deep as they would like, as facilitators we stay alert to how individuals may be feeling in the moment and the emotional tone of the whole group. Recognizing the possibility that tears may arise, when this happens, we respectfully support people in the moment, connecting the experience back to the purpose so that we also support the whole group in moving forward. We also follow up privately with an individual to check whether we can be of further support.

Adjusting to the context

We recognize that each group and context is unique, and that the process has elements of interruptions, diversity, unity, and messy reality. As a result, we are mindful to make adjustments to the process as it unfolds. Some adjustments may be related to timing (e.g., shortening the editing time to ensure a more fulsome group reflection at the end) or on the process itself (e.g., having actors perform stories if it wasn't deemed safe for people to share their own stories—see Etmanski et al, 2013).

As another example, Beth utilized *métissage* to present her research findings at a conference (Page, 2016). As the researcher, she wove together excerpts of data and participants' stories in response to the research question about what sustained leaders when navigating challenge. She invited conference attendees to read the excerpts. This approach served the desire to express the research narrators' own words, bring the findings to life, preserve the confidentiality of research participants, and allow different voices to represent the diversity of the research participants who took part in the study. Likewise, Cheryl and Kathy had a whole room of approximately 50 students each read their sections in turn, in an attempt to make space for all narratives within a short timeframe. We hope these examples encourage you to stay present to what is happening in your specific context and adapt as you feel inspired.

Sharing Our Example

Having offered insights on the theory and practice of *métissage*, in this final section we share an example of our own reflexive writing on the prompt: The Power of *Métissage*.

Brian: Prior to the workshop we talked about timing, should we have a careful space between our stories or quick succession, creating the feeling of piling on top of each other. These kinds of decisions, in the moment, had little meaning to me or understanding how they might play out in practice. Being invited to present a *métissage* workshop with two experienced

colleagues was interesting for me because my academic and professional background was quite different, having little exposure to the arts.

Catherine: The idea of methodological risk-taking comes up in conversations with students from time to time. I recall that it also came up during my own doctoral defense when I suggested that we continue to allow lectures and PowerPoint presentations to dominate. If we want to address the complexity of today's challenges and bring our collective creative potential to the fore, we need to take more risks and make better use of alternative methods in the academy.

Beth: Through the window pane of *métissage*, the thoughts of individuals sharing their narrative, becomes an opportunity to share experiences, make meaning and concrete community. The prompt extends an invitation - an opportunity to convene on a topic of shared interest. What of the weaving process? Selecting a passage here, eliminating a passage there. Surfacing what most matters to share. Taking the individual passage and identifying three parts. Much like a beginning a middle and an end. Or is it an end a middle and a new beginning?

Cheryl: For me, *métissage* brings people and ideas together in a complex narrative. It weaves together the individual and the collective...messy, intricate, yet seemingly perfect. It can transform what is possible, demonstrating our connectedness and our individuality in one breath.

Catherine: A colleague once challenged the very idea that this was even a risk. She suggested that we know that arts-based and story-based practices work. We now have documented experience and lots of evidence of this. So, if we know it works, is it really a risk? Why do we continue to frame it as such?

Kathy: Lingering in my mind are stories, images, gestures, ah-has, and even sounds from many co-created *métissage*, it all belongs, like...

Brian: As we presented the workshop, each telling our stories, one on top of the other, mixed, and meaningful, I realized how I was not just a single player but like a tree in a forest, interacting with other trees. An individual among individuals, humbled by the stark contrast and juxtaposition of the other trees in the forest, their own stories like mine, familiar but distant. In this collective of sharing, I realized there was far more to gain.

Beth: The source can be self created through free writing or maybe the words and phrases are drawn from an existing source. The possibilities are endless. The creativity begins to be experienced and grows as individual passages are shared.

Catherine: Each time I hear a new *métissage*, I am delighted by the opportunity to learn more about you and about us together. Your joy. The ways you think and the way you are in the world. Your burdens to carry. Your humanity. And what these teach me about my own.

Cheryl: *métissage* is not bound simply by words. In *métissage* it all belongs: silence, phrases, gesture, imagery, and song. It has the potential to transcend dialect, language, class, and generation. For one moment, we all stand in the same field, diverse, yet connected by the thread of one prompt, one invitation. It is an invitation to reveal that which is unique to one and connected to many

Kathy: Like,

I became to know you,

Dangling feet,

Singing her story,

Being vulnerable,

Cultivating communities of belonging,

Or, the radiance of his discovery seeing the gift of *métissage* in action.

Brian: Once the workshop participants began their exercise of story telling, I was stunned by the sounds, stories, and song that emerged. It was as if the forest was coming alive as my focus shifted from my own story, and that of my colleagues, to the story of many. It was as if, in the chaos of variety and diversity an ecosystem of possibility was born.

Beth: The weaving, is much like a braid. Three parts, individually shared, now woven together. The work of the individual becomes the weave of the collective. Once individual, now shared. Once individual, now community, once alone, now together. In coming together, the power of the collective becomes visible. More meaning being created among participants now sharing a co-created experience. Through the windowpane of *métissage*, individual narratives weaving together a collective narrative. Community cultivated through the experience of coming together.

Kathy: A kaleidoscope of stories, images, gestures, ah-has, and sounds, all belonging, creating a new *métissage* within my mind. I came to know you. And realize through this process I also came to know us and me.

Cheryl: *Métissage* breathes life into possibilities, possibilities into connections, and connections into collective memories. Braiding story over story, *métissage* weaves magic and meaning with the stories that live in our bodies and our hearts. *Métissage* helps to remember the connectedness inherent in what it means to be alive. For me, that is power beyond measure.

Closing Reflections

In this article, we have offered a practical way to—as Hendry (2007) stated in the opening quote—allow networks “of relationships construct the narrative” while “disrupting categories of subject/object, time/space, past/present/ future, and body/mind/spirit” (p. 492). We hope readers who share an interest in forefronting the narrative experiences of the people with whom they work might feel encouraged by the practical strategies, lessons, and examples shared throughout this text. We also hope the theoretical framing of *métissage* offered at the outset enables readers to appreciate *métissage* as more than a simple tool. Just as scholars before us have opened the space for us to find our own individual and collective narratives in this work, we invite you to add a strand to the ever-expanding *métissage* by weaving your narrative together with ours.

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“Just” Stories or “Just Stories”? Mixed Media Storytelling as a Prism for Environmental Justice and Decolonial Futures

Sarah Marie Wiebe

ABSTRACT Our lives and the lives of those we study are full of stories. Stories are never mere stories. Qualitative researchers who document, hear, and listen to participant lived-experiences encounter and witness the intimate spaces of people’s everyday lives. Researchers thus find themselves in the position of translator between diverse communities: those affected by policies, the academy and public officials. For academic-activists committed to listening to situated stories in order to improve public policy, several critical questions emerge: How do we do justice to these stories? What are the ethics of engagement involved in telling stories about those who share their knowledges and lived-experiences with us? Can storytelling bridge positivist and post-positivist research methods? Do policymakers listen to stories? How? What can researchers learn from Indigenous storytelling methods to envision decolonial, sustainable futures? To respond to these critical questions, this paper draws from literature in community-engaged research, critical policy studies, interpretive research methods, Indigenous research methods, political ethnography, visual methods and social justice research to argue that stories are never simply or *just* stories, but in fact have the potential to be radical tools of change for social and environmental justice. As will be discussed with reference to three mixed media storytelling projects that involved the co-creation of digital stories with Indigenous communities in Canada, stories can intervene on dominant narratives, create space for counternarratives and in doing so challenge the settler-colonial status quo in pursuit of decolonial futures.

KEYWORDS Mixed media storytelling, environmental justice, Indigenous youth, relational research, arts of engagement

As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released the final report in 2015, Canadians across the country bore witness to injustices perpetuated by colonial law and policies at the hands of the state. This truth-telling, fact-finding initiative engaged Canadians in a dialogical process of reconciliation while seeking to redress the legacy of residential schools and envision alternative, brighter futures (Calls to Action, 2015). As is widely known, the residential school system in Canada removed Indigenous children from their families and cultures without consent while dislocating them from their communities, identities,

languages, and lands (Coulthard, 2013; Million, 2013). To move forward, while uncovering these uncomfortable truths about the emotional and physical injuries caused by the colonial residential school policy, the final report produced by the Commission outlined 94 Calls to Action. These ranged from adopting and implementing the *United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as well as developing a national action plan, strategies, and other concrete measures into laws and policies and to create mandatory education about reconciliation from Kindergarten to Grade Twelve as well as within higher education (Calls to Action 43, 44, 62). In addition to developing more socially just laws, policies and education curriculum, the Calls to Action also referred to the role of the media to reframe Canadian-Indigenous relations (Calls to Action 84). Researchers who are invested in social and environmental justice have a role to play in responding to each of these calls. As I discuss in this paper, through mixed media storytelling as a relational art of engagement, researchers can connect with communities in an ongoing effort to witness injustice, learn about the ongoing effects and *affects* of colonial laws and policies while imagining brighter, decolonial futures in collaboration with community partners. This ethic involves an investment into relationships, reciprocity, and respect. To counter an extractivist mode of research production that enters a field site and removes data, this approach entails listening to communities—including their more-than-human environments—and a commitment to long-term relationship-building and structural change (Wall Kimmerer, 2013). One way to do so is through the practice of storytelling.

As this essay discusses from my vantage point as a non-Indigenous academic seeking to work in solidarity with Indigenous communities for environmental justice, engaging in relational arts-based research must go beyond just producing stories for the sake of storytelling, and orient itself to the interrogation and interruption of status quo inequities. This mode of community-engaged scholarship directs its attention to systemic injustices while aiming to create space for the voices of those directly affected by colonial policies that affect their everyday lives. Mixed media storytelling, which is a research approach that draws from Indigenous, intersectional and interpretive research methods, is an avenue with the potential to do so. Building upon the rich foundation laid by scholars of Indigenous research methods, this essay will assess the potential of mixed media storytelling for the enhancement of social justice research by discussing three collaborative visual media projects with academic-activist and Indigenous partners from across Canada.

Storytelling as Relational Research: Learning from Indigenous Research Methods

Indigenous research is action-oriented at its core. There exists a rich body of scholarship in the field of Indigenous methods, from which academics can draw from as they develop their research proposals and strategies (Kovach, 2009; Strega & Brown 2015; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Specifically, Margaret Kovach discusses her training in qualitative research as she sought out a lens that would not just give voice to marginalized peoples, but generate dialogue, stress social justice possibilities for Indigenous peoples and contribute to decolonization (Kovach, 2009, 2015). Her discussion of Indigenous research methods intersects with the aims and orientations of interpretive, qualitative, and emancipatory research

approaches, including the foundations laid by intellectual traditions of feminism, critical hermeneutics, postmodernism, and critical theory, which articulate a commitment for social and political transformation. These approaches aim to engage in a relational research practice that emphasizes “research as resistance” (Strega & Brown, 2015; Swartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Wiebe, 2016). An emphasis on meaning-making, storytelling, and challenging generalizable, monolithic truth claims brings these approaches into conversation with Indigenous research methods. As Kovach articulates, these methods are now emerging from the margins and have a place on the menu of options for scholars who intend to commit to long-term decolonial research (Kovach, 2015). Indigenous methods align with interpretive methods to (re)introduce the importance of stories into research (Kovach, 2009; Pachirat, 2017; Swartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Wall Kimmerer, 2013; Wiebe 2016). At the same time, when considering the ethics of engagement and who has the authority to tell stories, researchers must learn when to step back and rather than translate stories from Indigenous communities, create spaces for them to tell their own stories in their own voices on their own terms. This is one potential way to support the self-determination of Indigenous communities through a relational research process along an ongoing, continuous, iterative path to reconciliation.

There are four key components of Indigenous research methods that this paper will consider in relation to the practice of conducting mixed media storytelling with Indigenous communities on creative collaborative research in Canada. Following from Kovach, these four components include: *holistic foundations*, *relational research*, *collective action*, and *creative methods* (Kovach, 2015, p. 55). First, the concept of *holistic foundations* draws into focus how Indigenous epistemologies are multifaceted, diverse, fluid, nonlinear, and relational. They connect lived-experience to the creation of knowledge production, which is transmitted through “stories that shape-shift in relation to the wisdom of the storyteller at the time of the telling” (Kovach, 2015, p. 53). A holistic research orientation requires an acknowledgement and respect for Indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate ways of knowing that connect mind, body, experience, and community with the natural or more-than-human environment.

As such, this research is *relational*, which means that the relationship between researchers and participants are a natural component of the research design. This involves an emphasis on “reciprocity and humour” (Kovach, 2015, p. 54; Wall Kimmerer, 2013). Doing so implies respect for the natural or more-than-human environment. For instance, it means taking only what you need from communities to counteract the history of extractivist research (Wall Kimmerer, 2013). A relationship-focused model of research requires a lengthy investment into community, which means taking time to get to know the people and the place. It may involve travel to remote locations more than once, and moving slowly in the field to get to know community-members. This could mean leaving the consent form, audio recorder, or video camera behind for an initial visit and taking time to listen, to get to know Elders and community leaders, connecting with youth, listening to stories, and participating in ceremonies or community protocols. Rather than approaching community as the fly-in expert, this relational approach necessarily requires humour and humility and listening to community members to hear what their concerns are in order to involve them in a meaningful way in

the project design. At the same time, researchers must be clear about what they can offer to community and be in service to community. Academics bring a range of skills and experiences that can be useful, whether that is scientific knowledge about health and ecosystems or how to conduct archival research or operate research technologies ranging from GIS to video camera. In the process of sharing skills and experiences, researchers interested in Indigenous methods will also learn from communities. It is imperative to think about respect, gifting, and protocols. Before entering the community that a researcher wishes to partner with, they must think about the gifts they bring and be willing to engage in a reciprocal gift-reciprocity exchange.

Flowing from this, researchers engage with communities through an ethic of *collective action* with the shared aims of challenging colonial injustice and pursuing social change. It is important that researchers clearly articulate their positionality and where they are coming from as they approach community. For instance, elaborate why they are interested in the topic of study and how they envision a collaboration taking shape. Communities will want to know about what motivates the researcher. Researchers must also be mindful of the fact that communities are diverse and do not speak with one singular voice. Moreover, despite good intentions to pursue collective action, this does not mean that these relations are always cohesive or smooth. In fact, it is most likely that frictions, tensions, and challenges will emerge. Researchers who find themselves engaged in Indigenous research projects will thus need to reflect on this discomfort and be accountable to community leaders, partners, and protocols while working through these tensions. Seeking the support from cultural advisors such as advisors and community-based mentors can assist with doing so.

Furthermore, a central aspect of Indigenous methods centres the significance of *creative methods*, where stories, dreams, songs, dances, feasts, and ceremonies become legitimate ways of sharing emotive, felt, poetic knowledges (Kovach, 2015; Million, 2013; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Wall Kimmerer, 2013; Wilson, 2008). These modes of knowledge exchange contend with objective, positivist social science research. In contrast, they are emotive, personal, caring, and heartfelt. They connect researchers to communities and cultivate an “atmosphere of engagement” (Wiebe, Aguirre, Becker, Brown, Claxton, & Angell, 2016). When collaborating on creative mixed media storytelling projects such as digital stories, PhotoVoice or community-mapping, researchers and communities together become part of a research journey. They spend time together and learn from each other, often with food, laughter, and music. In sum, while non-Indigenous scholars can apply Indigenous research methods to their scholarship, doing so requires reflexivity of one’s positionality. This includes respect for Indigenous knowledge systems as experiential, personal, relational, storied and connected to lands, waters and community life. The next section of this paper draws upon these four features of Indigenous research methods and discusses the practical experiences of collaborating with Indigenous communities in Canada on mixed media storytelling initiatives. The final section speaks to the importance of connecting these creative, relational experiences back to policy-making processes across multiple layers or levels of government (community, municipal, Indigenous, provincial, federal, international, etc.) in order to collaboratively seek environmental justice and transformative change. As will be discussed, this involves not speaking on behalf of

communities, but creating connections, committing to long-term relationships, sharing resources and being available for ongoing policy dialogue.

Mixed Media Storytelling and the Art of Engagement

To situate myself in relation to the focus of this paper on incorporating Indigenous methods in social and environmental justice research, I'll share how I began to develop an interest in mixed media storytelling, a creative method of collaborative engagement with partnering research communities that combines multiple modalities, i.e. photography, film, painting, and involves the following key elements: a) interrogation of monolithic narratives; b) co-creation of community stories; c) interruption of asymmetrical policy processes with the aim to democratize knowledge production.

During my doctoral studies, I was struck by a film called *The Disappearing Male* which drew my attention to the environmental health harms experienced by members of the Aamjiwnaang Nation living within an area known as Canada's Chemical Valley. Elsewhere, I document their experiences fighting for environmental justice (Wiebe, 2016). This story resonated with me and I wanted to learn more about how the *slow violence* of these injustices could be ongoing in Canada, out of sight and out of mind for most Canadians (Nixon, 2011). I relocated to Sarnia, Ontario/Anishinabek territory and engaged in participatory action research with community members. Nearing the final stages of my research, I was approached by youth leaders to work on a public education project about Anishinabek culture, something that was notably absent from their local high school curriculum. We decided to turn this project into a film, began to fundraise, and eventually co-produced *Indian Givers* and then screened it at the local high school the following Spring.

As my doctoral research study period came to a close in 2012, I relocated back to the West Coast of Canada, to Coast Salish territory where I grew up, and began a post-doctoral position. I was deeply moved by the experience of co-producing a collaborative film project with Indigenous youth leaders from Aamjiwnaang who taught me so much. Subsequently, I purchased a camera with my first paycheck. Soon, while based at the University of Victoria, I was called upon to document different community events on and off campus. One included the resurgence of Tsawout Nation's reef net fishing practices, which a team of academic-activists co-produced as a film called *To Fish as Formerly*. Although the film did not radically transform the state-led deliberative process over the expansion of this pipeline project, the film became a product of significant value to the community. Tsawout leaders presented it as part of their Aboriginal oral evidence before the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion project during the November 2014 hearings held in Coast Salish territory, Victoria B.C. This demonstrates one way in which collaboratively produced visual media can create relationships and speak back to and inform policy initiatives and processes, especially on difficult multilayered topics like Canada's resource extraction industry. As a post-doctoral fellow, I continued to collaborate with Coast Salish communities on several projects that incorporated creative and relational components (Wiebe et al., 2016). Furthermore, while based at the University of Victoria, I applied for federal funding to pursue post-doctoral research that examined official responses

to former Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence's hunger strike, with the underlying motivation of trying to better understand what it means to be in a treaty relationship today, a concern central to Theresa Spence's high profile effort. After an initial visit to Attawapiskat to attend the annual pow wow in the summer of 2015, I was invited to return to the community the following winter to work with the high school art students on a critical media studies and digital storytelling project. As Ashlee Cunsolo Willox and her research team discuss, digital storytelling is a research method that can deepen qualitative and narrative inquiry while focusing on "community participation, capacity development, social justice, and the decolonizing of research, knowledge and method" (Cunsolo Willox, Harper, Edge, 'My Word': Storytelling and Digital Media Lab, & Rigolet Inuit Community Government, 2013, p. 129). This creative and collaborative method of visual mixed media storytelling can be understood as a "critical visual methodology" to borrow Gillian Rose's term, and includes an emphasis on taking images seriously within their context, considering the social conditions and effects of images as well as their modes of circulation and the perspective of the researcher as they look at images (Rose, 2016, p. 22). With respect to my emerging relationships in Attawapiskat, what began as a project to examine official responses to former Chief Theresa Spence's hunger strike evolved into an additional dimension which centered on locating youth voices in the process of envisioning healthy and sustainable community wellness that moved beyond the negative portrayals of the community in the media.

Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), this narrative research, which began as a critical discourse analysis of mainstream media, evolved into the Reimagining Attawapiskat project, which centers youth voices in the storytelling process as they sought to counter the predominant portrayal of their community as crises-laden. This additional funding allowed us to assemble a diverse research team including community-members, youth leaders, academics and artists. Together, through a series of workshops held in community, we co-produced photo essays and digital stories that highlight Attawapiskat youth perspectives about the connections between their culture, health, wellness and the environment. This project, what we called the *Reimagining Attawapiskat* project aims to combine visual and written elements of political research for social and environmental change to shift the dialogue about how Attawapiskat is seen and spoken about. I'll next explain how these projects incorporated the principles of *holistic foundations*, *relational research*, *collective action* and *creative methods* and identify some challenges and lessons learned along the way.

Holistic Foundations

What sparked my interest in Chemical Valley initially was the way in which women at the forefront of the struggle articulated a connection between the health of their communities, bodies, and environments. I was first moved to engage with this community through a story and the experiences of Ada Lockridge fighting for improved health outcomes in her community as she explained in the CBC film *A Disappearing Male*. As a researcher focused on environmental justice, I am particularly interested in this intersection of community health and environments. Other scholars have highlighted how oral narratives and storytelling can enhance research about

environmental-health relations and can complement other forms of data gathering methods (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2013, p. 131). Place-based narratives from those living at the front lines of environmentally compromised environments can serve as a fluid, non-linear form of research that engage communities as well as academic and policy audiences. While my own doctoral research implemented interpretive research methods, it did not incorporate digital or mixed media storytelling methods (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Wiebe, 2016). During the final days of my field research in Chemical Valley, I was approached by youth leaders to work on a collaborative project, which emerged into a film. This undertaking sparked my interest in the power of digital storytelling in particular (i.e., image-based narratives such as photography and film) and mixed media storytelling in general (including multiple platforms and media) to holistically engage in a research process. In my experience, this involved sharing stories and lived-experiences with members of the collaborative team in mind, body and spirit. Our film shoots and interview settings took us from homes in Aamjiwnaang to the Mayor's office in Sarnia to a protest in Ottawa. As a team, we also went into the bush to learn about traditional land-based practices. The process was deeply moving and *affective*. It created a *sense of community* and an atmosphere of engagement that goes beyond what one can ever learn in the classroom or from a museum or text book (Wiebe, 2015). Our product, a documentary film called *Indian Givers* included voices from the community, ranging from youth to Elders, as well as public officials. While this co-production was not initially conceived of as a digital storytelling or participatory action research project, we learned many lessons from this experience that informed future creative, relational storytelling forms of community-engaged research. What became clear from this process is that this art of engagement is certainly a form of relational research.

As a holistic research lens, mixed media storytelling connects Elders' stories with youth voices. It can be a form of intergenerational learning and sharing as these stories can be documented, archived, and passed on as appropriate to future generations. Through this holistic approach, participants connect with lands and waters as well as ancestral lineages. This is a platform for people to "remember their roots" (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2013, p. 135). During the production process for *Indian Givers*, participating youth leaders interviewed and spent time with Elders. These Elders shared with us their knowledge about treaties, environmental health and Anishniabek perspectives about community wellness to connect past, present and future. As we saw with the digital stories produced by youth from Attawapiskat, the storytelling process is an avenue that gives voice to culture through deepening connections with their territories and environments. Similarly, the shortfilm *To Fish as Formerly*—narrated by Nick Claxton who shares his story and research with the viewer—is a video that he is able to share widely with his community, policymakers and future generations. In the video, he speaks about treaties, fishing rights, and how water is also part of his community's territory, thus drawing attention to the holistic dimensions of Indigenous research while strengthening connections between human and more-than-human environments.

Relational Research

Once relocated back in Coast Salish territory as a post-doctoral researcher, I became excited about trying to more formally structure storytelling into the development of research projects given their potential to connect wider audiences to matters of social justice. This enthusiasm emerged from my experiences co-producing *Indian Givers* as I witnessed the ways in which community-driven collaborative film initiatives can raise awareness about social, political, and environmental injustices while creating pathways for co-learning throughout the process outside of formal state-driven deliberative processes. Elsewhere I have discussed the opportunities and challenges of participating in this kind of affective approach to political research (Wiebe, 2015). Despite the difficulties of engaging across cultural differences, these processes are deeply moving and have the potential to be transformative for the researchers and participants. In the summer of 2014, when invited to paddle with the Tsawout Nation as they engaged in reef net fishing, as one of the filmmakers in the canoe, not only did I have a responsibility to document the event but also to participate. On more than one occasion, the skipper of our canoe prompted me to put down my camera and paddle. Paddling together is a way to honour “the abundant life in an environment” and recall that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples have a shared responsibility to care for and be in relationship with land and marine environments (Million, 2013, p. 169). This experience of pulling together was at times strenuous as one of the canoes sprouted a leak, and it was the first time for many of the paddlers to engage in the reef net practice, but we pulled together with the leadership of Nick Claxton. While this invitation was not expressed as an explicit research project, the experience certainly informed my thinking about relational research, paddling together and the roles and responsibilities of a team committed to Indigenous storytelling.

Relationship-building is central to working in a good way with Indigenous communities, and this takes considerable commitment and time. It also requires humility and participating in community events without a specific agenda while being open to community direction. This may directly involve hiring a local community-member to be part of the research team who is invited to provide input every step of the way, from project design through to dissemination of findings. As our team discusses with respect to our collaboration with Tsawout Nation on a transportation safety project, visual media projects can engage members of a community from many backgrounds and walks of life (Wiebe et al., 2016). After following community protocols as well as receiving ethical approval from the University of Victoria’s ethics board, we incorporated digital storytelling into the research design, with the support of a community-based lead research assistant to guide our team through the process. Eventually we produced a public service announcement video that reflected youth participation, ideas and energies as well as a digital story that involved interviews with decision-makers within and external to the community. Each of our community meetings involved skillsbuilding, food and music, and perhaps most importantly, a sense of ease and humour. Mentorship and capacity-building, for instance developing workshops on how to operate a video camera, were central to our approach. Our *Traveling Together* video was published on the Victoria and Region Community Green Map and thus publicly available to shed light on community and policy-maker perspectives on

transportation safety concerns and insights on and off the Tsawout Reserve.

A relational approach to research also informed the *Reimagining Attawapiskat* project located in Treaty 9 territory. As a post-doctoral researcher, my entry point involved accepting the invitation to attend the annual pow wow as a way to first connect with the community. This led to volunteering with the host organizers as well as dancing and feasting together. It meant entering the community in ceremony as well as sharing gifts and allowing time to hear from community leaders about their concerns. Although I was mainly interested in environmental issues, many with whom I spoke encouraged me to make the connection between community health and wellness and the environment, as well as to include youth voices in the research process. With the support from the local high school art teacher and education board, I developed a research proposal with community input prior to submission to the university ethics board and committed to returning in the winter to kickstart a critical media studies workshop, which led to the *Reimagining Attawapiskat* project with the leadership of Attawapiskat community-member Keisha PaulMartin. After the initial workshop in the community, I returned in June that year to see the art students' final projects. It was during this visit that I learned about recently received funding to continue the digital storytelling work. The next time I went to Attawapiskat in the fall of 2016, our broader team of artists and academic-activists came together to hear directly from the youth about their perspectives on the connection between culture, environment and community health to challenge the dominant crisis narrative that began to frame the community following the high profile State of Emergency declaration in response to an escalation of youth suicide attempts.

Collective Action

Collaborative mixed media storytelling projects create connections. According to Cunsolo Willox and her team, digital storytelling is:

...a way to celebrate the individual and the collective and to lend respect and credence to the lived experiences of individuals through the collective co-creation of individual narratives, and provides participants with the opportunity to work together, tell and share stories, listen to others, and learn. (2013, p. 132)

In *Indian Givers*, our crew sought to intervene as a collective on the predominant portrayals of Indigenous peoples through documentary film. Our intervention was first of all a way to make the youth voices audible for a wider audience unfamiliar with Indigenous culture. As a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous crew members, we engaged in the shared, collective praxis of co-creation as a form of radical political interruption (Rancière, 2004). On one hand, we sought to enhance the visibility of the youth by providing a platform for them to tell their own stories on their own terms. As evident in the film's narrative vignettes, which refer to non-linear, multilayered stories that travel throughout the film, and in the concluding scene, there is still a long way to go towards reconciliation in Canada. *Indian Givers* was a collective effort to shift consciousness. It was a starting point and certainly cannot claim to

resolve the ultimate aim of reconciling differences; however, it is one small step towards trying to reframe perceptions of Indigenous peoples and to engage in broader dialogue about Canadian-Indigenous relations.

Building on this experience filming *Indian Givers*, I soon learned about the potential of documentary film and visual media to be a powerful conduit for social change. As Crystal Tremblay and Leila Harris have discussed with respect to critical video engagement in Cape Town and Ghana, participatory video projects can enhance citizen engagement and promote pathways for traditionally marginalized communities to engage in the policymaking process (Tremblay & Harris, 2018). By changing narratives, collaborative film projects have the potential to deepen how multilayered policy topics are understood. *Indian Givers*, *To Fish as Formerly* and the youth digital stories from the *Reimagining Attawapiskat* projects continue to be used as teaching tools in the classroom setting. As mentioned, the *Reimagining Attawapiskat* project specifically grew from a collective effort to challenge the predominant ‘crisis’ narrative framing the community in the wake of ongoing slow-moving crises arising from the built environment and community health concerns. Though the community of Attawapiskat experienced the continuous, ongoing, and systemic conditions of colonialism, which manifested in the form of inadequate housing and repeated State of Emergency Declarations including an escalation of youth suicide attempts in 2016, this is not the only story to tell (NPR, 2016). Through creative collaborations with youth, artists, academics, and collaborators from Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds, this medium presents a way to collectively reframe how Indigenous youth are represented in the media and to interrupt monolithic community portrayals.

Creative Methods

Mixed media storytelling in *Indian Givers*, *To Fish as Formerly* and *Reimagining Attawapiskat* each demonstrate opportunities to connect difficult topics about settler-colonialism, environmental injustice and the tricky business of reconciliation with imaginative possibilities for decolonial and sustainable futures. Their projects simultaneously aim to critique colonialism and celebrate culture. In *Reimagining Attawapiskat* the involved youth produced photographs and digital stories to show what they loved about their culture and home. The project involved several phases, including pre-production, production, and post-production. The collaboration began in the high school classroom as youth expressed a desire to tell stories about the strength of their land, ceremonies, traditions, and culture. We asked them where they would like to conduct interviews and to take us to places they cared about, places that made them feel at home. Several of the digital stories illuminated the importance of connecting to the land and water as a source of healing.

Youth were invited to participate in all stages of the pre-production, production and post-production phases of the project including how to feature their voices on a public website. They participated in workshops and activities that encouraged them to produce stories about what community health and wellness means to them. Although several artists played a central role in post-production by editing the youth photo essays and videos, all participating youth were invited to review the footage collected and to provide feedback before they were

screened in the community and published on the website.¹ After a month-long workshop in the community, facilitated by Indigenous academic-artists, youth stories were shared with the high school class in community before they went live. In this process, youth artists were able to represent themselves in a way that they felt most comfortable with on their own terms.

Our *Reimagining Attawapiskat* research team gave significant thought to how best to share the stories produced. We discussed together how part of the benefit of this project was to share youth voices with other communities who might similarly experience issues such as a housing shortages, environmental contamination or mental health concerns. By producing publicly accessible content, the *Reimagining Attawapiskat* project offers the potential to network communities and to create space for youth voices as the visionaries for social change. Now the project website hosts community vignettes: photographs, artworks, and digital stories that tell different stories about life in Attawapiskat. The images and videos selected honour the strength of the culture and highlight the beauty of the territory. These mixed media storytelling vignettes are a prism of multidimensional life, offering a spectrum of perspectives about community health and cultural connections. Paintings of dancing as well as photographs of rainbows and boat rides on the river shed light on the vibrant life that exists in Attawapiskat while revealing how this community is not merely a place in duress. There is so much to learn from the young people who shared their lived-experiences and perspectives about wellbeing throughout the project. The next step for this collaborative initiative includes identifying ways to imagine possible connections between the youth voices, experiences and stories to the more formal policy process. Scholars who engage in creative arts-based research have a responsibility to think creatively with communities about how best to ensure that this collaborative storytelling speaks back to policy in pursuit of social change. This requires creating space for not just hearing from communities through consultation but listening to communities about their ideas for how to transform the status quo.

Speaking Story to Policy

Local stories have the potential to address place-based experiences and inform policy. Finished products can offer a “rich, detailed, and nuanced tapestry of voices” that emerge and provide “context and depth to localized narratives and collective experiences” (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2013, p. 132). There are numerous examples of instances where creative methods of research engagement through storytelling can connect situated experiences to the more formal policy process. For instance, Cunsolo Willox et al., describe how their research project focused on health and climate change in Rigolet spoke back to the policy process through providing the stories to not only members of the community but also policy makers, health professionals, and academics (2013, p. 133). Screening community productions is a central component of how this work can lead to greater dialogue. This can take place within and external to the community. As was our experience in Attawapiskat, the participating youth screened their works at the end of a month long digital storytelling workshop and received certificates of

¹ www.reimaginingattawapiskat.com.

completion. In light of the fluid vignette format of mixed media, the final products are now on a publicly accessible website and can be screened in a variety of settings as appropriate.

To connect storytelling with the policymaking process requires innovative and imaginative thought about decision-making. This involves finding ways to include those directly affected by policy issues and to involve them in deliberations about desired outcomes. In particular, it means identifying opportunities to engage people from all walks of life, including youth and Elders to envision alternatives. One way to do so is through *sensing policy* (Wiebe, 2016). This sensing policy approach to policymaking builds on intersectionality-based policy analysis and interpretive research methods to bring social justice central to the design and dissemination of research findings (Hankivsky, 2012; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). In practice, what this means is involving those most directly affected by issues arising in the determination of recommendations and outcomes. In an Indigenous context, this also requires respect for self-determination. For instance, it is not the place of an external researcher to tell communities what to do or how. In contrast, community-engaged scholars are most useful to communities when acting in service to communities.

In order to challenge oppressive policies and envision brighter futures, a sensing policy framework simultaneously sheds light on the visceral ways in which communities are affected by oppressive policies while also making space for their voices and perspectives about how life could be felt otherwise. As discussed elsewhere, sensing policy involves engaging lived-experience, situated bodies of knowledge, multilayered analysis and geopolitical location (Wiebe, 2016). This framework is a shift away from linear, technocratic avenues of policy development. Instead, this sensing policy approach means dialogical, iterative policy that develops solutions that are placed-based and grounded in community. Instead of referring heavily upon outsider experts, sensing policy aims to centre expertise from within communities. For instance, to address issues related to mental health in Attawapiskat, public officials should turn to youth and their own experiences to identify solutions. Young people in Attawapiskat are carriers of *situated bodies of knowledge*, they are the experts of their own life-experience. Creative collaborations like digital storytelling open up space for sharing this knowledge with wider audience beyond the situated community.

Furthermore, a sensing policy lens requires simultaneously honouring community strength and acknowledging the ongoing perpetuation of settler-colonialism. It aims to both critique and create. This lens refuses colonialism and cultivates conditions for alternative environmentally just and decolonial futures. As Glen Coulthard has discussed in *Red Skin, White Masks*, this involves interrogating asymmetrical power relations between Indigenous peoples in Canada today (Coulthard, 2014). His analysis highlights how colonialism is a structure, not an event. Thus, creative mixed media storytelling, while a valuable approach to community-engagement and a practical avenue for sensing policy, cannot simply celebrate beauty and culture. It necessarily requires a critical interrogation of the legacy of settler-colonialism. This coincides with a careful and conscientious examination of the geopolitical forces that have led to territorial acquisition, cultural dislocation and state-led attempts to separate Indigenous peoples from their communities, as was the case with Canada's Residential Schools policy, which

is now documented in depth in the Truth and Reconciliation's final report (2015). Connected to this critical examination of geopolitics, the connection between power and place and the long-term effects and affects on everyday life, is the importance of multilayered analysis. In terms of policy development, this involves a close look at multidimensional policy issues from multiple angles and perspectives. For instance, to develop an understanding of the underlying conditions and forces that led to repeated State of Emergency declarations in Attawapiskat requires an examination of federal, provincial, and local policy decisions (Pasternak, 2017; Simpson, 2016). This entails a close investigation of relevant laws and treaties and a shift in orientation to envision what it means to be in a treaty relationship today.

To move from engaging communities to listening to storytelling requires humility. This means decentering expertise from elites outside of community and finding ways to hear from the voices of those calling for action. When former Chief Theresa Spence embarked on a hunger strike in the Winter of 2012, she sought to cultivate dialogue about the failures of the Canadian state to acknowledge its commitment as a treaty partner. While Canadian officials signed on to Treaty 9 in 1905, the relationship between Indigenous people in this territory and Canadians at large is not simply constrained by this agreement. It is fluid and emergent. While many today may consider treaties something of the past, a historic contract or land secession, her hunger strike drew attention to the need to reignite a vital dialogue about how to better honour treaty responsibilities and envision decolonial futures. Her effort also cast light on the ways in which the Canadian state continued to allow the latent dying of Indigenous communities who find themselves encountering environmental injustices that are out of sight and out of mind. Beyond Attawapiskat, these range from chemical exposure in Aamjiwnaang to mercury contamination in Grassy Narrows. Increasingly, as the widespread Idle No More movement demonstrated, Indigenous communities are speaking up and out about how to transform these relationships and to envision brighter decolonial futures. Community-engaged scholars, as academic-activists may find themselves entangled within these relations as they take up the call to act in solidarity with Indigenous partners in the collective pursuit of systemic social change.

What mixed media storytelling can contribute to this end is a way to respond to this call for dialogue. This creative mode of co-creation is a means to enhance communication about tricky issues of systemic slow-moving settler-colonialism. At once, this creative form of engagement is radical and regenerative. It functions as a tool for academic-activists to collaborate with marginalized communities and speak back to harmful laws and policies that affect their everyday lives. Through long-term community-engaged research, which requires a commitment to holistic research, relationship-building, collective action and creativity, scholars can learn from communities and find innovative ways to interrupt colonial policy development. This requires starting from community voices, learning from situated bodies of knowledge, reflecting on one's positionality and a commitment to ongoing dialogue. As efforts to cultivate dialogue about reconciliation continue, non-Indigenous academic-activists must be prepared to take up the uncomfortable and unsettling work required to challenge ongoing environmental violence and systemic social injustice.

To deepen the theory and practice of arts-based community-engaged scholarship, we can learn from past experiences to move this field of study forward. This requires a close look at ethics, relationships and timelines. First, with respect to ethical commitments, it was imperative to develop ethical protocols in line with the University of Victoria's research ethics board as well as ground the research in community protocols. For instance, this involved first visiting the community from a place of learning and volunteering during the annual Summer pow wow. While based at the University of Victoria as a post-doctoral researcher, I first connected with community members on the phone and then received an invitation to visit and to develop my research project from within the community. It was during this initial visit that I met the high school art teacher who invited me to return and provide a critical media studies workshop in the community. I submitted a proposal to the education board, developed workshop materials and returned the following Winter. What I learned from this is that there are layers of ethical protocols that must be adhered to, including formal administrative applications from the university institutional setting as well as administrative protocols from within the community. In my experience, those in the community involved written and oral ethics. For instance, I would spend hours visiting with community leaders introducing myself, sharing food and tea, and listening to their advice and wisdom to get my bearings. Developing an ethical practice as a researcher is directly linked to relational accountability and ensuring that a researcher grounds one's commitment to community beyond the tight confines of an academic timeline.

Centering relationships is essential to being an ethical community-engaged researcher. This often means taking time to build rapport and trust with research participants while treating them in their full humanness — and more-than-humanness — and not simply as research subjects (Wall Kimmerer, 2013). In my experience, this involved attending ceremonies such as a sweat lodge, spending time outdoors with youth walking around the community, and cooking meals together. This kind of relational approach brings academics up close and personal with the terrain of study and cultivates a kind of intimate atmosphere. As was our experience with the *Reimagining Attawapiskat* project, by hiring Keisha PaulMartin as a youth leader and research assistant, she was a crucial part of the team. We learned from her about her community knowledge and her lived-experience and we shared with her our academic and artistic skills. At the same time, it is imperative that community-engaged researchers clarify what they bring to the table and how their skills and expertise can be of benefit. This may include the ability to access archival materials, synthesize literature, examine media articles, conduct arts-based workshops or facilitate community conversations. Central to a relational approach to community-engaged research is sharing. Sharing knowledge, sharing food, and sharing ceremony. This is in direct opposition to the standard positivist mode of research that assumes a kind of objectivity, or what Donna Haraway has referred to as a god trick (Haraway, 1988). Rather than treating knowledge as a standalone object, from this relational approach, knowledge is co-constituted between the researcher and the community. Thus, researchers have the responsibility to report on their findings and to share what they learn with the communities.

Finally, another lesson learned from these arts-based mixed media storytelling initiatives

is that timelines have their own fluidity and these do not always align with academic priorities. Community events, including ceremonies or the passing of a community-member, may prompt the researcher to pause scheduled activities. This requires respect for local knowledge about how to conduct oneself, for instance returning to the community another time to conduct a survey, focus group, or workshop. It may involve rescheduling a meeting at the last minute and certainly entails respect for the circumstances that communities encounter. Sometimes community partners will have their own timelines that may differ from the academic grant cycle. What is crucial to smooth out any misunderstandings is to establish clarity about timelines and expectations early on the relationship. Furthermore, how best to close the circle or loop on a project may vary depending on the shape of the project. With mixed media storytelling, while a project may be finished insofar as the results are made public or published, the ripple effects will continue as different audiences come into contact with the narratives. These discussions are difficult to anticipate or plan for. What can be learned from such openness with participants' personal stories out in the open is the importance of continuing relationships, being available to check-in and communicate about how one feels in response to their deeply personal lived-experiences being shared so widely. With respect to ethics, relationships, and timelines, what is crucial here is acknowledging positionality and being reflexive and open to continued feedback beyond the conclusion of a formal project end date. These types of iterative projects may be more of an opening to alternatives rather than a formal closing as the dialogue about the stories continue.

Conclusion

Mixed media storytelling is a deeply moving, affective ethic of engagement. It is an intimate approach to research that connects personal experiences to political forces that govern peoples' lives and communities. As a creative research process, it can "open up worlds of affect and intimacy" and share "a glimpse of another life" through sounds, pictures, voices and videos (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2013, p. 142). There is much that researchers can learn from communities when listening to and witnessing these stories. Crucial to creative engagement in an Indigenous context is being willing to look back on oneself with humility, engage in research holistically, develop relationships, commit to collective action and imagine alternative possibilities. Young people are especially well-positioned for this imaginative work and scholars are in a privileged position to bridge their voices with decision making-processes.

Moving forward, the challenge for most researchers engaging in this kind of research will be to think carefully about how best to impact and speak back to the policy process. These processes take place at multiple levels and scales from within community to the international arena. As a vignette that travels across space and time, moving beyond colonial state boundaries and jurisdictions, mixed media storytelling is one possible avenue for communicating across diverse geographies, translating situated bodies of knowledge for decision-making audiences, and contributing to ongoing dialogue about settler-colonialism and environmental injustices that affect communities in Canada and around the world. Critical then to move this practice along is to give careful consideration to how public officials or decision-makers can listen to the

stories produced, or better yet, how the storytellers can become decision-makers themselves. Community-engaged academic-activists hold a unique position as they bridge worlds between diverse ways of knowing. A starting point to do this difficult but necessary work is to highlight how community-members are the best experts of their own lifeworlds and that policy-makers need to hear from those directly affected in order to enhance environmental justice. This pertains to topics such as Indigenous mental health, disaster response, and climate migration, issues that affect the most marginalized. In sum, mixed media storytelling is a creative practice that incites critical conversations about tricky and messy injustices that affect peoples' everyday lives. Going forward, policy makers must share the responsibility of finding ways to not just hear but *listen* to these stories that emerge from within community. This requires an openness to transform their own practices by centering the voices of community-members at all stages of policy development from the early stages of design through to the open world of dissemination and circulation.

About the Author

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Research Article: “Spirit, Safety, and a Stand-off”: The Research-Creation Process and Its Roles in Relationality and Reconciliation among Researcher and Indigenous Co-Learners in Saskatchewan, Canada

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ABSTRACT Provision of safe water on reserves is an ongoing problem in Canada that can be addressed by mobilizing water knowledge across diverse platforms to a variety of audiences. A participatory artistic animation video on the lived experiences of Elders with water in Yellow Quill First Nation, Treaty Four territory, was created to mobilize knowledge beyond conventional peer-review channels. Research findings from interviews with 22 Elders were translated through a collaborative process into a video with a storytelling format that harmonized narratives, visual arts, music, and meaningful symbols. Three themes emerged which centered on the spirituality of water, the survival need for water, and standoffs in water management. The translation process, engagement and video output were evaluated using an autoethnographic approach with two members of the research team. We demonstrate how the collaborative research process and co-created video enhance community-based participatory knowledge translation and sharing. We also express how the video augments First Nations community ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP) of research information that aligns with their storytelling traditions and does so in a youth-friendly, e-compatible form. Through the evaluative process we share lessons learned about the value and effectiveness of the video as a tool for fostering partnerships, and reconciliation. The benefits and positive impacts of the video for the Yellow Quill community and for community members are discussed.

KEYWORDS Indigenous, research-creation, knowledge mobilization, auto-ethnography, story-telling, reconciliation

Environmental health issues are major concerns for Indigenous communities across Canada (Dupont et al., 2014; Bharadwaj et al., 2006). Water resources in Indigenous communities can be difficult to access, and are often contaminated or at risk of contamination due to industrial activities upstream and outside community water borders (Bharadwaj et al., 2006). Contamination of water interferes with traditional activities and the way Indigenous peoples experience the environment (Arquette et al., 2002; Laboucan-Massimo, 2010). Manipulation of water sources through the construction of dams and unmonitored industrial activity on waterways are long-standing concerns (Blackstock, 2001; Arquette et al., 2002).

Indigenous people's identities, cultures, and spirituality are intertwined with expressions of the natural world (Windsor and Mcvey, 2005). Water is the lifeblood of Mother Earth; a sacred gift from the Creator that connects all things and must be protected for future generations of all life. Water gives and sustains life. Humans, and in particular women, may have a sacred responsibility to care for water (Kairos and Akaitcho, 2006; Polaris, 2008; Chiefs of Ontario, 2008; McGregor, 2008; Walkem, 2007). These understandings infuse the fabric of Indigenous society and culture, and thus it is easy to understand that when various issues arise with respect to water, many aspects of life are affected.

Indigenous communities are partnering with researchers and organizations to identify contamination of their water sources (Bharadwaj, 2014). Community led research partnerships have directed aquatic cumulative environmental effects monitoring programs. Innovative and meaningful knowledge mobilization of threats to water have been made (Latchmore et al., 2018; Mantyka-Pringle et al., 2017; Baldwin et al., 2017, CWN, 2015). An example is a whiteboard animation video recognized as a culturally-appropriate form of assembling research information on environmental impacts in the Slave River Delta, Northwest Territories (Bradford & Bharadwaj, 2015).

Emerging digital technologies have enhanced research data collection, engaged youth, and improved dissemination of results. Digital storytelling, a process involving the combination of audio, video, photography, and music in developing short first-person digital narratives, has been demonstrated as an effective way of sharing research knowledge about climate change and environmental and mental health in Indigenous contexts.

This paper describes the collaborative process involved in the creation of an artistic animation video with Yellow Quill First Nation (YQFN). We share how the collaborative video production process enhanced both community-based participatory knowledge translation and sharing, as well as the community's ownership of and access to research information.

Harmonized Storytelling Tradition

Indigenous Storytelling

Oral-based knowledge systems that include storytelling as a primary act predominate among Indigenous groups from Turtle Island, including Anishinaabe, Dene, Saulteaux, Cree, Iroquois, Mi'Chif, and other Nations (Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Lavallee & Poole, 2010). Storytelling is often intergenerational in nature; that is, grandparents and other Elders tell stories to youth as a method to teach about ways of life, relationships, practices, cultural beliefs, values, customs, rituals, and history (Corntassell, 2009; Davis, 2014). Lessons are expressed through a range of story genres, from humorous to deeply serious and spiritual (Archibald, 2008). They can focus on social, political and cultural events, practices, and theories. Indigenous storytelling involves expert use of vocal and body expression, the voice, pitch, verbal imagery, facial animation, context, plot and character development, natural pacing of the narration, and meticulous genuine remembrance of the story (Christensen, 2012). Storytellers are held in high regard in many Nations (David, 2004; Archibald, 2008; Iseke & Brennus, 2011).

Storytelling as Indigenous Pedagogy

Storytelling has an advantage of teaching social norms and expectations, moral lessons and reinforcing behaviours for children and youth. Storytelling benefits individuals through identity formation and communities through the weaving of different cultural elements together for feelings of unity (Davis, 2014). Storytelling in Indigenous communities contributes to educational, social and cultural development; maintenance of traditional knowledge; and builds capacity to advocate for change (Battiste, 2002; Piquemal, 2003; Dowell, 2006). Storytelling supports passing of essential ideas from one generation to the next, and it honours customs, knowledge and philosophies (Iseke-Barnes, 2003). It transforms people to agents of change and enhances one's personal resilience (Shoreman, 2009; Hughes-Hassell, 2013).

Challenges to Storytelling in Indigenous Communities

The erosion of culture, language, participation in traditional economies, and degradation of land and water threaten the continuity of storytelling traditions in Indigenous communities (Heritage Canada, 2005; Jackson, 2018). Changes to ecosystems threaten the resilience, and biodiversity of regions, from which stories, totems, icons, characters, and locations are based (Pfeiffer & Voeks, 2008; Voggesser et al., 2013). Social processes including cultural appropriation and hybridization threaten the values and 'sacredness' of stories through tensions between story keepers and usurpers (Taylor, 1997; Owen, 2008). The internet is a competing interest against mentorship by Elders for Indigenous youth (Rice, Haynes, Royce, & Thompson, 2016). The internet, while providing advantages of social connectivity, enhanced access to knowledge, and other opportunities for Indigenous people, is countered by its pervasiveness, unmoderated online racism and abuse directed toward Indigenous people, cyberbullying, and difficulties of legal regulation and policing (Radoll, 2012; Rice et al., 2016). Additional issues include who owns and controls Indigenous knowledges (Schnarch, 2004; Ball & Janyst, 2008). In some Indigenous communities, there is both the desire to work with academics and other researchers to support the maintenance of Indigenous knowledges and practices, and the fear of losing control of community-held knowledge and practices to the wider world without appropriate attribution or community members' permission for that information to be shared (Castleden, Morgan, & Lamb, 2012; Ninomiya et al., 2017). More tension is brought forward from academics who need to publish work in particular pathways to advance in their careers (Stiegman & Castleden, 2015; Bradford, Bharadwaj, & Lindenschmidt, 2016). Academics are beginning to provide lessons on alternate pathways to mobilize knowledge that may be accepted institutionally and seen as legitimate forms of publication (see for example, Castleden, Hart, Cunsolo, Harper, & Martin, 2017). However, more stories of practical experiences are needed to contribute to guiding principles across research and non-research contexts.

Some Solutions

There is a need to develop policies and practices that support and maintain the existence of Indigenous languages, knowledge and traditions (Simpson, 2004; Lowan, 2012). Educational curricula that blend Western science with Indigenous environmental knowledge, support for

the creation and delivery of Indigenous language, field experiences courses, and Elder-in-residence programs have contributed to that end (Norris, 2006; Brook and McLachlan, 2008; McCoy, Tuck and McKenzie, 2017). Ways of how to overcome knowledge translation problems using techniques that embrace storytelling as a traditional practice, and also take up internet-based technologies to share that information in ways that attract youth, remain culturally harmonized, and meet the needs of academics on co-learning journeys with Indigenous groups are needed (Bradford and Bharadwaj, 2015; Castleden et al., 2017; Saini, 2017).

Evolution of Collaborative Research Partnership

This project was borne out of a larger collaborative Indigenous-led research program that has evolved over 15 years. A research relationship with the Federation of Sovereign Indian Nations (FSIN) and individual Saskatchewan First Nations, built on trust, co-operation, and mutual respect, grew from a community-driven environmental health project in 2004. Subsequently, a team (the Safe Water for Health Research Team, hereafter termed SWHRT) of Indigenous people representing members from First Nations, Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations and Tribal Councils, academics, members of the Saskatchewan Research Council, and federal and provincial governments was formed and members met regularly to plan community-driven environmental health initiatives. Through conversations and planned workshops, research questions and objectives for this work emerged naturally.

As a direct outcome of a SWHRT workshop research grants were co-developed and successfully acquired with the aims of gathering narratives from the community on the human dimensions of effective water provision and regulation (Bharadwaj, 2014). Council members were involved in the grant proposal development where they requested the participation of Elders and youth and the gathering of stories about YQFN's Nut Lake.

Community Partners and Context

Yellow Quill First Nation is located in Treaty Four territory, about 300 kilometers east of Saskatoon and with the main reserve (about 15,000 acres) of 800 people located around Nut Lake. On-reserve is the 250 student K–12 Nawigizigweyas Education Centre, health and social services centres, a general store, a community hall, a water treatment plant, a sewage station, and the Band office.

Nut Lake is a vital and significant water body, and its surrounding territory are critical to the Saulteaux people of YQFN. Their people, spirit, culture, social and traditional livelihoods, economies are tied to the lake, along with the plants and wildlife inhabiting its shores. Councilors and band members have expressed concern about Nut Lake's water quality, given the agricultural land, municipalities, and industries in the same watersheds located upstream. Nut Lake is prone to flooding, increasing local concerns about potential pollutants infiltrating the groundwater drinking water supply. Between 2011 and 2017, unpredictable spring flooding on and around the reserve occurred despite upstream and downstream water control structures. YQFN members continue to feel concerned about their drinking water quality, as well as the impacts of climate change to Nut Lake.

Application of a Multimedia Tool

The research team was informed research results are often inaccessible to the community. The formats in which results are shared—written words published in reports and journals, or embedded within Powerpoint presentations—were deemed the primary reasons.

Alternative ways to mobilize knowledge were needed. Through an Indigenous-driven research program in the Northwest Territories (Bradford & Bharadwaj, 2015), an enhanced e-storytelling technique, sharing and disseminating traditional knowledge from a compendium of people as a single-voiced narrative, was co-created. This method was shared with YQFN and others and generated an extremely positive response. YQFN expressed a desire to use this method to share information gathered through the larger research program.

YQFN faces ongoing challenges with access and rights to water. For example, the community has no control of Nut Lake's floodgate mechanisms, leading to ongoing flooding and the lake's eutrophication. Community members expressed desire to gather Elders' knowledge and experiences about water, as a support for their applications to the Truth and Reconciliation process. This act would also ensure Elders' memories were collected and preserved for future generations. This paper describes how arts-based animation projects enhance community-based participatory knowledge translation and sharing processes. We express how this knowledge mobilization project augments youth interest in storytelling, and upholds principles of ownership, control, access and possession of research information. Through an evaluative process, we share lessons learned about the value and effectiveness of the video as a knowledge mobilization tool and the benefits and positive impacts of the video for the YQFN.

Mixed Method Design for Research-Creation and Evaluation

Research-Creation

This study used an engaged mixed method design where research-creation occurred simultaneously with research evaluation as depicted in Figure 1.

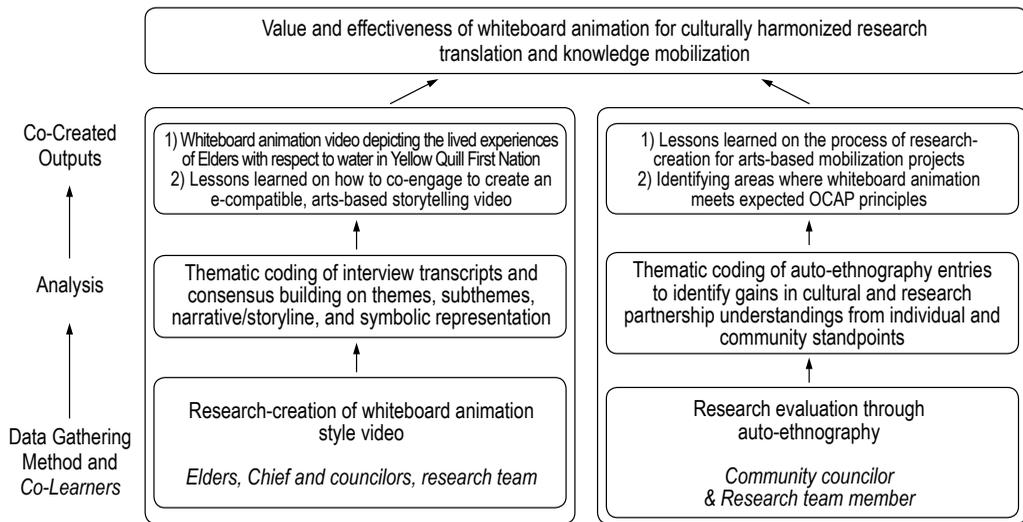


Figure 1. Concurrent Mixed Methods Engaged Research Design for Research-Creation with Yellow Quill First Nation.

Research-creation is an emergent social science practice combining the strengths of contemporary media with the study of pedagogy and practice while engaging in a creative process that builds an artistic work as a direct product (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012). Co-learners in the research-creation process worked together to build relationships while writing and animating a new community narrative about their experience of changing water access over their lifetimes. Co-learners included 22 Elders, the Chief and council members, media production personnel, researchers and students, and a professional artist. Elders (N=22 14M, 8F; Average age: 59; Range: 42–81) were interviewed between February 2014 and June 2015. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and verified by participants between July 2015 and April 2016. Interviews were thematically coded (as per Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006) by two researchers (Bradford, Bharadwaj) and the community council member and coordinator for this project (Neapetung). Three main themes—spirituality of water, the need for water for survival, and stand-offs in water management—were presented to the Chief, other members, and Elders interested in participating in the analysis of interviews. Themes were woven into a narrative by the council member and the researchers, telling the story of each main theme from the perspective of the Elders whose interview content and experiences aligned with that theme. Researchers, Elders, and Chief and council members prepared a table of potential symbols that would appropriately depict aspects of the narrative arising from each main theme. Multiple iterations of symbol identification were completed until co-learners involved in the analysis reached consensus on the symbols. This took 14 months (May 2016–June 2017).

The table of symbols was presented to a contracted professional artist, who met repeatedly with researchers, community coordinator, and council members to gain insights on each symbol and how it represented aspects of each theme. The artist used culturally harmonized

media identified by community members (willow charcoal on heavy unbleached cotton paper) to draw symbols. She prepared draft drawings of symbols for review, then the team mapped out the symbols to a larger draft ‘whiteboard’ so the artist could understand sequencing and placement of images on a map where Nut Lake was the central feature. Symbols were placed around the lake in accordance with the Saulteaux guiding principle of the Circle of Life. The media productions team video-recorded the drawing and sped it up to match with narratives that were recorded by community youth and volunteers. The whiteboard animation research-creation was adapted from a previous protocol (Bradford & Bharadwaj, 2016).

Auto-Ethnography

Auto-ethnography, as a method, is a way of investigating how personal stories and experiences elucidate morals and ethics on individual and cultural levels without the pressures of positivistic ideals in academia (Ellis, 2004; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). An approach that systematically analyzes personal experiences to contribute to understanding cultural ones (Ellis et al., 2011). The purpose of auto-ethnography is to examine individual transformations over a specific experience, or range of time to uncover learning in [an] individual(s). In this study, thoughts, beliefs, and learning relating to relationships, research-creation, and research findings of the council member and one key researcher, deeply embedded in the project, were gathered to demonstrate how the relationship between the co-learners evolved. Three questions were explored three times during the course of the project; at inception (June 2016), after creation of the art-animation (June 2017), and at the closing of the project (October 2017). Questions included:

- 1) What have you gained from this project (so far)?
- 2) What has the community gained from this experience (so far)?
- 3) What do you want others to know about your experiences with this project (so far)?

The councilor (Neapetung) recorded his answers on a digital recorder and had a note-taker present to assist with recall of context and talking points. The councilor wanted to ensure his thoughts and words were recorded accurately, and any *low speaking* was clarified, and backed-up by notes. Recordings were transcribed and both notes and transcriptions verified by Bradford and Neapetung. The researcher (Bradford) kept a journal of her answers which were submitted to the research team for thematic analysis (as per Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results

Five sets of findings are discussed: the initial thematic analysis of interviews; the co-created set of symbols to represent themes; the whiteboard animation video¹; the auto-ethnographical themes; and comparison of findings to principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP).

Thematic analysis elder interviews

Three main themes emerged from the 22 Elder interviews and were based around similar

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqGSm8xFR5A>

experiences of the interview cohort.

The theme of *Spirit* expressed the importance of water as a sacred, spiritual essence contributing to community wellbeing and as a woman's responsibility to protect. Women most often relayed information about the spiritual meaning of water for their community. The water provided them with directives: flooding meant that it was time as a community to undertake cleansing, while drought meant time for fasting to return balance to the cosmological system. Water provided resources for the community including duck eggs, berries, medicines, and a location for gathering as families or as a community. Women discussed how new regulations, policies, and developments have impeded the community's ability to maintain their sacred connections to water. They told stories of difficulties in continuing sacred practices around childbirth, grieving, and in relationship-building with other nations. Much reflection was provided in how changes to the community's water and lake were both a precursor to changes in community member behaviours, as well as a prophecy from Elders of long ago. Two women's voices were selected by consensus to tell the narrative created for the *Spirit* theme. In YQFN, women are considered the keepers of the spirit of water because of birth stories (we are all born from water through our mothers, and thus women are the keepers of life-spirit through the water of the womb).

The second theme, *Safety*, discussed the need of water by all species for survival, and was brought forth by the working men who were interviewed. They expressed the practicalities of water; that is, without water there would be no life, no ceremonies, no plants for food or medicine, no hunting and fishing, no transportation, no way to bathe, and there would be a general inability to survive as a community. The men concurred that the waters provided directives—at one point, the community became too large to be supported by the fish, wildlife, and timber in the region and was hence split into three communities, with two groups moving to new lakes. This theme also focused on how stewardship and practicality principles were overpowered by the white-settler need for 'convenience', and how convenient infrastructure such as dams and reservoirs impacted species formerly dependent on natural flows. Utility as a concept superseded morality; this was described in an interview discussing how damage to surrounding non-Indigenous communities was always measured in monetary value and yet no dimensions of damage to Indigenous communities were ever given. The stories told by these Elders also included dramatic moments of escape from changing waters (floods, falling through ice unexpectedly), as well as how changing access and use of water influenced local economies, livelihoods, and food provision. A younger man's voice was selected for this narrative to exemplify the gendered role of being on the land hunting for one's family.

The third theme, *Stand-offs*, explored how political challenges have influenced the community's identity and cultural sustainability. Stories about political changes were brought forth by co-learners. Some had previous experience as councilors and Chiefs, while others had learned of the experiences of other councilors and Chiefs that had developed into stories told throughout the community as lessons to youth about political process. Many of these stories expressed the lack of voice community members had in political processes such as selling goods through the 'Indian agent', accessing permits to leave reserves, influencing decisions of

water control boards, and more recently, regaining land entitlements and advocating for treaty rights (including water). A strong male voice was chosen for narration to reflect conventional political leadership in this community.

Symbolic representation of themes

Once themes were analyzed and consensus was reached on narratives representing each theme, a table of symbols was co-created to guide the artist drawing of the story. Tables 1, 2, and 3 present the selection of symbols representing each theme.

Table 1. Themes, subthemes and symbols for *Spirit* section

Section, Theme and Subtheme	Symbols
Part 1: <i>Spirit</i>	These symbols will all be drawn in black around the outside of the lake and mostly above the lake. Black colour is selected to represent man, the north, and the winter.
Introduction	Draw the outline of Saskatchewan, pinpoint Yellow Quill First Nation main reserve. This will be the central focus. Pictures will be added to this central lake shape outline across the video.
Moved out for school, life events...	A residential school (Muscowequan – towering brick building), farm outline, two wedding rings
Log cabins by the water	Log cabin around the east side of the lake
Water was pure, lived a good life by the water	A gleaming water droplet, happy YQFN face
Water is what we are born from... gives us life	Outline of mother and infant
Lake center of the community	People gathered by the water's edge giving tobacco to the lake
Shared connections	Drawn arms from the people in the previous piece holding hands
Drank water and so did animals	Draw person with mug dipping into water, horses head bent down next to it
Hauled it in barrels, cut ice in winter	Barrel, ice cube, crystal clear and gleaming
Hunting animals	Outlines of some animals – beaver, muskrat, moose, elk, deer
Bathed, laundry, collection	Draw scene of people bathing or washing clothes, others collecting eggs along the shore
Ceremonies connecting with elements	Elements (i.e., waves for wind, water droplets for water, sun, moon) drawn around outside edge of medicine wheel
Lived in family groups and took care of each other	Draw family holding hands
Learned to respect water very young	Hands holding water with water dripping down from fingers
Water gives spirit - Floods are cleansing, enhances spirituality	Hands holding water splashes the water on a face outline
Dam built in the 60's, changed	Draw outline of what the dam looks like
Couldn't drink water anymore	Dirty glass of water

Water controlled by the whims of other people (government, water board ...)	Outline of man and his hand holding a switch
Ceremonies hidden	Curtains drawing closed over people sitting in circle
Sharing resources and getting taken advantage of	Person giving something to another, but other person holding fingers crossed behind back
Elders predicted the changes	Elder talking to others sitting and watching
No one touches the water - polluted physically and spiritually	Child holding hand near water and bigger hand stops that hand from touching water
Lake as an afterthought	Someone throwing something over shoulder into lake
Not respecting other living things	Sign saying "Beaver control, \$ per tail"
Worrying	Worried face or question marks
Afraid of losing the teachings on the sacredness of water	Elder teaching young

Table 2. Themes, subthemes and symbols for *Safety* section

Theme	Symbols
Part 2: <i>Safety</i>	The drawings for this section will be around the outside of the <i>Spirit</i> drawings and drawn in orange and red to represent the east and west directions, the cognitive components of people, the summer and autumn, and a combination of people (settlers and Indigenous people)
People together around the lake	Draw people gathering around the lake
Split into three	Three arrows away from lake
Raised cattle and cut hay, haying bees	Cattle, hay bales
Cords of wood	Stacked cords of wood in wagon on road
Convenience, no sugar no booze...	Draw beer bottle with Circle and slash through (in red), bag of sugar with circle and slash
Water was clean	Clean cup of water
Farming and human waste poured into creek	Barrel of pesticide in a stream that is flowing out to lake: this is a pretty important symbol for YQFN because of historic events
In the fall when it dries up we see the sludge from the pesticides and waste	Sludge waste, dying plants, bare tree trunks
Animals poisoned and we ate them, berries and medicine disappearing	Animals drinking from that stream downstream from where the bottles are poured
Greed for money over the earth	Draw planet earth, then dollar sign
Everything grew because of water	Draw plants (tiger lillies, bulrushes) along lake edge
Fish ladders and hurt fish dying	Fish ladder and fish swimming up it
Floodgates making life easier?	Picture of floodgates or go back to previous one and circle it in new colour

Sopping ground, flooded land	Flooded fields and underground
Flooded houses	Flooded houses, and a calendar which gets flipped and shows next year, and next year, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014...
Town flood and cost	Write 12 million \$
New water plant	Draw outline of new water plant
Teaching kids lessons so government not seen as a hero	Man in suit with gold medal around neck holding arms up in victory, person teaching young children in a sharing circle about history and traditions
Lessons	Papers with words like treaty rights, history, contaminants, at school plus side-by-side image of elder teaching kids
Thinking – intellect	Hunting, measuring distance with own eyes. Setting traps
Listening to Elders	Young kids listening to Elders in a circle
Water is our highway, floodgates ruin that	Stream going off in distance with canoe floating down, and floodgates closing across the stream, stars drawn in background

Table 3. Themes, subthemes and symbols for *Stand-Off* section

Theme	Symbols
Part 3: <i>Standoff</i>	These drawings will be done in blue on outside of circle to represent the night, winter, emotions
Argument	Two outlines of people arguing
Flood gate control and water board	People sitting around board table, Saulteaux person sitting off to side, vote ensues and people's arms get put up but not the Saulteaux person
Flooded field	Another flooded field and go back and circle the calendar from before
Community pasture and good citizens	People working on hay bales together, patting backs of cows, shaking hands...
Selling through Indian Agent	Man in suit with Indian agent label on, permits in pocket or around him, measuring cattle, pocketing money* another important image here
Cutting wood and selling it in town	Person buying a permit and then selling wood to townspeople
Industries (power, water, gas) not getting permission for use of Yellow Quill resources	Person with 'I don't know' expression or shrugging
SaskWater owns the water	Person holding up paper with words "Water Deed" on it while YQFN people collect berries and canoe in a lake
Reserves paying money to corporations for resources	Person holding up bills labeled Gas, Electricity, Water and frustrated expression
Hands are tied	Two hands tied at wrists
Water not in Treaty 4	Paper with Treaty Four written on top held in hands of Elder as they sit looking at lake
Buying up land, 3 way standoff	For sale signs drawn around west side of the lake, YQFN people building it up, but government or other agencies pointing fingers at the paper and at each other

Paying taxes, milking us for land that's ours	Envelope with stamp labelled 'taxes' and addressed to YQFN
Responsibility to raise children and grandchildren to protect YQ	Children learning from Elder at side of lake
Still have culture	Eagle flying away
Kids at school but also learning at home	School building and mom and dad teaching kids at home
Water connects us all	Water droplets floating across the sky as if being tossed by a child
Good place to start, teaching culture and traditions	Community members holding hands and talking to one another
Worth fighting for	More people are drawn and more kids and people keep getting added holding hands, arms around each others waist... until a big group is there

Specific details on why symbols were selected were at times deemed sensitive. Thus, further details on symbols is not provided at the community's request.

Research-creation output: Artistic animation video

The next co-created output was the artistic animation-style video. It is not a conventional whiteboard animation. Instead, the drawing process was recorded in its entirety, then sped up to fit the pre-recorded narratives. Community volunteers, recruited from summer staff and students at the Yellow Quill Urban Services office, provided the voice acting. In this case, the artist was video-recorded while she drew the sequence of symbols. Willow chalk and paper were used, as the media did not allow for the quick erasing and rapid movement from one aspect of a story or concept to another. The quick erase concept was also not aligned with the deeply reflective cultural practices expressed by Elders, where mistakes are records of learning and not to be erased. Flute music was suggested as most relevant and appropriate. Soundscaping and editing was completed to finalize the draft video. Sections of video were presented to Chief and Council and interested Elders. Suggestions were incorporated and changes made.

The final copy was presented to Chief and council members. Legal representation provided additional advice for changes necessary for protecting sensitive aspects of local knowledge. A community video launch was held in July 2017 for community members, local school students, and researchers, and with the artist donating the original drawing to the community. DVD copies of the video were gifted to each Elder or his/her family members, the school teachers, and several copies, held by councilors, to the Band office. Ownership of the video was agreed to be held by the community. The video link was shared by the University's media production unit with permission of community councilors who did not yet have a locally-hosted account for hosting the video.

Auto-ethnographical findings

The auto-ethnographical findings reflect the learning experienced by both a researcher and a

local councilor, key contributors to the research-creation process. Bradford's research account expressed learning in terms of how to be respectful, relevant, and responsible in co-creating research outputs with Indigenous communities. Neapetung's auto-ethnographical findings relayed messages about learning to trust researchers, sharing vulnerabilities in order to share the weight of the importance of the work, and leading reconciliation efforts on behalf of his community. These findings developed over the project:

1) What have you gained from this project (so far)?

I found today to be a big step towards building a friendship. I did not know whether the Chief and council members would be supportive of us coming in and suggesting the making of a video from their Elders words and thoughts—like we were selling out their stories. I was afraid that at worst, we would be asked to leave, and told we were being disrespectful of their Elders, some of whom had died since the interviews were done, and at best, told to come back another day. I was surprised to have been welcomed, even after stumbling over my too complicated words. It was right for us to present tobacco, and to listen carefully to the Chief's thoughts about the Delta Ways Remembered video [pilot video presented to group as idea]. There was the immediate ask for the names of the Elders involved in the interviews. I was worried because we couldn't share that info without ethics approval to do so, so I thought the Chief would be upset. We explained why, but I could tell that would be a sore spot. (Neapetung, June 2016)

When they first came in, uh, I thought to myself, 'Here we go again, another research project that doesn't help us.' But it turned out to be different. And the two of them [Bradford, Research Assistant] were so nice and genuine. They brought tobacco. They prayed with us. They listened. The video they showed us was really...um, emotional. Moving. Some of the councilors had a hard time keeping it together. I thought maybe this could work, but I wasn't ready to go all out. The Chief needed some time too. I waited for him to tell me what to do before I called them back. (Neapetung, June 2016)

Initial auto-ethnographical entries revealed two challenges; first, from the research side, there was the desire to create a friendship and go about approaching the Chief and council in a respectful way. Secondly, there was a defensiveness from the community's side about getting into a research relationship that may be seen as driven from researcher interest. At the outset of the project, ethical dilemmas complicated the relationships. Within the community, there was the desire to know which Elders had been interviewed, and what they said in those interviews. Researchers were not able to reveal identities because of consent and confidentiality agreements put in place by institutional ethics policies. Overcoming this challenge was deemed a way to demonstrate respect and trust among the co-learners. Elders, originally involved, were contacted and were reminded of their roles in the earlier project. They were re-sent their

transcripts if desired. If those Elders chose to share their transcripts, it was up to them. In that way, the community members could learn of the Elders who were involved, at their request, not because of researcher action. The drive for this knowledge by the community was not to point fingers (as feared by researchers) but for pride in families whose Elders may have died. Living relatives wanted to be able to be proud of Elder family members for their involvement, as well as have copies of their words as they were nearing end-of-life.

Initial reflections revealed a lack of guidance and familiarity with ways of approaching building a research relationship. While Bradford was uncertain about protocol and formality, Neapetung was unfamiliar about how to enter the relationship in a way that preserved exit opportunities and allowed for time to reflect, and discuss opportunities among community decision makers without researcher pressure.

2) What has the community gained from this experience (so far)?

What we gained from this goes beyond the video...um, the video is great. The teachers use it at the school. Uh, we show it to companies when they come in...we want them to know our history. We gave a copy out to each family. We share the YouTube link. The drawing is still hung up at the school. But, I think Lori [Bradford, researcher] is important. She did things in the right way, a good way. She asks about protocols. Brings tobacco or other important things to our meetings. You know, it's all important. We did it together in a good way. The projects just exploded now. I mean, we're doing some environmental stuff, learning about what's in the lake which we've been curious about for a long time. We're doing the urban movers stuff too. We needed Lori to show us how to get started with that work. The youth, they're interested. Some of them tried to make their own videos. They fiddled around and now they're figuring it out. I think we gained some inspiration. (Neapetung, July 2017)

I don't think it's right for me to talk about what the community has gained, because I'm not in or from the community. But as co-learners, we gained knowledge and experience together. We made mistakes, I made mistakes, but I was forgiven and that felt so good because I was really worried. I think we can keep up the work together now, and I'm not afraid to high five Myron [Neapetung, councilor] over our small victories. I see him at the [Recreation Center] sometimes and we're friends, talking about our kids mostly. I can also text him about upcoming things and know he'll get back to me when he can. We've moved beyond the tip-toe on eggshells part that takes a lot of energy and thought, and are comfortable now. I don't take that for granted, because it reaffirms how important the ongoing effort on our relationship is to supporting each other through our reconciliation journeys. (Bradford, October 2017)

The focus on project outcomes highlighted two findings; firstly, that the video was well received by the community and acted as a stepping stone to further work. Secondly, the video was less important to the councilor and the research team than the relationship between the

community representatives, and the researchers themselves. At the heart of the analysis, there was a realization of the humanity of both researcher and councilor that was precarious at first, but solidified through mutual challenges faced over time.

3) What do you want others to know about your experiences with this project (so far)?

I'd like others to know that this kind of work is not easy, probably won't produce the journal articles, book chapters, or invitations to international conferences that count as academic career success. But to me, the gratitude of the community is worth more than those things. This work takes time, and energy. It takes emotional commitment. But, I like to be surrounded by a group of people working together for something bigger. In this case, it was doing justice to the lived experiences of the Elders, and also a story that I think, all Canadians should hear. (Bradford, October 2018)

What I want others to know about this...um, is that there are people out there who...uh, do things in a good way. That they [Researchers] came in and followed protocol. That they kept asking about whether they were following protocol and doing things the right way, and, uh, that there was respect. They showed respect to all of us, the students, the Elders, and the Chief. It was the little things too, you know, they baked a cake for the video launch. Lori [Bradford, researcher] answered her phone whenever I called. You know, we've been through it all, and, um, it's hard to figure out who's gonna to be there for the long-haul and who's gonna come and go. And now, it's getting easier for us to figure that out. We needed to let others in, so we can all learn, and heal, so for us too, um, we did some reflecting on how we do things and saw that we, um, we could open up a bit more. We brought a lot of pride back to our community with this video. People were proud of their family members for telling their truths about water, and um, when the video was done we felt like finally, they [researchers] listened. (Neapetung, October 2017)

Entries to this question expressed four themes. First, that while there was difficulty in navigating the initial stages of research relationships, trusting relationships between individuals and groups were ultimately created. Second, maintaining these relationships required ongoing energy and open communication throughout the project and beyond. Both co-learners reiterated the need for continuing to work at relationships and checking-in to be sure expectations were being met. Third, there were reflections from Indigenous partners told through Neapetung that they saw this as a beginning for their healing journey, and that a part of the journey could be done together. Finally, the councilor revealed that as a community, they felt that the researchers had listened.

*Synthesis of results and OCAP principles***Table 4. OCAP Principles and Responsiveness in this Project**

OCAP Principle	Meaning*	Achievement in this Project
Ownership	Ownership implies the rights of a Nation and their cultural knowledge, data, and information. Only the community or group owns that information much like individuals own their personal information.	The video provides ownership of cultural knowledge in a form aligned with traditional storytelling principles. The video expresses the community's spiritual, cultural, personal connection and lived experiences with water. The video is jointly owned by the researcher team and the community with the premise that either owner can share the video widely. This ownership arrangement was actively agreed on and is evaluated on an ongoing basis by both researchers and community members. The agreement reflected growing trust between the researchers, councilor, and community.
Control	First Nations communities, and representative bodies are equal decision makers within all aspects of the research process and control resources, research planning and data management processes.	The research process was co-created with the community councilors over several months of interactions prior to the co-development of the video. The Elders, councilor and researcher worked jointly directing decisions related to all aspects of the research process, video creation, and video sharing. This manuscript was also co-conceived by the co-learners. Control was an issue when disclosure of Elders interviewed was requested. Control was placed back in the community via individuals who were interviewed vested with control of their interview transcripts.
Access	First Nation communities and organizations have the right to oversee and make decisions on access to information about themselves regardless of format, or location where retained. Access may be realized in practice through standardized or official protocols.	Throughout the research process councilors and Elders contributed to the planning of the research and the development of video themes. They oversaw the selection of plot, symbols, narrators, and music for the video. This was an iterative process where trust and relationships were built. Appropriate First Nations protocols were respectfully honoured and verbal agreements were formulated among our First Nations partners.
Possession	Possession refers to the mechanism by which ownership of information can be supported and protected. Possession refers to stewardship and physical control of community information.	The whiteboard video provides a means to support the ownership of cultural and traditional information in a digital storytelling format. Without any outside influences, the community can share the video to wider audiences for purposes that are meaningful and beneficial to them.

Source: First Nations Information Governance Centre (2018)

In the past, researchers developed and imposed projects without community engagement or input into the research process. Researchers entered communities, collected data without respect for local culture, and then exited having little or no community interaction or consideration of how research could be shared or even benefit communities. Indigenous people were not involved in research decisions. Through our collaborative research process an iterative cycle of engagement and discussion naturally unfolded to inform our collective decisions about what research information should be collected, who should gather it, maintain it and have access to it. Research was conducted jointly, rather than individually. Research was relevant to the questions and priorities of the community as opposed to researcher interest. Results were co-created and transformed into a knowledge mobilization instrument that respected the community's decisions regarding how research information is to be shared, to whom, how and for what purpose; thereby contributing to the four key OCAP principles. In addition, reflection and meta-analysis were undertaken to inform future work and to reinforce relationships.

In summary, the results indicate that protocol, shared decision making, and ongoing effort on maintaining and improving relationships were pivotal to the completion of the video, and lessons learned on managing mutually beneficial research-creation work.

Discussion

The research-creation process guided co-learners toward objectives of gathering Elders knowledge, co-creating an e-compatible output that was culturally harmonized, undertaking a process that involved youth, upholding the principles of OCAP, and providing lessons for other First Nations and research teams looking to undertake research partnerships. From the point of view of the community members, via the councilor, creating the video facilitated reconciliation between the community and the research team. The video itself provided further outcomes; that is, it was deemed a source of pride, a pedagogical tool, a link to Elder knowledge, inspiration for further work and for youth capacity building, as well as the start of a healing journey with YQFN's neighboring municipalities. Anecdotal evidence from Neapetung's autoethnography indicate that youth went on to create artistic animation-style videos. Combination of traditional practices with technological advancements inspired youth.

Other multimedia projects with Indigenous communities had similar results. Emphasis on devoting energy to maintaining accountability and trust in research relationships (Wilson, 2008; Cunsolo Willox, Harper, & Edge, 2013; MacKenzie, Christensen, & Turner, 2015), pride in creating a tangible and empowering output, especially with youth (Flicker et al., 2014), and the expressed need to begin reconciliation journeys together during and after the process (Castleden et al., 2017; Wiebe et al., 2017) have been reported. The video enhanced non-local people's access to knowledge about the lived experiences of Elders in YQFN with respect to water, and how colonial practices impacted those living on reserve. There is potential through the internet's pervasiveness and through enhanced social connectivity to provide a spectrum of different perspectives on Canada's history through more videos.

From the point of view of the research team via the key researcher's autoethnography, the

project provided lessons for her, and other researchers. First, researchers need to be respectful of protocols and governance processes in Indigenous communities above and beyond meeting project objectives and goals. This finding reiterates others (Tobias, Richmond, & Luginaah, 2013; Castleden et al., 2012; Koster, Baccar, & Lemelin, 2012). Secondly, culturally harmonized (relevant and contextually-focused) outputs build friendships, and reiterate to communities that researchers are listening (Munns, Mahoney, Miller, & Whitehead, 2016; Jull et al., 2018). Third, vulnerability can be a strength because of the mutual interdependence in solving project problems, thereby revealing the humanity of co-learners as a common trait (Sinner, 2014; Nilson, 2017).

Finally, sharing research-creation products suffer from two challenges to meeting OCAP requirements; first, in research-creation projects, there can be many voices and influencers for a product. Ownership agreements are needed and require ongoing evaluation and reinforcement. The process of creating these agreements can introduce tension. The second challenge is that researchers may not receive academic credit for these works. Others have provided specific challenges in relation to publishing (Giles & Casteden, 2008; Bradford, Bharadwaj, & Lindenschmidt, 2016). These two challenges were overcome through negotiation and the shared realization of greater benefits (trust, friendship, a start towards reconciliation) provided through the video production.

Researchers may feel vulnerable and act cautiously when navigating initial and ongoing relationships with Indigenous groups. In this project, both the councilor and the researcher struggled at first with overcoming emotional challenges. In the researcher's case, it was the fear of making mistakes that might threaten a relationship and, for the councilor, it was the fixation with preserving an exit strategy. With time, patience, and forgiveness, both partners were able to demonstrate leadership toward finding a new path for knowledge creation and sharing. Academia suffers from a lack of intergenerational storytelling on protocol and successes and failures at engaged Indigenous partnerships, although the literature is growing (Zeldin, Larson, Camino, & O'Connor, 2005; Findlay, Ray, & Basualdo, 2014; Facer & Enright 2017). We share this project process as an exemplar for others beginning their own journeys.

Conclusion

Castleden et al.'s (2017) chapter on reconciliation and relationality in water research provides recommendations for collaborative research with Indigenous groups. We suggest the addition of four recommendations geared toward knowledge sharing to their list:

- 1) Co-learners have open conversations about their desired knowledge sharing products and processes prior to initiation of the research.
- 2) Co-learners seek to unite in overcoming the negative aspects of internet-based knowledge sharing via opportunities to upload and share evidence-based research-creation products widely.
- 3) Co-learners create processes to discuss potential anxieties about research, for example, ways that Indigenous partners can alert researchers to breaches in

protocol, and researchers can alert Indigenous partners to their institutional constraints.

- 4) Indigenous partners work with academics to invite more collaboration if desired, catalogue and share knowledge sharing outputs, and create a forum to discuss successful and failed processes.

The video project enhanced community-based participatory processes by facilitating the opportunity for community members to direct the video design and development from interview to widespread sharing. Community members selected key messages, collaborated in the narrative creation, chose symbols and the medium for the artist to convey the story, involved youth and community members in narration for the story, selected music and other post-production enhancements, and directed where and how the video would be broadcast. Interview data was moved from transcript and report form into a harmonized knowledge-sharing product so that community members owned a legacy output, in an e-compatible form, aligning with their storytelling traditions. An important finding was that building respectful relationships facilitated the overcoming of individual and culturally-based challenges of trusting one other, and provided foundations for starting healing journeys.

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The heART of Activism: Stories of Community Engagement

David Monk, Bruno de Oliveira Jayme, Emilie Salvi

ABSTRACT This paper invites the reader to consider the power and potential of art for public engagement, and its use in social movement learning and in demanding the world we want now. The authors frame social movements as important sites of scholarship and learning. They emphasize that by applying creative strategies to engage in critical thought about the nature of the world and one's position in it, artforms have the potential to make essential contributions to social change. Inspired by literature related to critical art-based learning and learning in social movements, the authors explore representations of protest art and public art exhibitions. They contextualize their writing with stories of mobile art exhibits in Sao Paulo, the 'maple spring' in Montreal (Tiotia:ke in the language of the Kanien'kehá:ka), and anti-Bill C-51 protests in Lekwungen territory (Victoria, British Columbia). They present and reflect on their own experiences of using art as engagement and as a representation of voice in public demonstrations.

KEYWORDS Critical pedagogy, art-based learning, learning in social movements, adult education

Art, an embodiment of public pedagogy, is imperative to our work as critically engaged young scholars, community activists, and radically loving human beings. Often existing outside the milieu of capitalist consumption, art as resistance constitutes one of the few political and pedagogical spaces that remains free—where artists everywhere use their soulful imaginations to resist oppressions, to dream of justice, and to speak truth to power (Darder, 2011, p. 799).

The above quote by Antonia Darder, a popular academic, poet, artist, and community organizer in many ways summarizes the goals of our explorations in highlighting the relevance of community art as transformative tools in social movements. Transformation, in the context of community art (as resistance) refers to a social phenomenon in which individuals, through collective practices, and critical reflection, experience a profound understanding of themselves and their words, in ways in which they act and react upon constraints that may affect their wellbeing. Such phenomenon is what Freire (1970) identifies as *conscientização*. As a result of this process, individuals shift their perspectives of, and engagement in, the world. Through this lens, we intertwine theories of social movement learning and arts-based learning as critical pedagogies to describe and articulate the potential of community arts as powerful tools in/for

social justice, community engagement and conscientização, with the ultimate goal of promoting social change. To illustrate this claim, we present three different and yet interrelated real stories of community art as activism experienced by the authors. These stories, unfolding in two different Canadian cities (Lekwungen–Victoria, British Columbia, and Tiotia:ke–Montreal, Quebec) as well as in the city of Sao Paulo, Brazil, are examples of how dialogue appears as a pedagogical tool, and as methods of (de)constructing political discourses.

We interpret transformative learning from a Freirean and holistic perspective as presented by Edward O’Sullivan (1999). In theory, after experiencing discomfort or disorientation, often escalated to anger, individuals reflect on their position in their world(s), shift their perspective, and act consciously for social justice. The critical and social justice components are important for our conceptualization of art as opening spaces of disruption in activism. Drawing upon transformative learning theory, this article explores how these frameworks help us to understand the need to broaden our perspectives on a pedagogy promoting creativity and opening spaces for community art as dialogical spaces.

Art as Disruption

Once upon a time there was quite a shy little girl, who did not really participate much in class. One day, the teacher finds her in the corner of the classroom drawing intensely. The teacher approaches her and says:

“Oh! That is nice. What is it?”

The little girl, without looking up at the teacher answered:

“I’m drawing a picture of God.”

The teacher, now intrigued, said to the girl:

“That’s impossible. No one knows what God looks like.”

The little girl, looked up to the teacher and said:

“They will in a minute.”

This story is borrowed from Sir Ken Robinson (2006) referring to encouraging teaching for creativity. For the authors, this excerpt also illustrates that art can open dialogical spaces for critically interrogating the world. In this case, the young girl, through her art opened a space that challenged the teacher’s schemata and asked them to reconceptualize *the impossible*. Mahmoudi, Khoshnood, and Babaei (2014) suggest that such spaces enable individuals to increase conscientização, and mediate transformative learning. Freire (1970) accentuated that dialogue develops self reflection within culture and history, leading to (re)imagination of different realities for ourselves and the world surrounding us. The arts have the power to open up cracks in social norms and hidden injustice by provoking soulful reflection, dialogue, and reimagination of the world. This is synchronous with the goals of social movements, which Hall (2009) describes as seeking to disrupt the status quo and demand the world we want now. We therefore argue that the arts as critical pedagogy are valuable tools for transformative learning and have the potential to catalyze transformative learning and social change through activism and social movements. It is from this radical tradition of critical pedagogy, transformative learning and social change that we interpret community art as activism.

In many parts of the Western world, the arts have been historically defined by European standards and traditions—that is, predominantly produced and judged by elitist, *white*, and masculine measures, aimed at or supported by the wealthiest and the most powerful institutions (Janis & Mann, 1977). According to Dewey (1934), such powerful institutions play an important role in reinforcing the production (and large reproduction) of artwork (Benjamim, 1999), much like any other product for sale in the market. In the second half of the 20th century, numerous artistic interventions challenged the ways in which people perceived not only their realities, but the standardization of art. For example, Dadaist cultural movements that emerged in Zurich, Switzerland during the Second World War mobilized millions of people worldwide to protest against the barbarism of the war. Dadá, besides being an anti-war movement, was also an anti-bourgeois and anti-(institutional) art movement that encompassed poetry, visual arts, and theatre (Gale, Ades, Aguer & Fanes, 2007). It not only challenged the elitism and standardization of art, but it also invited the general public to explore different ways of perceiving art by contextualizing it within what was previously seen as mundane or vulgar historical and cultural contexts (Dewey, 1934). This sort of intervention into the privileged institutionalized forms of art challenged the very function of art, within positivist elitist European traditions, as being “emotive rather than informative” (Eisner, 2008, p. 3) or transformative.

Community art as disruption challenges this very notion of arts as being only emotive. Ideally community art uses and represents often ignored voices to surface problems and inequalities, and reflect individual and community needs, desires, and hopes for a better future. From this perspective, community art portrays an alternative reality for participants and the general public. More so, community art mediates compassion and empathy amongst those involved in the artmaking process. This is not to say that community art does not, or should not evoke emotions, but their potential to communicate sensitive issues should not be neglected, as well as their ability to bring forth different political views, increase cultural sensitivity, and develop alternative aesthetics.

Community Art as Activism

Community art is an experiential, inclusive, and participatory type of art, where artists work collaboratively with citizens in grassroots contexts to create artworks that are of public interests. This type of participatory artmaking process emerged in the political and activist scenario of the 1960s, which at the time aimed to popularize the arts, and return it to the citizens. Community art has a history of challenging dominant cultural and political views in an effort to respond to hegemonic *status quo*, “evolving around the notion of empowerment through participation in the creative process” (Krensky & Steffen, 2009, p. 12). Krensky and Steffen (2009) emphasize that in community art everyone is an artist and “the production of art by people who don’t define themselves as artists is a radical and transformative act” (p. 12). From this perspective, community art results in social change because it challenges social norms, hierarchy, patriarchal societies, and elitist European arts through its collaborative art-making process. In the context of community art, the stories presented here describe and articulate how activists, artists and the general public co-create art to disrupt social norms and

respond to social injustice. This practice invites educators, activists, and the public to engage in soulful dialogue and dream of justice and a better society. This practice is at the very heart of our stories of activism.

Community Art in Social Movements

A vast amount of literature within art education claims the arts open up spaces for personal and social transformations (e.g., Belfiore & Bennet, 2008; Eisner, 2004; Greene, 2000; Holden, 2008). Within the context of social movements, the arts can be a powerful tool for transformation by opening up spaces for soulful imagination and dialogue. They force dialogue and thinking about often hidden or ignored oppressions, while giving voice to the values and ideology of activists.

They address important societal questions, and construct and build on ideologies of social progress (Milbrandt, 2010). Typically, visual images inspire a sense of belonging and identity to the activist's cause. By using codes and conventions representing not just a verbal text but an emotional tone, art increases community engagement (Milbrandt, 2010). The arts unite activists and community often having an impact across boundaries of age, socio-economic status, country, and ideology.

Art in social movements can establish an emotional tone to bring a sense of unity at the beginning of an action and sense of closure to wounds. For example, as Milbrandt (2010) explains, a powerful and emotional visual artistic reminder of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome is the AIDS Memorial Quilt. With more than 44,000 three-by six-foot panels have been sewn together into a commemorative community artwork, every panel is designed to honour the memory of a loved one who lost their life to AIDS.

In many ways community activist art has been a way to develop a voice representing the real needs of a community, thinking critically to build a solid foundation for democratic citizenship. Even during cases of extreme oppression, art has proven to be an empowering tool, for instance in the form of folktales, theatre, jokes, folk art and songs (Scott, 1992). These art mediums have a strong cultural impact and typically become a powerful element within any movement.

Social Movements as Sites of Intervention

Rather than the traditional and individual model of academic knowledge production, contemporary dialogues on social movements as agents of change focus on counter hegemonic practices through alternative forms of engagement, including community art. According to Freire (1970), it is through critical conversation that we are able to reflect upon our own realities. Freire suggests that reflection allows us to position ourselves within our culture and history, to (re)imagine different realities and the world surrounding us, with the ultimate goal of social change. Tandon, Hall, and Tremblay (2015) suggest that a reconception of legitimate ways of knowing and being is essential to social change. Extending these concepts to the social movements arena, Mota and Esteves (2014) assert that social movements have potential to embody change and limit reproducing the status quo through legitimizing subaltern

epistemologies: “At the heart of this is the pedagogical, understood as those processes, practices and philosophies that enable the unlearning of hegemonic forms of life, social relationships and subjectivities” (p. 21). Central to the goal of social movements is challenging hegemonic power by taking back spaces of domination, often maintained through the silence of the status quo and police control. Marcuse (1965) explained this process by which the liberal state together with corporations assert democratic tolerance, as they insist that radical activists are subversive of the very ideals on which our society is based. This is a process whereby anyone who speaks out is portrayed as violent, a troublemaker disrupting the public peace with the goal of destroying society. Somma (2006) described this through the post 9/11 crackdown on activists, emphasizing the patriarchal language used by corporations and government such as protecting *freedom* and *democracy*. It is therefore essential for social movements to both take back spaces of domination and engage in critical pedagogy about freedom, democracy, and the status quo. This is synonymous with the goals of critical art-based learning as indicated by Clover and Stalker (2007) who document how many states using neoliberal policies of austerity have been moving away from social traditions. Clover and Stalker use community art projects to empower women, who have been most impacted by these cuts, to engage actively in social justice. Community art provides an excellent opportunity for engagement and is therefore an important critical pedagogical tool for social movements.

Critical adult educators and community organizations are increasingly relying on arts-based educational approaches as a way to react to social issues and challenge cultural norms (see Clover 2012; Clover & Stalker, 2007). Darder (2011) outlines the value of using art in the context of protests as a tool for fighting against power and opening new spaces for hope and social justice. She suggests that the more engaging the process, the more likely people will feel a personal connection to the issue increasing the likelihood of change. Using alternative methods and strategies in knowledge creation engages people with the world in a different way, in itself challenging normative conceptions of knowledge, while (in the context of social action) opening up spaces for engaging in social justice. Collins (2006) emphasizes the significance of art in this context as critical pedagogy. Elmbourg (2010) explains that when conceiving art as critical pedagogy it is essential to empower “people to own their questions, their minds, and their bodies” (p. 71). Further to this and in relation to social movements, research published by Clover and Craig (2009) demonstrates that art develops trust and community among the artists working together, as well as pride and consequent confidence to think creatively about solutions to social problems. It can also empower them to speak out and take action.

Ultimately, community art encourages learners in producing sites of knowledge where critical learning, social consciousness, and participation inspire democratic societies. It is with this perspective that we turn to our stories where art is central to activism and social change. The first story centres on art creation for social change accentuating the value of art in shifting knowledge hierarchies and challenging public spaces and cultural representations. The second and third stories examine art as a tool for engagement and learning in social movements, giving examples of direct grassroots action. The second and third stories thus complement and build on the foundations of the first story.

First story: Recycling stories

It's ten in the morning, June 22nd, 2012 in a metropolis where every hour is rush hour. There are people everywhere hastening to get places and shoving into public transportation. The helicopter air traffic is chaotic, and cars and motorcycles honk their way onto the pavement. Street vendors try to sell anything they can to make a living. An audience contemplates a preacher who loudly announces "Jesus is coming". Police and ambulance sirens are heard from miles away. Although it is not summer, the heat is unbearable, the air pollution is heavy, and the city lacks green space. The warmth accentuates the stench of garbage not yet collected by city workers. A group of executive men sweating inside their suit jackets ignores a panhandler begging for food.

This could be just an ordinary day in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, except that at this moment, a van drives through the crowd onto the main public square and parks in front of City Hall. Five people get out and start unloading art supplies. A set of 12 easels is unfolded and artworks are carefully hung on them. On the other side, an old bus is parking. Its door opens and a young crowd jumps out and blasts hip-hop music. Each one grabs a can of spray paint and starts to graffiti the bus. In between two light poles, a big banner has been hung that reads in bold letters: "Recycling Stories—A mobile art gallery." At that moment the chaos in that public square seems to stop, transformed now into an open-air art gallery.



Figure 1. Setting up the mobile art gallery.

Photo credit: Bruno de Oliveira Jayme

The above story is one example of many mobile art galleries created by Members of the National Recycling Social Movement in Brazil. Traditionally these workers are looked down on socially. During the art shows, visitors were able to freely walk around the artwork and have interactions with recyclers. Most of the conversation regarded the politics around recyclers' work. From these dialogues, new recycling networks for cooperation were established and many stories emerged. These mobile art galleries aimed to create dialogue amongst recyclers and the general public about the work performed by recyclers, to make visible to the public the

importance of their work, and, ultimately, to decrease the prejudice they suffer.

Community created art galleries break taboos when people's personal experiences are shared, bringing forth social identities of a community. The Recycling Stories project was created by the community for the community, and it challenged the confined walls of traditional art institutions which often are disconnected from the *real world* of local communities. The Recycling Stories *deterritorialized* traditional art standpoints by challenging views of who can produce art and where art can be displayed. More specifically, it first made art more democratic by tackling into a territory once occupied by formal trained artists. Such democracy of the arts welcomed ordinary people from different backgrounds to share with the general public contemporary and relevant stories about themselves including their daily struggles working on the streets and living on the edge of extreme poverty.



Figure 2. Mobile art gallery display.

Photo Credit: Bruno De Olivera Jayme

Through these mobile art galleries various actors (e.g., recyclers and the public) divesting voices, defining the outcomes and future inquiries. The Recycling Stories allowed the community to choose which stories they were willing to share. This helped recyclers to create their own identity and to make their reality visible, inviting the public into a critical reflection about social justice. This aspect of our art gallery is important because when members of the community create their own artworks and curate their exhibit, we do not take the risk of hiding or misrepresenting stories, and perpetuating the privileged status quo. In other words, the Recycling Stories, de-hierarchized knowledge production and mobilization. Additionally, the Recycling Stories created alternative and affective spaces within everyday life. This was evident when our gallery disrupted a public space in front of São Paulo City Hall gaining the attention of politicians, media, and the public. At that moment, at that public square, conventional use

of public space was challenged, power questioned, alternative social dynamics established, and a hopeful atmosphere created.

Second story: Bill C-51

The second story examines a major rally that took place in unceded Lekwungen territory (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada) in protest of a proposed draconian law, Bill C-51, limiting free speech and labelling social activists as terrorists. Two of the authors helped to organize the rally by introducing and facilitating a co-created community art project. This account is based on the analysis of personal reflections and notes taken by the author—participant-organizers during the rally—along with photos of the event. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) define this method of qualitative research as Systematic Sociological Introspection (SSI), which is commonly used in autoethnography. The goal of autoethnography is to share an experience and reflections on the experience hoping to create personal ties with readers who identify with the experience and reflect on it carefully in the context of their own lives. We share our story about the process of engagement and personal interpretation of the impact of art in this C-51 protest with the hope to inspire.

Bill C-51 was introduced as an anti-terrorism act in January 2015 by the Conservative Party of Canada. It was immediately subject to major and ubiquitous public outcry against the increased power given to police forces to impinge on public privacy and human rights (see Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, 2015; Canadian Bar Association, 2015), especially sovereign First Nations (For First Nations' reactions see: Assembly of First Nations, 2015). It was generally seen as a means for forcing through a pipeline against the will of many First Nations and environmentalists.

The morning of the protest, around 1000 protesters gathered in a public space and marched together down several main streets, stopping at a major intersection in the downtown core to leave messages on the road in chalk, and culminating in an accessible public space with a stage and microphones, where there were speakers, musicians, and art. Jordan (1995) has outlined the importance of solidarity in a large movement as one that builds on a collective *we* among a wide variety of interested groups, and that was one of the first things we noticed as people began piling into the square with their signs. First Nations, Religious groups, anarchists, communists, political representatives, and activists from almost all parties, union leaders, student groups, environmentalists, and many more took the streets to show their opposition to the bill. One of the key goals was to reclaim public space; this was done by occupying the streets. As Jordan (1995) points out, it is important for the organizers to avoid authoritarian control/ cooptation by keeping the police unaware of the route, so that they found themselves catching up to block streets rather than *allowing* the protest to happen. After all, the protest was opposing an expanded authoritarian police state. In taking to the streets in non violent direct action, protesters asserted their right to speak out to power and sent a strong message to the media and to government, demanding, as Hall (2009) puts it, “the world we want now” (p. 9). We feel that art was an integral part of the C-51 protests and there are three ways in which it was used: the use of signs and masks, chalking the streets, and a collective piece of artwork.

All of which were used to communicate people's dissent for Bill C-51 and the authoritarian state. It was more than just communication, however. The significance of using art to disrupt was particularly important in this instance because of the authoritarian measures we were contesting. Authoritarianism emphasizes conformity and normalcy and we were intentional about using art to encourage creativity and freedom of thought. Song and dance were also large components, although not discussed here, these also contributed to a rambunctious and festive atmosphere of freedom and dissent.

The use of signs is quite common in protests and rallies. They are typically used to convey a message to a wider audience—passersby, bystanders, and media. This protest was no different. Organizers created a massive banner that lead the demonstration saying “stop Bill C-51”, and distributed yellow cloth pins with “stop C51” written on them along with full face masks of the political leaders who supported the Bill: Justin Trudeau and Stephen Harper. A popular sign reflected the movie “Kill Bill” using the same colours as the popular video and adding “C-51” at the end. There were a number of signs that linked bill C-51 to Nazism, fascism, and a destruction of democracy. Another common theme was a demand for the protection of rights and freedoms, and a removal of Harper from office.



Figure 3. Protestors marching.

Photo Credit: Bruce Dean (Professional Recreationist)

About halfway through the protest march, in a major intersection in a shopping and eating hub downtown, the organizers halted the march asked people to sit. They then distributed chalk to protesters, asking them to write a message to their politicians about what they thought of Bill C-51. The idea was to have a bit of a party for a while in the intersection and leave a lasting message for people passing by.

These were all important ways of giving voice to voices that are otherwise alienated and/or not represented, and of course disrupting the city to provoke thought about the consequences of the bill. At first many of the protesters were visibly hesitant and unsure. There were a

number of people waiting for buses and cars stopped all around, and because it was not your traditional group of *hardened* protesters, there was a distinct feeling of nervousness among some of the protesters as we handed out chalk and prepared to stay put for a while. As chalk distributors, we remember thinking at this point that we were going to lose people. A few people even declined taking it at first, until they saw other people starting to drop to the ground and write their messages. Eventually almost everybody obtained some chalk, and momentum was restored as people shared their messages using art, poetry, and slogans. Drums came out, a circle was formed, people discussed their work, and we sang some songs before moving on. Common themes included stopping Bill C-51, opposing Harper and fascism, and (re)claiming democracy and freedom.



Figure 4. Chalking up the intersection.

Photo Credit: Tony Sprackett

Using this collective artmaking process played a significant role in empowering those protesters who were uncertain about being in the streets to begin with. This was evident through the shifting atmosphere and visible demeanour observed. Stopping traffic and disrupting the normal flow of life in the city was uncomfortable for some people and physically stopping forced them to think more about the power and potential of their voice and actions in collaboration with others. As organizers we hope that the point of blocking the main street and leaving our artwork helped participants to realize the importance of disrupting the status quo. It is difficult to gauge the extent this was successful; however, we did attempt to engage in individual conversations about our artwork as disruption. There was also an experiential element of disruption. Firstly, as we were stopped, curious bystanders gathered to have a look at the art, with some even adding to it. Secondly there was an element of self disruption, as people had to wrestle with and overcome their vulnerability and nervousness of disrupting other people's lives in a very visible way. This action also had an empowering impact as people overcame their fear and vulnerability they appeared to become more confident. The art played a big role in moving through this process. Additionally, the participative nature of

actively marking up a public intersection in a lasting way created a deeper and more personal connection to the issues. Collectively marking up the intersection not only empowered people to share their feelings in a message that would last beyond the protest, it also brought the group together. This was evident in the observed energy shift; protestors were hesitant at first to even take the chalk, but slowly gained confidence to write and draw their messages and eventually even formed a circle and sang and danced. Certainly after blocking the street for 20 minutes, it was a visibly and audibly more unified, and assertive crowd that proceeded along their route.

A second outcome was the opportunity for everyone to express their feelings about the bill, the government, and democracy in an impromptu exhibition on the streets of the city. Milbrandt (2010) identified the impact of art in protest as publicizing actors perspective, values, and ideology. This use of public space left a direct message to thousands of people who pass through the city every day. It was an unavoidable art exhibit engaging people on an important public issue, and an element of the protest that remained even after the protestors passed, thus making the disruption and engagement last longer and impact more people. As organizers we feel that this tactic worked very well. We personally have had many discussions about democracy, the right to protest and Bill C-51 when back in the area after the protest. For example, a few days after the protest one of the authors engaged with a tourist from Germany who was trying to understand what all the writing was about. The author was able to point out and explain about some remnant of his own message. The author certainly felt empowered and engaged and proud at his participation in that moment. The tourist was surprised that this was happening in Canada. We share this example to show the potential for dialogue opened by art, but also to demonstrate how difficult it is to capture the extent and depth of the impact art can have on both individuals and the world. In my case, I continued to participate actively in other events, perhaps partially as a result of the feeling of empowerment. In the case of the German, it is impossible to know if he went on and shared the dialogue with other travellers and in his own country.

The promenade through the city culminated in a popular public square with a series of speakers and musical performances. This is where a good deal of informal learning took place. Our main contribution as organizers was facilitating a collective piece of artwork consisted of a large canvas four meters by one meter, with a background of multiple smaller images of the Canadian parliament buildings faded into it. The art project took place in a public square at the end of the march. Accompanied by music and speeches, protestors and curious passersby were invited



Figure 5. Capturing layers of voices about C-51.
Photo Credit: Bruno de Oliveira Jayme

to lend their voices however they desired on the canvas.

The result of the tapestry was a multi-layered, multi-lingual mix of words and pictures reflecting democratic views, freedom of speech, and a broader theme of solidarity among causes and oppressions. The tapestry (Figure 5) was painted on the back drop of several copies of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which were ironed into the tapestry. Several important elements emerged from this artmaking process. Primarily, it provided a creative venue for people to communicate their perspectives about the bill, the government, and democracy in an impromptu exhibition on the streets of the city. Chwe (1998) suggests that creative methods of stimulation and engagement (such as this one) are more likely to leave a deeper social and personal impact. The process of creating art engaged and drew in a crowd of passersby who did not feel intimidated by the art and were willing to learn about and discuss the bill. It was an unavoidable art exhibit facilitated by a professional artist. Most of the dialogue was informal as people contributed together to the art. There was also an element of reflection as the facilitator and co-artists asked questions of spectators and contributors about the art. There was a constant grouping of people around the art all afternoon. The active element of contributing to a collective art creation opened a space for a deeper discussion on a range of issues in our society, not only Bill C51. Cole and McIntyre (2003) suggest the arts are powerful tools of knowledge mobilization because of their ability to evoke emotions and deeper political complexities. Thompson (2002) points out that in creating art, people enter into a space of uncertainty, and it is in these spaces that deeper engagement can take place. While signs, speakers, music, and physically occupying public spaces were important for engaging people, this collaborative artmaking experience evoked deeper conversations as the artists painted a picture of the world they want to live in now.

In the process of engaging in the art, conversations naturally emerged among the participants, many of whom developed a more profound understanding of the impacts of Bill C-51. Questions about democracy, its meaning, who is heard and who is not were raised and discussed throughout the process. The art also provided an element of deeper connections, through collaboration and conversation of people who did not know each other. There were people from very different walks of life who engaged with one another and learned a little more from each other. People jumped in and out of the canvas discussing the work and its meaning together. It formed a significant part of the learning and engagement of the protest, and the tapestry itself was later (and still is) used as a basis for engagement in other art activist educational forums in the city.

Third story: Québec Maple Spring

Throughout history, Canadian student activists are known to have spearheaded social change. The 2012 Québec Maple Spring [Printemps érable], also referred to as “Québec Spring” [Printemps quebécois] and the Québec student movement, is celebrated as the largest student protest movement in Canadian history. The following story is a reflection of the author’s analysis, based on academic literature, relevant websites, news reports, and an interview with a key organizer describing the impact of learning and engagement through art.

The movement began in 2011, when more than 20,000 students, in the province of Québec, including hundreds of thousands of student activists from CEGEPs (an acronym for *Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel* [General and Professional College]), and universities, began protesting against Jean Charest's Parti Liberal de Quebec (PLQ) government's proposed five-year 75 percent increase to raise tuition (Spiegel, 2012). Despite massive protests and demonstrations, the negotiations with the Jean Charest government were unsuccessful. As reported by Montréal student activists, Sam Bick and Mehreen Rushdia (2012), on May 22, 2012 an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 protesters marched against the government's refusal to acknowledge the students' demands. The strikes began as protests against tuition fees increase and grew into a popular movement, building solidarity against the austerity agenda. In mid-May, the Québec government passed Bill 78, a government law aimed to ban all non-announced marches and gatherings (Assemblée nationale du Québec, 2012). In response, protests escalated.

As the demands and scope of the student movement expanded, multiple creative actions arose. In many Montréal neighbourhoods, groups of protesters expressed their frustrations by banging their kitchen pots and pans. Protesters also organized nightly marches, often naked, with hopes to demonstrate their vulnerability and non-violence in the face of police violence and brutality. Typically, all supporters wore the carré rouge [red square] which became the symbol for the movement worn by all supporters.

New art practices also appeared to motivate Québec citizens to participate in a dialogue with the student movement. Artist-researcher, Nato Thompson's (2012) "*Living as form: Socially engaged art from 1991-2011*" suggests that over the last few years, a growing movement of artists choose to interact with timely issues. Thompson (2012) contends that, "socially engaged art is not an art movement, but rather it involves cultural practices that indicate a new global social order" (p.19).

Montréal-based artist, Tina Carlisi's research (2013) describes the significance in collective visual art initiatives to promote critical thinking, increase awareness, and mobilize citizens.

One of the most powerful forms of collective art activism during the movement came from the École de la Montagne rouge (EMR). A seven-month initiative led by undergraduate graphic design students from the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), the mission aimed to combine activism, art and education to recruit participants in the Québec student protests (École de la Montagne rouge, n.d.).

By actively participating in the movement, the members extended their learning from the classrooms to public spheres. Not only did EMR members discover new ways of learning through social art practices, but they also began reconstructing alternative practices to reflect the movement (Carlisi, 2013). For instance, members'



Figure 6. A protestor sits among banners.

Photo Credit: École de la Montagne rouge

desire to unite and create visual art for the protests increased their sense of autonomy in organizing meaningful projects related to social change (Carlisi, 2013). During a *La Presse* interview, EMR founder, Guillaume Lepine, reveals the purpose of the creative initiative:

L'idée générale, c'était d'offrir à ceux qui n'avaient pas envie de descendre manifester dans la rue l'occasion d'utiliser les arts comme moyen d'action" [The general idea was to offer those who never felt like protesting in the streets an opportunity to use the arts as a form of action] (Petrowski, 2012, p. 3).



Figure 7. Some signs during the march. Photo Credit: École de la Montagne rouge

EMR members learned about the student movement and how to participate in taking action through the widespread use of poster art, particularly silkscreen posters, such as: teaching the silkscreen process to others, showcasing the protest work of other artists, such as using silkscreen to share inspirational literature related to the student protests, and sharing the visual art pieces and videos produced on their website. The initiative also allowed members of the school to collaborate with multiple artists and organizations supporting the student protests. These collaborations led to the creation of posters, magazines, animations, local events, and other artists' collectives and organizations.

In personal correspondence with a co-author, one of the EMR founding members, Olivier Charland, describes his role. He recounts, "Ensuring proper setup and organization of the initiative from the beginning: organizing workshops, schedules, brainstorm sessions, among a few (O. Charland, personal communication, June 1, 2016). The EMR art produced was critical in contributing to the student protests as he claims, EMR members aimed to spread the message of the protest through multiple art mediums. By focusing on delivering the message as clearly as possible, the members' goal was to reach as many people as possible so they can relate to the message and think about it. For instance, along with the help of the garden architect, members planted 16 red maple trees on Mount Royal Park to form a perfect red square, the symbol of austerity, on Earth Day.

Reflecting upon his involvement, Charland describes it as a valuable learning experience. EMR members "learned how to work, brainstorm, take clients, deal with different situations and also understand to deal with human feelings" (O. Charland, personal communication, June 1, 2016).

The graphic designer reveals it was a crazy learning experience as they learned so much, met so many nice people, and passed through a rollercoaster of emotions throughout the process. Charland hopes:

...that graphic design can play a major role to communicate art project in a clear

way to the masses. Because the idea is to convince the population and government, not people already into it! So it has to be smart and clean! (O. Charland, personal communication, June 1, 2016)

The EMR rouge is an example of community art highly engaging activists in the Québec student movement. Not only did the EMR provide a strong visual identity to the movement, but the project also represented a unity between the artist, student and politically engaged citizen (Carlisi, 2013). Similar to the C-51 protesters in British Columbia, the creative initiative used visual arts as a tool to unite collective voices on the student protests. EMR members shifted their perspectives on art's role in education as they started to understand art as a tool for social action. Members creatively constructed their own knowledge, using art to engage and empower art students with a desire to have their voices heard.

Conclusion

We hope that our personal stories of participation and the use of community art as radical pedagogical tools of community transformation resonate deeply with artists and activists. As social justice educators, community activists, and social change artists we try to open souls, disrupt unequal (and often hidden) power structures, challenge oppression, and dream of an alternative reality and a far better world. We have experienced the power of art to engage, disrupt, publicize, unite, conscientize, and potentially transform society. We hope that our stories have illustrated the shared goals and natural connections between the goals and methods of arts and social movements as they engage, critically disrupt and attempt to transform society. In our heARTS we know that an alternative world is achievable and we hope that this research will encourage the continued creative use of the arts in social movements as we paint the world we want.

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Extemporaneous Lessons on Place, Space, and Identity: Graffiti as a Pedagogical Disruption

Kaela Jubas, Kimberly Lenters

ABSTRACT In this interdisciplinary article, we employ scholarship from educational studies, cultural studies, geography, and sociology. We use graffiti texts we have encountered ourselves in places where we have lived or visited as examples of how graffiti becomes pedagogical. Theoretically, the concepts of public pedagogy, new mobilities, and affect theory — notably Sara Ahmed’s ideas — complement Doreen Massey’s ideas about place, space, and identity, and are cornerstones of our framework. As we consider them, pedagogy and learning are multidimensional processes, which involve intellect or cognition, affect or emotion, sensation, and perception. Place, space, and identity are taken up as sociomaterial phenomena, whose meanings develop as people, texts, physical structures, and various cultural artifacts come into contact with one another and with ideologies about what is (ab)normal and (un)desirable that circulate throughout and across societies. In presenting and discussing examples of graffiti texts we have encountered where we live or visit, we identify three pedagogical purposes that graffiti artists might employ: contemplation, reflection, and action. We close by considering implications for teaching and learning across disciplines, age groups, and context.

KEYWORDS Graffiti, public pedagogy, new mobilities, affect theory, literacies

In this article, we retrace our steps as pedestrians through places and spaces near to and far from home. What we have discovered, as we thought about our walks along streets and pathways, is that graffiti can be helpful to us in learning something about not only *where* we are, but also *who* and *how* we are (or ought to be or want to be). Following Doreen Massey’s (1996) ideas, we consider how “the spatial’ is constituted by the interlocking of ‘stretched out’ social relations” (p. 22), so that place, space, time, and identity become intertwined. In turn, places give rise to personal identities (i.e., individuals are seen as belonging in or properly excluded from certain places; see also Cresswell, 1996) and entire places develop identities. Finally, we note that “the identity of a place—its social structure, its political character, its ‘local’ culture—is also a product of interactions” (Massey, 1996, p. 120). How people share space and develop practices in place can reflect, reinforce, challenge, and develop, in a Gramscian sense (Gramsci, 1971), ideologically based *common sense* about who and what are perceived as socially acceptable and desirable. In Tim Cresswell’s (1996) words, place is “something produced by and producing ideology” (p. 17). Taking up these ideas, we aim to use graffiti images we have come across in cities where we have lived or visited to explore how graffiti can function pedagogically. More

particularly, we are interested in how graffiti contributes to learning among passersby about how contemporary social issues and relations are (re)presented and (re)constructed locally and globally, materially and culturally.

Coincidentally, the two of us share a great deal in our histories of the places we have called home. Both of us were born in Toronto and continue to feel an attachment to that city. Later, we lived and went to university in Vancouver, on Canada's west coast - Kaela to study adult education and Kim to study youth literacy. Now, we are colleagues in Calgary, Alberta, just east of the Rocky Mountains. Whether for study or work or leisure, we have travelled to other cities and countries. In many of those places, we have been struck by forms of graffiti that are something other than gang-related tagging or seemingly simplistic degradation of property. Although we believe that all graffiti — like all use of public space — functions pedagogically, we are interested in graffiti texts that seem intentionally pedagogical, that aim to spread a message, to invite passersby into contemplation or discussion or call them to action. Such messages tell us something about the contemporary character of the places where we are or have been, about how the people who live there want to make and share their space, and about how we see ourselves in the sociomaterial context of space, place, and time.

This interdisciplinary article is grounded in scholarship from educational studies, cultural studies, geography, and sociology. Theoretically, the concepts of public pedagogy (Giroux, 2000, 2004; Luke, 1996), new mobilities (Sheller & Urry, 2006), and affect theory — notably Sara Ahmed's (2010, 2015) work — complement Massey's (1996, 2004) ideas and are cornerstones of our framework. In the following sections, we conceptualize graffiti and outline our understanding of the key concepts and ideas which have framed our analysis and provide one illustration of community-engaged, arts-informed scholarship. We then present a series of images to illustrate how graffiti can invite those who encounter it into one of three sorts of learning processes that we refer to as contemplation, reflection, and action. In our closing section, we consider implications of our ideas for building and recognizing engaged teaching and learning processes, across age groups and educational settings. First, though, we spend some time conceptualizing graffiti and qualify the forms of graffiti that we included in our analysis.

Graffiti in the Public and the Scholarly Landscape

Graffiti has had a long history, which scholars can trace back to Ancient Rome (DeNotto, 2014; Garrofoli & Laurence, 2013; Iddings, McCafferty, & da Silva, 2011). What, though, are we talking about when we use that word, especially as educators and scholars? The word itself comes from the Italian verb, *graffiare*, which means “to scratch” (DeNotto, 2014, p. 208). Graffiti has been viewed as everything from children's scribbles to grown-up statements, from degradation of property to consideration of publicly visible spaces as blank canvases waiting to be filled. In separating graffiti “from the culture of the elite found in literary texts,” scholars and everyday people alike who simply regard graffiti as “vulgar” overlook the possible “convergence of the two types of writing, and the fact that sections of literary texts [can] appear in graffiti” (Garrafoli & Laurence, 2013, p. 125).

Informed by perspectives from security and law enforcement, contemporary mainstream Western rhetoric about graffiti tends to tie it to vandalism, urban decay, and even obscenity. In North America, graffiti typically is discussed as “visible, invasive challenges to middle class and elite aesthetics, property concepts, and sense of security” (Christen, 2003, p. 57). Cresswell (1996) explains,

Just as dirt is supposed to represent not just a spoiling of the surface, but a problem that lies much deeper (in terms of hygiene, for instance), graffiti as dirt is seen as permanent despoiling of whole sets of meanings—neighborliness, order, property, and so on. Graffiti is linked to the dirty, animalistic, uncivilized, and profane. (p. 40)

In our current home base, the Calgary Police Service (2017) issues the following notice to the city’s residents:

If not immediately removed, graffiti vandalism sends out a message that “nobody cares” about the area. It also causes the area to look unsafe and makes people concerned about their personal safety. This creates an open invitation for more littering, loitering and other graffiti. It may also lead to an increase in other crimes and/or acts of violence. (para. 3)

Despite that disparaging characterization, even the Calgary Police Service (2017) suggests there are different forms of graffiti, created for varied and not always nefarious purposes. On the same webpage, the Service notes that its emphasis is on graffiti “without permission” (para. 2), and that most graffiti texts are unrelated to organized gangs:

The most common type of graffiti vandalism is the Hip Hop graffiti which consists of hand scribbles, bubble type lettering or complex works. Communicative graffiti vandalism is about conveying a message, usually about political views. Hate graffiti vandalism is targeting a specific group with words that are threatening to that group. (para. 4)

In educational studies, that broader range of purposes is considered. Many adult educators working from a critical theory perspective and focused on social justice consider graffiti as a form of hate(ful) speech directed to members of marginalized social groups. Lyn Tett (2016; see also Crowther & Tett, 2011) writes about her adult literacy education research with socioeconomically marginalized communities in the UK. One part of participants’ learning was how to respond to racist graffiti in their neighbourhoods, including through collaborative letter-writing to politicians. In his research with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBTQ+) groups, Andre Grace (2016) recounts the ongoing reality that members of these communities encounter homophobic and transphobic graffiti.

A rather different emphasis is found in scholarship that explores graffiti as one of the deliberate tactics employed by activists who want to register and publicize a critique of the

status quo. In adult education, this emphasis appears in work connected to social movement learning or art education; sometimes, these two areas are combined in scholarly work that explores graffiti as a form of both political and creative expression. With regard to the former area of work, Donna Chovanec (2006) recounts her research into women's pro-democracy activism in 1980s' Peru and notes the importance of "graffiti brigades" in resistance. Ana Iddings et al. (2011) describe similar uses of graffiti in São Paulo, Brazil.

Summarizing her international research into cultural institutions as sites of adult education, Darlene Clover (2015) explains that a graffiti artist was among the participants in a "Human Library" project based in Victoria, British Columbia. That project initiated exploration of and dialogue among participants about "misconceptions and stereotypes...that discourage them from seeing broader, problematic, sociopolitical constructions" (p. 306). Writing about their "pop-up art school" project conducted in Huddersfield, England, Christine Jarvis and Sarah Williamson (2013), who work with post-secondary students preparing to teach in art and design programs, note that graffiti surfaced as a form of expression that can be learned and used strategically. For one of the events focused on sustainability, the project brought students and community members together in learning techniques and using found materials to participate in collaborative art-making and discussion. Among the techniques that proved popular with participants, knitting was seen as more than a traditional craft; it was appreciated for its increasing appearance as the form of politically oriented graffiti known as "yarn bombing," often associated with feminist, peace or environmental movements (Larrie & Newlands, 2017; Springgay, Hatza, & O'Donald, 2012; Wallace, 2012). Another art educator, Steve Ciampaglia (2013) discusses graffiti as "guerilla art" and comments on his interest in graffiti texts that aim to "challenge cultural hegemony and authority" (p. 202). At the same time, he notes his surprise that students in his classes often overlook graffiti's political intention and are more likely to be captivated by "the creative visual stylizations employed by the graffiti artists" (p. 202).

Critical literacy scholar Elizabeth Moje (2000) takes up graffiti as one of many literacy practices through which people—including those who place or find themselves outside the idealized norm—construct novel, even if objectionable, ways of "exploring possible worlds, claiming space, and making their voices heard" (p. 651). As Moje establishes through her socioculturally informed research with U.S. gang-affiliated youth, graffiti can be seen as an "alternative or unsanctioned" (p. 653) literacy practice used to textually assert and read territorial and social claims. Likewise, cultural geographers bring a similarly critical eye to their analyses. Exploring the emergence of graffiti and the ensuing battles in 1970s' New York City, Cresswell (1996) describes graffiti as everything from "a symptom of the end of society, of anarchy and decaying moral values" to "a free spirit closing the curtain on the stifling bureaucracy" (p. 21).

Stabilities and Movements

Part of what makes graffiti so interesting to us is that it relies on a tension between location or stability, on the one hand, and movement or mobility, on the other. As we noted above,

graffiti can seem anchored to a physical place and can have a lasting impact on social and material spaces. At the same time, graffiti texts have an inherently fleeting quality, sailing out of their original place as they are shared through photographs, removed or covered over. As Ana Iddings, Steven McCafferty, and Maria da Silva (2011) explain,

Some graffiti become famous and endure longer than others; some are close to where a person lives, a circumstance that allows multiple viewings across time; some are talked about and others not; some pertain to events that residents in general are aware of whereas others are targeted to a specific audience...and so forth. What is important to emphasize is that viewers are constantly exposed to graffiti over time and space as an everyday aspect of going about their lives in neighborhoods that are graffiti-active, sometimes for decades. (pp. 8–9)

Even movement and mobility, words used in 17th-century English onward to refer to different sorts of processes and phenomena (Cresswell, 2006), have tensions that make them interesting. In the sciences, the words have been used inter-changeably to refer to physical movement of bodies. Also in the sciences, movement can refer to certain bodily functions (e.g., bowel movement), while, in the social sciences, it has become attached to social agitation and transformation. According to Cresswell, “By the eighteenth century, the moveable and excitable crowd was known as the mobility (the *mobile vulgus*, in contrast to the nobility), later shortened to the *mob*” (p. 20, italics in original). Both words, then, can be used in celebratory fashion, to refer to capacity for advancement and change, even as they might signal disorder and danger. In the social sense that we use here, “the fact of movement becomes mobility” (Cresswell, 2006, p. 21).

In their discussion of multimodality and mobility, Kevin Leander and Lalitha Vasudevan (2009) consider how new technologies are bringing new approaches to culture, representation, and meaning. These new approaches acknowledge that space and identity are both material and discursive (Massey, 2004). Although they do so unevenly (Massey, 2004; Sheller & Urry, 2006), new technologies facilitate the movement and hybridization of people and cultures; however, graffiti has always blurred the boundary between the vulgar and the refined by incorporating literary, political or social icons (Garrafoli & Laurence, 2013). Like other examples of the new mobilities phenomenon, graffiti blurs the boundary between the static and the mobile, by relying on a combination of buildings, walls or other (infra)structures that are rooted in places and movement of people and texts across places (Sheller & Urry, 2006). These new mobilities encompass movement of people and ideas, recognizes that how mobility is extended and experienced varies greatly depending on class, gender, racialized, national, and other identities, and attends as much to the *nodes* (Sheller & Urry, 2006) through which people, places, and texts connect as to forms and processes of movement. So, movement and mobility are physical, social, and cultural.

Movement is also emotional. When they describe being moved by a dramatic or a poignant or a repugnant incident, people are articulating the idea that emotions move them from one

state, one understanding, to another (Ahmed, 2010, 2015). That emotional movement is a form of learning. If movement can be thought of as emotional, though, emotion might also be thought of as “sticky” (Ahmed, 2015), as “about attachments or about what connects us to this or that” (p. 11). For Ahmed, emotion or affect is not just an individual phenomenon but, more importantly, socialized and politicized. She is interested in “the processes whereby ‘being emotional’ comes to be seen as a characteristic of some bodies and not others, in the first place. In order to do this, we need to consider how emotions operate to ‘make’ and ‘shape’ bodies as forms of action, which also involve orientations towards others” (Ahmed, 2015, p. 4). These emotional attachments are brought into encounters, which can play out in ways that would otherwise be inexplicable. This is the sense invoked by Cresswell (1996) when he explains that “something or someone *belongs* in one place and not in another. What one’s place is, is clearly related to one’s relations to others” (p. 3, italics in original). Following from this, far from a mindless scribble, graffiti has a complex of meanings and functions: It is found within, beyond, and across places, seen as in or out of place, experienced physically, intellectually, and affectively, and read as an individual point of view and a marker of social relations. Graffiti is more than an aesthetic intervention in place and space; it is a source and a form of text that, in being produced and read, becomes part of the community-engaged teaching and learning that unfolds, as we suggest in our title, extemporaneously.

Graffiti as Public Pedagogue

First introduced and popularized in the writing of Carmen Luke (1996) and Henry Giroux (2000, 2004), public pedagogy has become a term commonly used to denote the range of educational influences, settings, and processes that people encounter on an everyday basis. Largely associated with the scholarly field of cultural studies, public pedagogy is rooted in the older field of adult education, notably in the work of Raymond Williams. Williams’ (1958/2011) famous statement that “culture is ordinary” (p. 179) anchors the notion that all cultural artifacts and accounts are forms of text, inasmuch as they require production and interpretation (Maudlin & Sandlin, 2015), and that all texts are educative.

Like all education, public pedagogies are inherently socially and politically inflected, as they emerge “where people actually live their lives and where meaning is produced, assumed, and contested in the unequal relations of power that construct the mundane acts of everyday relations” (Giroux, 2000, p. 355). In Andrew Hickey’s (2010) words, “the street operates as an implicit pedagogue ... [that] shapes us and influences our identity. ... The street comes to be a site of knowledges and discourses, in constant interplay and renewal, presented to us as we pass through” (p. 168). As graffiti creators, viewers, and even texts move through and across places and times, graffiti becomes one form of public pedagogy and one potential topic of engaged scholarship.

Encounters with Graffiti

Like the authors noted above, we understand the varied meanings and functions of graffiti,

and employ a limited conceptualization of graffiti in this article. In this article, we take up an understanding of graffiti as:

...a literacy practice...[that] entails different ways of socially organizing communicative events involving written language and semiotic signs that can provide opportunities for access to social and cultural understanding. In this way, we were interested in the way people, “text,” and context act on and interact with one another to produce meaning. (Iddings et al., 2011, p. 6)

In particular, we avoid references to obviously gang-affiliated markings or tags that present stylized names alone. We also avoid explicit slurs against minoritized social groups. What we do focus on is graffiti texts that can be interpreted as part of a deliberately engaged pedagogy aiming to foster some sort of personal or social progress. Finally, because this is a reflective analysis of our own encounters with graffiti texts, we focus on how critical adult and literacy education converge in everyday travels.

In our analysis, we read graffiti as different forms of invitation. Some graffiti texts seem to invite passers-by to respond through private, quiet contemplation. Others invite a more collective reflection, and still others extend an expectation for a form of critique and challenge that requires collective engagement and action. We discuss each of these forms of invitation in this section, offering examples of graffiti texts we have encountered and that we believe illustrate both producers’ intentions and our own—that is, an audience’s—reading of them.

Contemplation

Kim encountered what we came to call graffiti texts that seem aimed at moving passers-by into a contemplative process on walks along the Bow River pathway, which runs along some of Calgary’s inner-city neighbourhoods (see Figure 1). A popular destination for cyclists, joggers, and walkers of all ages, the pathway affords views of the river and stands of trees, and is dotted with a couple of islands that have been developed as pedestrian-only parks. Running parallel to the downtown core, much of the path offers an alternative to streetscapes of high rises and vehicular traffic. It is a space where people might find it easy to slow down and enjoy an outdoor setting that blends the urban and the natural.



Figure 1. Calgary, AB Bow River pathway images
Photos: Kimberly Lenters

With their messages of “Love more,” “Live the life you [love,] love the life you live,” and “If you were here, I’d be home now. Love more,” these messages, stencilled on concrete sections of the river pathway, seemed to call out to those who encounter them in particular ways. Over a period of several years, these messages could be found in numerous places along the pathway system, making them everyday encounters (Iddings et al., 2011) for many who use the paths for commuting and recreation.

Although such texts appeared in public spaces, they seemed aimed at fostering a private, individual process of contemplation. Even in their somewhat cryptic messages, they suggested that pausing to take stock of what and who is important and valued is an important and worthwhile interruption to everyday comings and goings. These texts functioned as what Ahmed (2010) refers to as “happy objects,” which “accumulate positive affective value as they are passed around” (p. 29) or encountered. The heart-shaped symbol, the printed word LOVE, the suggestion of a loving partner who makes any place feel like home—these all transmitted a culturally defined sense of desire and, if that desire is fulfilled, sense of wholeness and wellness. Moreover, these texts worked in the context of place—the relaxed riverside pathway along which cyclists and pedestrians experience a unique assemblage of nature-in-the-city.

Although the application of the graffiti might be illegal, the feelings that these texts generated did not include the fear and disgust that might typically be associated with graffiti. On the contrary, as Ahmed (2010) suggests, the physical placement of these texts capitalized on the likelihood that people who already felt happy would attribute additional happiness to the graffiti. Moving and coming together, spatially and temporally, text, place, graffiti producer and viewer constructed a sense of place and self in place.

In the process of contemplation and production of the contemplative self these texts invited, there was no hint that viewers should move beyond quiet appreciation. Moreover, returning to Ahmed’s (2010, 2015) ideas about the social nature of emotion, we wonder how a general call to love is taken up in the context of other messages about who is loving and lovable. In these texts, there is no invitation to consider why some people might find it easier than others to give, receive, and share love, happiness, and contentment. That process is associated with a second form of graffiti texts, which we contend invite reflection.

Reflection

As the two of us undertook this project, Kim began to reconsider the graffiti presented in Figure 1. We talked about the contemplative process encouraged by those texts, and she wondered about their function. In her words,

What registered for me as a virtual tsunami of happy stencils when I first came to Calgary left me contemplating: Why so many here in Calgary? Why so many with the “love” message? Might these happy objects also serve the pedagogical purpose of promoting the Calgary can-do spirit, culture of old/new west “boosterism”?

This response suggests how personal contemplation can be extended by a deeper, more

critical process, which we refer to as reflection. In contrast to inward-focused contemplation, reflection entails a shift in focus outward, an explicit claim in and on public space, and a rethinking what is understood as within/out place. Such a reflective process seems apparent in the following examples of graffiti texts we have encountered.

One issue that has attracted a great deal of attention among publics in recent years is consumption. From concern about environmental impact to the sustainability of locally operated businesses to food security, the encroachment of transnational policies and corporations has given rise to various organizations and movements. Like graffiti texts, which are both in place and mobile, references to localized circumstances and globalized processes, consumption-related movements develop in and across place. In the next two figures, we present examples of consumption-related graffiti that seem to invite viewers into a reflective stance.

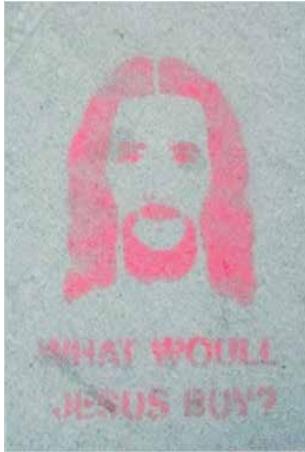


Figure 2. Victoria, BC
downtown sidewalk image
Photo: Kaela Jubasrouge

The first of these graffiti texts was encountered by Kaela in 2008 on a well-travelled sidewalk dotted with interesting, independently operated shops and eateries in Victoria, British Columbia (see Figure 2). Gazing into a simply rendered but solemn bearded face, the viewer was asked, “What would Jesus buy?” With that question, posed in the midst of a popular shopping district, the graffiti artist seemed to be inviting viewers to think about their shopping and consumption practices, and consider what impulses and purposes they fulfill, and how those practices ultimately function spiritually, ethically, and socially.

This text, too, operated affectively. Although the image and name of Jesus dominate the text, Kaela saw an emphasis on a general feeling of spiritual (dis)satisfaction rather than an affiliation with any particular religion or doctrine.

Continuing to use the rhetoric of consumerism, which positions everything as available for purchase and use, a second graffiti text invited passers-by to reflect on the surrender of hope and vision. In this example, a “for sale” sign was altered to express a perception that young people are “selling out” on their principles and their commitment to building a better future (see Figure 3). The sign was spotted by Kaela’s partner in the fall of 2017, posted on the fence of a lot near the home they maintain in Victoria, BC. That neighbourhood might be described as “in transition”: It houses a people of varied incomes. With homes ranging from high-end condominiums to rental apartments, it also has several subsidized or supported housing projects and a shelter for homeless people. In the fairly small city of Victoria, it is unique for the mix that light industry, including a number of artisan studio shops and breweries, adds to the neighbourhood homes and services. It also has the perk of lovely views and a walking and bicycle trail that runs along the Gorge waterway. Since Kaela has had a home in this part of town, it has seemed like a neighbourhood with a conscience, one that “steps up” in responding to social and environmental issues. A nearby park is a base for families with young children and youthful festivals focused on anything from the annual Gorge swim fest to a smaller, quirky

music festival powered by generators connected to bicycles. This is a part of the city where community members are not shy about making their views known.

Like all cultural texts, these two examples of graffiti were produced and read intertextually, in juxtaposition with one another and with multiple other texts. The message, presumably from a young person, that idealism, which has always seemed to be the purview of youth, is being abandoned, seemed to go beyond the invitation to reflect on hyper-consumerism presented above. Here, we see the conjuring of a despairing affect accompanying an invitation to reflect on the dreams and potential of an entire generation that are being bought and sold as corporations focus on their profit margins and governments withdraw from their social commitments.

Any encounter with individual texts, including these examples of graffiti, “plunges us into a network of textual relations. ... Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts” (Allen, 2011, p. 1). These two graffiti texts appear(ed) in different parts of the same city and in different years, marking areas and years in particular ways; however, they also knit those places and times together, reminding Kaela, along with other viewers and readers that issues and texts are made and received within and across places, spaces, and times. Long since removed or worn away, the “What would Jesus do?” graffiti text returned to Kaela’s thoughts when she encountered the modified “For sale” sign a few years later, as a reminder of the ubiquity not just of consumption but also of the anti-consumerist framing of concerns.

Kim experienced a second example of graffiti text inviting reflection on a sidewalk in the



Figure 4. Lima, Peru sidewalk image outside a major Catholic church
Photo: Kimberly Lenters



Figure 3. Victoria BC street sign
Photo: Karen Caithness

Mira Flores district of Lima, Peru in April 2015 (see Figure 4). Although its focus was different from the two examples discussed above, it too illustrated how graffiti can enter into social debate that circulates globally, but with local nuances. It also provides a good example of how graffiti is produced and read intertextually. This particular sidewalk follows the coastal cliff bordering Lima’s western edge. It serves as a curved dividing-line between high-rise residential and retail spaces and the recreational parkland that forms the boundary between city and ocean. Stencilled on a section of the sidewalk, across the street from a Roman Catholic church, the message in Spanish stated,

“Libertad de amar,” or translated into English, “Freedom to love.” Graphics expanded this message with a heart in the centre of a permeable circle and three couples (male-male, male-female, female-female) situated around the heart.

The message proclaimed freedom to love whomever we will love, regardless of gender and sexual identity. Found in another space we argue it might have invited quiet contemplation; however, its actual location outside a Catholic church in a country where Catholicism retains cultural currency, urged more than inward-focused contemplation—it invited the viewer to reflect on how a globalized movement to extend rights to and acceptance of lesbians and gay men. Through its location, the quiet stencilled statement, facing a church whose doctrine explicitly limits marriage to heterosexual couples, made visible the politics of love. It both acknowledged and disrupted the rootedness of the C/church and claimed a space for relational diversity and sexually marginalized people in the vast city of Lima, Peru.

Action

In this final selection of graffiti, we see another shift, as invitations to reflection become invitations to action. Beyond encouraging viewers to think about relations and complicities, these texts suggest how viewers can translate analysis and critique into changed practice. As the focus seems to change, so too does the tone of the invitation, which becomes more pressing, something closer to a calling.

Kaela came upon one of these texts in Sydney, Australia in 2006, at the start of a day trip to the Blue Mountains. Plainly visible on the walkway leading to the city’s Central train station, where it would be visible to thousands of people daily, the simple text issued an ominous comment about the dangers of silence in the face of unfettered consumerism (see Figure 5). Evoking a Marxist sensibility, the text portrayed human beings as drones who give themselves—ourselves—over to the obligations of work and the distractions of consumption. In the process, this graffiti implied, any meaning in life is scarified. Of course, some sort of work and consumption are necessary in life, and it is a fact that we all will die. What remains changeable is silence. In inserting the “Be silent” phrase, this text disrupted the “natural,” common sense order of things and suggested we all have agency, because we all have voices. Although similar in some respects to the “For sale—Youth idealism” image discussed above, to us, this text seemed to take an affective tone of indignant challenge rather than resigned satire.

Kaela saw a second action-oriented graffiti text while visiting Aveiro, Portugal in 2011. This graffiti, painted on a wall outside the small city’s train station, notified passersby about a nation-wide general strike organized for the following day (see Figure 6). In inviting people to participate in the strike, this text



Figure 5. Sydney, Australia image on the sidewalk outside the Central train station
Photo: Kaela Jubas



Figure 6. Aveiro, Portugal—Call to general strike on the train station wall
Photo: Kaela Jubas

reminded people that, in body and voice, they could join others in contributing to social change. The lesson of the graffiti moved off the wall, as Kaela's vague sense of the opposition to austerity measures was deepened by conversations with the local conference coordinator about the extent of citizen anger over the impacts of government cut-backs, which had reached even this fairly conservative city.

Affectively, both of these graffiti texts summoned feelings of anger, directed at systems and practices that diminish human dignity and well-being. They disrupted the plans for the day, whether attending a conference or beginning a pleasant jaunt. They were also more than expressions of outrage; in issuing invitations to action, they taught viewers something about contemporary politics and social movements, and might have reminded some viewers that, raised in protest against the status quo and insistence of something more sustainable and just, our voices can contribute to the making of a different life, a different social condition, a different text.

Bringing It Home: Closing Thoughts

We have argued here that at least some graffiti aims to reach the ordinary passerby with a political or social message and that, as it does so, it performs a pedagogical function. Not every graffiti text accomplishes this in the same way, though, or tries to convey the same kind of message. Certainly, there are examples of graffiti meant to offend and conjure hatred through expressions of bigotry, examples meant to intimidate residents and rivals by marking territory as gang-controlled, and examples meant to do little more than boost the egos of taggers. Those were not the sorts of graffiti that we chose to consider here. Instead, we presented examples of graffiti that, we believe, intend to invite viewers into responses we conceptualized as contemplation, which brings the gaze inward, reflection, which relates the individual to the social, and action. Differences are affective more than topical, and made apparent in the graffiti's aesthetics and explicit messages.

Grounded in place, space, and time, graffiti also becomes unmoored from its physical and temporal location as it is shared online or in print with viewers elsewhere. Graffiti's producers, viewers, and texts find one another in place and time, and are (re)moved in ways that can be planned or unimagined. Even viewers who do not take up graffiti's invitations for contemplation, reflection or action might notice a text and move on from it as altered, emotionally moved individuals. Similarly, the place in which graffiti is located is altered; its social structure and political character, its very identity becomes "a product of interactions" (Massey, 1996, p. 120) with(in) it. In this way, graffiti works as more than an informal pedagogue; it becomes a catalyst, producing change in those who interact with it and the very place in which it is located as well as a possible resource for educators working either in the formal classroom

or engaged in community-based education.

In some places, municipal planning staff or private landowners have hired artists to transform surfaces in public or publicly accessible spaces by creating murals and, presumably, to decrease the appeal to graffitiists of otherwise-blank surfaces. Such moves signal attempts to restrain what some see as citizen outbursts and degradation of property and control the ways in which spaces are enhanced aesthetically. While such responses may be portrayed as necessary for the maintenance of urban social order, they disregard the potential cultural and intellectual sophistication and refinement that graffiti can have (Garrofoli & Laurence, 2013), as well as the pedagogical impetus of graffiti texts that issue invitations to contemplate, reflect on, and act on issues of personal well-being and perceived social injustices.

Although we had no community partners in this work, we see the artists and the graffiti discussed above and our discussion of them as contributions to various efforts to understand, build, and advance community through an artful practice. We offer this article as an engagement in the conversation about the function of graffiti in community and in our own efforts in engaged teaching and scholarship.

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Confronting Gentrification: Can Creative Interventions Help People Keep More than Just Their Homes?

Amie Thurber, Janine Christiano

ABSTRACT Gentrification is changing the landscape of many American cities. As land values rise, people may lose their homes, neighbors, and sites of significance, along with their *sense* of place, community, and history. There is a critical need to build and preserve affordable housing, yet housing alone will not address the *more than material* losses. What role can the arts play in sustaining place attachments, restoring relationships, and building place knowledge in gentrifying neighborhoods? This paper explores this question through a systematic review of current research. We identify four prominent alternative interventions in gentrifying neighborhoods—creative placemaking, public pedagogy, community organizing, and public science—and explicate strengths and limitations of each approach. We find the strongest interventions bridge approaches—engaging artists as/and researchers, educators, and community leaders—and mobilize residents as participants in knowledge/cultural production. We note that initiatives that provide short-term benefit may simultaneously make the neighborhood more desirable—and thus more vulnerable to gentrification—in the longer-term. Finally, given the dearth of research in this area, we conclude with recommendations for future research that attends to issues of equity, process as well as outcome, and longitudinal effects of *more than material* interventions in gentrifying neighborhoods.

KEYWORDS Gentrification, placemaking, popular education, PAR, community organizing

Gentrification is changing the landscape of many American cities. As land values rise, people may lose their homes, neighbors, and sites of significance, along with their sense of place, community, and history. There is a critical need to build and preserve affordable housing, yet people want to keep more than just their homes. What role can the arts and other creative interventions play in sustaining place attachments, restoring relationships, and building place knowledge in gentrifying neighborhoods? This paper explores this question through a comprehensive review of current research. To situate this review, we begin by introducing a *more than material* framework for conceptualizing gentrification. Drawing on a systematic review of the literature, we then catalog the types of alternative interventions taking place in gentrifying neighborhoods, and explore outcomes and limitations of those interventions. We conclude with implications for future study, policy-making, and practice.

Thinking Holistically about Neighborhoods

Gentrification is commonly understood as the transformation of areas with relatively high levels of affordable housing into areas targeting middle and upper income uses (Hackworth, 2002; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2013). Urban neighborhoods in the U.S. are now gentrifying at twice the rate of the 1990s, and 20% of low-income neighborhoods report rapid increases in median home values (Maciag, 2015). In Canada, low-income families and low and middle-income couples have been priced out of once affordable neighborhoods in Vancouver and Toronto (Sturgeon, 2016). Similarly, the cost of housing in many of London's previously affordable neighborhoods has skyrocketed, pushing low-income residents out of the city (Owen, 2015).

Although gentrification is often defined solely in economic terms, Curran (2018) reminds us that “class is gendered, raced, aged, and abled” (p. 2). It is not an accident that neighborhoods of colour are particularly vulnerable to gentrification (Brookings Institution, 2001), but rather the result of generations of policies and practices that have functioned to segregate, contain, exploit, and/or remove people of colour (Lipsitz, 2007). Given the continued gender-based disparities in income—which are more extreme for women of colour—women, those with children, are more likely than their male counterparts to be displaced by rising housing costs (Curran, 2018). As such, an intersectional analysis is imperative to understanding the impacts of gentrification.

Gentrification's effects on the built environment impact residential as well as commercial spaces. In immigrant communities and communities of colour, locally owned retail spaces often simultaneously meet critical economic, cultural and socioemotional needs (McLean, Rankin, & Kamizaki, 2015). Yet, a study by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (2013) finds that as a result of the accelerated rate of gentrification in Chinatowns in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, these mixed-use neighborhoods are on “the verge of disappearing” (p. 2). Other scholars have observed patterns of “boutiquing” in gentrifying areas, as long-standing local retail stores are replaced by new boutiques catering to an exclusive price-point (Zukin, Trujillo, Frase, Jackson, Recuber, & Walker, 2009).

The transformation of residential and commercial areas provokes a constellation of losses, as people may be displaced from homes, family and friends, and familiar gathering spaces, along with their *sense* of place, belonging, and history. And importantly, residents of gentrifying neighborhoods may suffer social, cultural and/or political displacements even when they remain in place (Twigge-Molecey, 2013). As Betancur (2002) notes:

There is an aspect of gentrification that mainstream definitions ignore...The most traumatic aspect...is perhaps the destruction of the elaborate and complex community fabric that is crucial for low-income, immigrant, and minority communities—without any compensation. (p. 807)

Such losses of community fabric are significant. For some time, scholars have argued for the need to think holistically about the stakes of gentrification, offering a variety of conceptual

models for doing so. For example, Hyra (2013) offers the three-tiered framework of residential, political and cultural displacements, and Twigg-Molecey (2013) uses the typology of social, cultural, and housing market displacement. Davidson (2009) suggests an epistemological shift away from equating the loss of abstract space with a loss of sense of place (Davidson, 2009). As R&B legend Luther Vandross croons, “a house is not a home...”; if we reduce gentrification to only a loss of space (houses), we miss the effects on place (a resident’s feeling of being at home). However, these insights have been slow to be conceptually integrated into a framework that can inform public policy. In recent years there have been a number of highly cited policy reports on gentrification which focus almost exclusively on strategies to create or preserve affordable housing (Mallach, 2008; Brookings Institution, 2001; The Urban Institute, 2006, Urban Land Institute, 2007). While such approaches are critical, they fail to recognize and respond to other harms residents may be experiencing concurrent with, or independent from, a loss of housing.

Recently, Thurber (2017) offered a more than material conceptual framework that attends to three dimensions of residents’ experiences of gentrification:

- *Material* concerns related to housing and changes in the built environment, which may include housing instability, residential and commercial displacement, and the loss of jobs for and amenities targeted to lower income residents.
- *Epistemic* concerns related to knowledge about, and the reputation of, neighborhoods, which may include long-time residents being dismissed as knowledgeable and marginalized from public life, lost historic knowledge about an area, and symbolic erasures of an area’s cultural history (i.e., the changing of place-names).
- *Affective* concerns related to changing relationships between people and place, which may include diminished social bonds and sense of belonging, increases in stigma and discrimination, and a lost sense of place.

Thurber (2017) contends that although all long-term residents of gentrifying neighborhoods will not experience all of these harms, or only these harms, or experience these harms in the same way, a more than material approach to conceptualizing gentrification foregrounds the need to think holistically about intervening in gentrifying neighborhoods. Residential displacement is among gentrification’s most serious harms, yet it is not the only harm. As such, in addition to efforts to build and preserve affordable housing, it is imperative to consider more than material interventions in gentrifying neighborhoods.

A simple internet search reveals numerous grassroots responses to gentrification led by artists, organizers, and scholars designed to effect changes beyond the built environment. But, what do we know about the efficacy of such interventions? What changes can more than material interventions produce, and what are their limitations? To answer these questions, we conducted a systematic review of the literature.

Methods

Recognizing that alternative interventions in gentrifying neighborhoods do not emerge from

a single discipline, draw from a single theoretical tradition, or use shared language, we utilized multiple combinations of search terms to acquire a sample that met the following criteria: (1) the article provided an empirical account (2) of an intervention (operationalized as any organized response to changing neighborhood conditions), and (3) focused on addressing the more than material effects (that is, effects that may include, but are not limited to, material losses) (4) resulting from neighborhood gentrification.¹ This search produced a pool of twenty articles by thirteen first authors documenting seventeen distinct projects, all located in changing urban neighborhoods. Although the majority of these studies explore projects in the United States, there are four in Canada, and one in Australia and the United Kingdom respectively. A summary of the articles included in this review is provided in Appendix A. Though a relatively limited sample, the seventeen projects provide a starting point for considering the applications of more than material interventions in gentrifying neighborhoods. The following sections first catalog the types of more than material interventions occurring, then synthesizes the outcomes and limitations of these interventions.

Cataloging Practice: What Constitutes a More than Material Intervention?

A survey of the studies included in this review suggest four general approaches to more than material interventions in gentrifying neighborhoods:

- *Creative placemaking* projects engage the arts to transform how people feel about, relate to, and interact in their neighborhood;
- *Public pedagogy* initiatives create opportunities for people to learn about their neighborhood;
- *Public science* projects engage people in studying and taking informed action in their neighborhoods;² and
- *Community organizing* efforts mobilize residents to build and exercise power to affect change in their neighborhood.

Each approach is associated with particular practices to achieve change, engages residents in different ways, and utilizes a distinct set of strategies to achieve their goals (see Table 1). That said, as reflected in Appendix A, a number of projects in this review incorporated more than one approach. These four forms of intervention can rightly be understood as approaches to community-engaged scholarship, wherein people working in academic or professional settings partner with local community experts to address a concern, question, or need (O'Meara,

¹ We completed a simultaneous database search of all 59 Pro Quest databases, which index thousands of titles across multiple disciplines, restricting the search to peer-reviewed journals, and unrestricted with regard to geography and year of publication. We used the following search terms, as found in the article abstracts: Gentrification OR redevelopment OR neighborhood change, AND, Community Practice OR Participatory OR action research OR place-making OR dialogue OR memory OR public history OR cartography OR civic OR art. When an abstract met these inclusion criteria, we reviewed the article in full.

² Given disciplinary differences in how participatory modes of research are termed, we use 'public science' as an umbrella term to include projects conceptualized as Participatory Action Research, public archaeology, and collaborative ethnography, as examples.

2011). Indeed, all but one reviewed article are examples of community-engaged scholarship. That said, these approaches do not necessitate an academic partner to be effective.

Table 1. More than material interventions

	CREATIVE PLACEMAKING	PUBLIC PEDAGOGY	PUBLIC SCIENCE	COMMUNITY ORGANIZING
Looks to:	Place-based artistic/humanities practices	Facilitated teaching/learning	Systematic inquiry	Mobilization of community members
Engages residents as:	Artists and/or audiences	Teachers and/or learners	Researchers and/or research subjects	Community Leaders
Sample strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● media campaigns ● dance/performance ● installation art ● street festivals ● alternative tours ● counter-mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● skill-building workshops ● public history workshops ● portable exhibitions ● resident story-sharing sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● participatory or street surveys ● focus groups ● participatory excavation ● archival, policy, web-based analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● door-knocking ● networking ● leadership development ● policy analysis ● power-mapping ● public events and/or social actions

Creative placemaking

Creative placemaking is broadly understood as the deliberate integration of the arts into community revitalization initiatives. A white paper released by the United States National Endowment for the Arts claims that creative placemaking, “animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired” (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010, p. 3).

As evidenced in this statement, though creative placemaking projects may produce material outcomes, such as a public art installation, the goal is often affective change: to transform how people feel about, relate to, and interact in a particular place. Although creative placemaking practices are not necessarily designed to achieve social justice, the arts can and often play critical roles in advancing social justice movements. As educational scholar Lee Anne Bell (2010) notes, “The creative dimensions opened up by aesthetic engagement help us envision new possibilities for challenging and changing oppressive circumstances” (p. 17). More specifically, Brookfield and Holst (2011) suggest five functions of the arts: to sound warnings, build solidarity, empower, present alternative epistemologies, affirm pride, and teach history (p. 152). However, creative placemaking practices have been criticized for treating places as

blank slates ready for artistic intervention rather than as sites layered with histories, meanings, and experiences (Wilbur, 2015). In the words of cultural leader Roberto Bedoya, a “politics of belonging and dis-belonging” can be traced through the “troubling legacy of ‘placemaking’ manifested in acts of displacement, removal, and containment” (2013, p. 20). In contrast, Bedoya (2013) and community activist/artist Jenny Lee offer the concept of creative place-keeping, which refers to the practices of residents to preserve the material, cultural, and social aspects of their neighborhood they cherish. Despite these distinctions, the term placemaking is often used as an umbrella term, regardless of whether the project has place-keeping goals.

Nine of the projects (50%) in this review used creative placemaking as a response to gentrification. These included a choreographed dance performance engaging themes of displacement and home (Somdahl-Sands, 2008), a series of political art installations (Dutton & Mann, 2003), a photo-voice project (Burke, Greene, & McKenna, 2017), and a street festival (McLean & Rahder, 2013). Across the creative placemaking projects, residents were at times engaged as artists (McLean, 2014b; Cahill, 2007) and at times as audience (Somdahl-Sands, 2008). In either case, a core assumption of creative placemaking projects is that the arts and humanities can catalyze community engagement and galvanize commitments to restorative place-based actions.

Public pedagogy

Public pedagogy can be broadly understood as facilitated learning that take place outside of formal schooling environments (Sandlin, O’Malley, & Burdick, 2011). This might include bike maintenance classes offered at a local bike shop, gardening workshops hosted by the library, or a lecture at a coffee-shop. In the context of gentrifying neighborhoods, many public pedagogy projects draw on the tradition of popular education (also referred to as critical education, or critical pedagogy). Popular education is often traced back to two famous educators: Brazilian educator and theorist Paulo Freire, and Highlander Folk School founder and community organizer Myles Horton. Working in different geographies and contexts, both Freire and Horton reimagined the educational process from one that indoctrinates people into an existing social order, to one that mobilizes people towards liberation from systemic inequality. Popular education intentionally brings together people who have been marginalized, and, with the help of a facilitator, creates conditions for people to teach and learn from one another; to critically reflect on their lived experiences, to imagine alternatives, and to take action to affect change.

Public pedagogy approaches in gentrifying neighborhoods often have epistemic and affective aims, seeking to transform what and how people know about a place, as well as how they feel about their neighbors and/or neighborhood. Eleven of the sixteen projects (69%) in this sample deployed public pedagogy strategies to address gentrification in their neighborhood. These included skill-building workshops for resident activists (Darcy, 2013), participatory democracy trainings (Nam, 2012), youth-led neighborhood tours (McLean, 2014), public history projects (Chidester & Gadsby, 2016; Thurber, 2018), and resident story-sharing sessions (Drew, 2012).

The reviewed public pedagogy projects varied with the regard to who occupied teaching

and learning roles. In some cases, longer-term residents took on the role of expert/teacher (Drew, 2012; Thurber, 2018), while in others, outside professionals served as teachers to residents of all tenures (Chidester & Gadsby, 2009). Despite these differences, public pedagogy projects share an assumption that educational practices can raise consciousness regarding the consequences of gentrification, which may in turn activate social action.

Public Science

Public science can be understood as knowledge generated with and for the public. The movement towards publicly engaged scholarship is rooted in a number of critiques of research which locates expertise exclusively within the academe (Torre, Fine, Stoudt, & Fox, 2012). Too often, such scholarship ignores the grounded expertise of everyday people in everyday places, and produces work that is irrelevant and/or illegible to the people it purports to be *about* or even *for*. As indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) famously concludes about expert-driven research in indigenous communities, “It told us things already known, suggested things that would not work, and made careers for people who already had jobs” (p. 3). Such disengaged scholarship often takes final form as journal articles intended to be read by and influence others in academia, and are, in the words of bell hooks, “...highly abstract, jargonistic, difficult to read, and containing obscure references” (p. 64). In contrast, in public science, academics leverage their particular tools and resources in partnership with community members to understand and address issues of mutual concern, and produce research products that are meaningful and relevant to the community.

A simple internet search reveals the cross-disciplinary scope of contemporary public science, including public anthropology, public archeology, public history, and public sociology. In the health and social sciences, publicly-engaged scholarship often manifests as Participatory Action Research (PAR). Better understood as an epistemological approach to inquiry and action than a research method, PAR draws on diverse lineages and has produced varied strands (see Torre, Fine, Stoudt, & Fox, 2012). At the core, however, participatory action researchers share a commitment to engage those who are directly affected by social problems in studying and intervening in those problems (Greenwood, 2002). Although PAR projects differ in how that engagement manifests, all PAR projects require reassessing traditional notions of who is involved in designing research questions and data collection instruments, collecting and analyzing data, and determining the purpose and design of dissemination materials. Public science projects often have multiple objectives, including: to improve living conditions, to generate new understandings of social phenomenon, and to include more people in the process of knowledge production.

Nine of the seventeen projects (53%) in this sample engaged in public science as a response to gentrification. Seven were self-described as Participatory Action Research (PAR) projects. For example, four different projects involved residents of public or socialized housing conducting research in order to effect public policy (Darcy, 2013; Hodkinson & Essen, 2014; Sinha, 2013; Thurber, Collins, Greer, McKnight, & Thompson, 2018; Thurber & Fraser, 2016). Another took aim at commercial gentrification, engaging residents of a “major

immigrant landing area” in studying the planned redevelopment of their community (McLean, Rankin, & Kamizaki, 2015, p. 1299). All the public science projects in this review reflected partnerships between academically trained researchers and community groups, although some were initiated in the community (Sinha & Kasdan, 2013), and others by academic researchers (Chidester & Gadsby, 2009). There was also variation in the degree to which community members participated as research collaborators and/or research subjects. Nonetheless, these projects shared an assumption that the tools of scientific inquiry can be used to leverage, legitimize, amplify, and extend efforts to improve public policy and civic life.

Community organizing

Broadly defined, community organizing refers to the processes associated with mobilizing a constituency that can exercise power to achieve social change (Speer et al, 2003). There are many similarities in strategy between popular education, PAR and community organizing. As Speer and Roberts (2017) note, community organizing—like popular education—leverages existing knowledge in communities, and—like CPAR—engages the tools of research to inform social action. However, the target of community organizing is transformational rather than educational or ameliorative; the goal is to address the root causes of problems, not simply to develop an analysis or to make bad conditions better. Christens and Speer (2015) suggest that community organizing is characterized by a set of processes, which include relationship development, research, social action, and evaluation (p. 194). While the goals of community organizing vary by context, they may involve material, political, cultural, and social targets.

Five of the projects (29%) in this sample engaged a community organizing approach to intervening in gentrifying neighborhoods. In three sites, residents of public and socialized housing organized for material and epistemic goals. They sought to prevent displacement of low-income residents while at the same time working to transform the deficit-based representations of their community that were used to legitimize displacement (Darcy, 2013; Sinha, 2013; Thurber, Collins, Greer, McKnight, & Thompson, 2018; Thurber & Fraser, 2016). In these three projects, community organizers partnered with academic researchers to help achieve their goals. The fourth project, Huntington Park NO SE VENDE!, involved youth-led community organizing to resist gentrification within a Puerto Rican community in Chicago, and did not appear to involve academic partners (Nam, 2012). In all cases, community organizers deployed a number of strategies, which included door-knocking to outreach and mobilize communities, networking sessions to share best practices, leadership development and skill-building, policy analysis, power-mapping, and public events and/or social actions intended to educate and agitate around specific goals. The core assumption behind community organizing is that those directly affected by social problems can come together to work toward and achieve positive changes that would be impossible to achieve alone.

Evaluating Practice: What Differences Can More than Material Interventions Make?

Evaluating the effectiveness of more than material interventions requires studies that are not only descriptive—providing an accounting of how an intervention took place—but are also

evaluative—using systematic analysis to explore the effects of the intervention. Significantly, only four of the reviewed studies were designed with the express purpose of evaluating the intervention itself: to understand what the intervention did to and for those who participated, and how those effects took place. That said, most of the studies included evidence of intervention outcomes. Synthesizing results across studies suggests four central findings. First, more than material interventions can effectively disrupt and respond to the more than material harms of gentrification. Second, creative placemaking and public pedagogy interventions can spark individual and collective development, though are limited in fostering collective action. Third, public science and community organizing initiatives can facilitate collective action, though face difficulties in sustaining change. And fourth, an equity lens is necessary to evaluate the effects of any intervention. In the following pages, each of these findings is explored in turn.

Beneficial outcomes

First, in all but one project, the authors provided evidence of the beneficial outcomes of the intervention. Those outcomes included: raising neighbors' collective consciousness about gentrification and the processes of neighborhood change (Cahill, 2006; Drew, 2012; McClean, 2014; McLean2014b; Thurber & Fraser, 2016; Thurber, 2018), strengthening relationships among residents (Chidester & Gadsby, 2009; Thurber, Collins, Greer, McKnight, & Thompson, 2018; Thurber, in press), and transforming residents' relationships to place (Somdahl-Sands, 2008; Thurber, 2018).

Interventions that engaged residents as artists, teachers, and researchers had the additional benefit of democratizing knowledge production. This has both individual effects, as residents increasingly value their own knowledge and abilities to theorize (Cahill, 2006; Drew, 2008; McLean 2014), and community-level effects, as residents use their knowledge to to influence neighborhood change (Darcy, 2013; Hodkinson & Essin, 2015; Thurber, Collins, Greer, McKnight, & Thompson, 2018; Thurber & Fraser, 2016; Sinha, 2013).

Contributions of creative placemaking and public pedagogy interventions

The greatest contribution of both creative placemaking and public pedagogy approaches is its ability to catalyze consciousness-raising among potentially large groups through relatively short-term interventions. The Mission Wall Dances—a multimedia performance responding to gentrification in San Francisco's historically Latino Mission district—serves as an example. Designed by choreographer Jo Kreiter, the project included a commissioned three-story mural depicting the 1975 Gartland Apartment arson, which many believe was intentionally set to evict low-income residents from the district. In recent years, this disturbing pattern of evicting-by-arson has re-emerged in the Mission, displacing residents and eliminating affordable rentals, most of which have not been rebuilt (Somdahl-Sands, 2008). Kreiter staged an aerialist dance performance against the mural. The piece was choreographed to evoke the legacy of arson and displacement, as well as resident resistance to removal. The performance drew 1000 attendees over several days. Somdahl-Sands (2008) surveyed the attendees immediately after the event,

and distributed a follow-up questionnaire a year later. She concluded that the performance cognitively and affectively transformed the attendees' relationships to the Mission district by creating a "communal memory of the neighborhood" which "made the displacement of Mission District residents an intellectual, physical and emotional reality for the audience" (p. 349). While the Mission Wall Dances used aesthetics to foster communal memory, other projects, such as the Restorative Listening Project, used the power of narrative.

Sponsored by the city of Portland and sited in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood on the city's east side, the Restorative Listening Project invited newer, predominantly white residents to attend facilitated community gatherings to hear stories of long-time African American residents. The project aimed to raise white neighbors' consciousness of how the changing neighborhood was affecting black residents' sense of safety, community, and belonging (Drew, 2012). Sessions were held monthly, and attendance varied from 20 to 100 people. Through a multi-year study of the intervention, Drew (2012) found that the experience was transformative for many white participants, who described a deepening of their understanding as to how race and racism impact their community. In addition, some African American residents also reported positive effects. For example, one speaker reflected that "it is healing for us to acknowledge the pain...instead of holding this stuff inside our whole lives, with no outlet, causing all kinds of mental and physical anguish" (2011, p. 110). Drew concludes that the Restorative Listening Project sparked critical consciousness-raising among many attendees (though not all, as will be discussed below). Further, by positioning longer-term residents as experts, the project validated their experiences and knowledge. However, given that the project by design was limited to story-telling and story-listening, it did not foster collective action to address structural racism.³

These two examples illustrate the potential of stand-alone creative placemaking and public pedagogy projects to spark important changes to individuals and collectives, as well as their limitations. In the tradition of memory-work advocated by geographer Karen Till (2012), creative placemaking and public pedagogy approaches can bring attention to the history of racial struggle, help residents make connections between the past and the present, and engage residents in reflecting on their responsibilities as neighbors in gentrifying neighborhoods. However, given their ephemeral, one-off nature, these approaches are limited in terms of fostering action—either individually or collectively.

Contributions of public science and community organizing interventions

In contrast, public science and community organizing approaches, which require a greater investment of time, are effective in fostering both consciousness raising and collective action. Studies find that in addition to having positive developmental effects on those involved (Cahill, 2007; Thurber & Fraser, 2016), both approaches offer the potential to effect systemic change by developing a pipeline of leaders (Nam, 2012; Thurber, 2018), creating organizing networks (Darcy, 2013; McLean, 2014b) and producing materials that can be used to organize

³ As an interesting postscript, in 2012 the City of Portland changed the name of this project to the Restorative Action Project.

for better neighborhood conditions (Darcy, 2013; Hodkinson & Essin, 2015; Sinha, 2012; Thurber, Collins, Greer, McKnight, & Thompson, 2018). This is not to suggest that public science and community organizing activities achieve all of their goals. In contrast, each of the projects included in this review document ongoing sites of struggle. However, the projects were designed to advance those struggles by creating tools, relationships, and networks that feed into civic action work.

For example, the Neighborhood Story Project is a three-month action research intervention engaging residents as researchers in their gentrifying neighborhoods. Through a multi-case study of three Neighborhood Story Projects, Thurber (2018) finds that participants deepened their place-knowledge and place-attachments, strengthened social ties, and developed an increased sense of agency to advocate on behalf of their community. As one participant reflected,

These past, you know, 10-15 years, I have been watching the neighborhood... It's like 'what can I do, what can I do? How can I get involved?' Then all of a sudden, it's like I'm involved and this is just, I'm just so blessed...even though I don't know, I don't feel like I've done anything that outstanding so far, but I just feel, I feel some sense of empowerment. I just feel like I'm not just sitting around watching all of this happen and doing nothing about it. (Thurber, 2018, p. 115)

Although the Neighborhood Story Project is designed to effect change at the small-group level, other reviewed projects were designed to have broader reach.

The Residents' Voices Project (Darcy, 2013), which blends community organizing and public science, offers a particularly robust example. This international collaborative research project was co-located in Sydney, Australia and Chicago, U.S., and involved residents of public and socialized housing, as well as community workers and scholars in both settings. Michael Darcy (2013) and collaborators designed the project to counter the ways that resident perspectives are "systematically devalued or excluded from the so-called 'evidence' deployed to justify redevelopment of public housing and sometimes destruction of communities" (p. 370). The organizing agenda was simultaneously multi-local and global. Using a shared web-space and connecting via technology allowed collaborators to learn and share best practices that built local capacity, while also drawing connections across contexts. As Darcy (2013) explained, "This project aims to create a space where tenants are able to express, exchange and theorise about the impact of the places they live on their lives, to validate their own knowledge, and to use it in ways which best suit their interests" (p. 371). Although the potential contributions of Residents' Voices appear to be significant, it is unclear whether these efforts have been sustained. The project web address is no longer functional, and little additional information is available online. Indeed, only one of the public science and/or community organizing efforts included in this review appears to be ongoing: the Right to the City Alliance,

a national coalition of organizations working for racial, economic and environmental justice.⁴ Interventions need not, and indeed cannot, last forever. Among the projects included in this review, the conditions of social inequality outlasted the intervention strategy. But attention to sustainability does raise questions about the life-span of public science and community organizing initiatives, and how such initiatives can be crafted to collectivize and share learnings, best practices, and resources when their efforts come to a close.

A second related challenge in PAR and community organizing initiatives concerns how success is measured. In their compellingly titled essay, “Youth voice, civic engagement and failure in participatory action research”, Burke, Greens, and McKenna (2017) explore the “promises that are made and broken” (p. 585) in the course of their work with youth. Bridging creative placemaking and PAR approaches, their project spanned six years and engaged eight cohorts of middle-school aged co-researchers with the goal of transforming a neglected, underutilized park located on the edge of a gentrifying neighborhood. Through photovoice projects, guided walks, and systematic observations, the first cohort assessed the current and potential uses of the park and developed a proposed redesign. Subsequent cohort researchers worked with the parks department and landscape architects to develop a detailed plan for the park, engaged in a fundraising campaign and won support from city leaders. While some progress has been made, the park project has largely stalled. Reflecting on the value of PAR, the authors note that though they “have long been proponents of that process, one that encourages youth to take on democratic responsibility and social participation...the product also matters as do promises made to kids, implicit, explicit or otherwise” (Burke, Greens, & McKenna, 2017, p. 594). Given their collective inability to achieve the goal of revitalizing the park, the authors conclude that “though our youth partners might have learned the value of telling stories, of doing research, and something about their own agency they might also have learned that though they had voice, ultimately they didn’t have much power” (2017, p. 594). Thus, although community organizing and PAR interventions can be effective in fostering both consciousness raising and collective action, there are no guarantees that such actions will accomplish participants’ stated goals. This is not to say that their efforts cannot produce significant gains (as noted, participation in community organizing and PAR projects have been shown to build capacity, skills, and knowledge that can fuel other social justice efforts). However, it does speak to the importance of transparent deliberation among participants about how success will be measured, and encouraging honest assessments of the gains and limitations of interventions.

The Need for an Equity Lens

The final finding from this systematic review is that effective interventions in gentrifying neighborhoods require explicit attention to equity. An equity lens is better understood as an approach than a rigid set of practices. As Grantcraft (2012) describes, applying an equity lens means “paying disciplined attention to race and ethnicity while analyzing problems, looking

⁴ See www.therighttothecity.org

for solutions, and defining success” (p. ii). More broadly, applying an equity lens implies asking questions about who can participate in a given intervention, and who is left out; who benefits and who is harmed; and/or whose interests are prioritized and whose are ignored or secondary. One study of a neighborhood-based intervention in Toronto, Canada demonstrated the importance of bringing an equity lens to bear when addressing gentrification.

Concerned about rapid redevelopment and concurrent loss of street-level interaction in their neighborhood, a group of residents and business-owners began hosting monthly pedestrian-only street festivals as a tool of resistance to gentrification. However, as McLean and Rahder (2013) find, organizers failed to consider the impact that blocking car-traffic had on some of the working-class residents and businesses, and designed the festival activities to appeal to middle-class residents and tourists. Businesses that require traffic for deliveries and pick-ups (such as the meat and hardware store) suffered, while niche coffee shops and gift stores profited. Further, the festival increased interest in the neighborhood among middle and upper-class residents, likely accelerating the rate of gentrification. Although the initial impetus of this initiative was to resist perceived negative effects of gentrification—in particular, diminished social ties—McLean and Rahder conclude that “uncritical and unquestioned ideals of public involvement, community, and creativity may reproduce the very exclusions, both symbolic and material, that they claim to challenge” (2013, p. 95). Absent a comprehensive analysis of who the street festival was designed to benefit, and who might be harmed, this creative placemaking intervention deepened rather than diminished the social damage it attempted to address, thus perpetuating the troubling legacy of placemaking Bedoya (2013) cautions against.

Yet even in interventions deeply committed to centering marginalized knowledge, as with PAR projects, tensions emerge between equity values and outcomes. In their insightful reflection on an action research project within an immigrant neighborhood, McLean, Rankin, and Kamizaki (2015) consider how “racialized and classed dynamics also infused our collaboration between university-based and community-based researchers” (p. 1299). Reflecting on a PAR project involving residents of a public housing project and academic partners, Thurber, Collins, Greer, McKnight, and Thompson (2018) note:

While the academic researchers sought to counter the marginalization and powerlessness of residents, these Team members also wielded significant influence in shaping the research process. Even as academic partners encouraged dissent and alternative explanations within our meetings, we (Amie and Leslie) may have inadvertently advantaged our own thinking at times, and resident partners may have unknowingly deferred to our assumed professional expertise. (p. 13)

Thus, even when an intervention is explicitly designed to interrupt relationships of inequality, differences in power and privilege cannot be erased, but rather must be continuously interrogated, both inside the research partnership and between scholars with shared values and commitments (de Leeuw, Cameron, & Greenwood, 2012).

While the previous examples foreground the role of those who design and implement

interventions, other studies suggest that those who participate must also bring a critical consciousness around issues of equity, or develop that consciousness along the way. For example, while Drew's (2012) account of the Restorative Listening Project highlights the consciousness-raising potential of this intervention, another major finding in her study is the prevalence of white denial. Indeed, though many white listeners reported being transformed by the stories of their neighbors, others simply dismissed these accounts, and refused to consider their own complicity in creating conditions where black residents felt unwelcome, unwanted, and unsafe in their own neighborhoods. Furthermore, Drew (2011) was concerned about the potentially exploitative nature of an intervention that relies on people of colour's stories of pain in order for white people to (potentially) learn about injustice. McLean (2014) reaches similar conclusions in her analysis of a youth-led tour of a gentrifying public housing neighborhood, which in some cases reified, rather than challenged, distancing and exploitative social relations between lower-income and higher-income residents. As these findings make evident, despite the best efforts of those involved, not all participants will be transformed.

It is likely, then, that results of more than material interventions will always be mixed, and the gains always partial. The intervention will hopefully interrupt injustices in some aspects, and inevitably re-inscribe inequities in others. As such, it is critical that collaborators in efforts for change discuss expectations of the intervention's goals, how success will be measured, and reflect critically on the successes, challenges, and failures along the way.

Implications and Conclusion

In neighborhoods experiencing and/or vulnerable to gentrification, *more than material* interventions can complement efforts to build and preserve affordable housing. For those scholars seeking ways to collaborate with communities in responding to gentrification, this literature review identified four prominent alternative interventions—creative placemaking, public pedagogy, community organizing, and public science—and explicated strengths and limitations of each approach.

Although there are important distinctions between these approaches, as highlighted above, there are also marked similarities in the potential contributions of more than material interventions in gentrifying neighborhoods. First, as all four approaches are place-based, each reflects a commitment to context. By exploring spatial relationships within a neighborhood over time, more than material interventions—particularly those that adopt an equity lens—can attend to legacies of displacement and racial struggle that have shaped neighborhoods, and inform resident's experiences of present day gentrification. Second, each approach relocates authority and experience from institutions into neighborhoods. By bringing art out of museums and theaters, learning out of schools, science out of labs, and social change out of city hall, each approach claims neighborhoods as critical sites for experiencing, knowing, and acting in response to gentrification. Finally, each approach reflects a commitment to widening the lens of what is seen, known, and felt about gentrification. More than material interventions reveal losses caused by gentrification that can be concealed by a singular focus on loss of housing. Relatedly, each approach (albeit to a differing degree) engages people cognitively, affectively,

and experientially. These approaches reflect a recognition that human development—and by extension, social development—requires changing what people think about gentrification, changing how people relate to their neighbors and their neighborhood, and increasing their capacity to care for one another and the places they live.

As described above, creative placemaking and public pedagogy interventions can be used to spark individual and collective development, though these approaches are limited in fostering collective action. Public science and community organizing initiatives are designed to foster collective action, though they can face difficulties in sustaining change. And importantly, the effectiveness of any intervention often hinges on the degree to which intervention designers and participants attend to issues of equity. In particular, initiatives that provide short-term benefit may simultaneously make the neighborhood more desirable—and thus more vulnerable to gentrification—in the longer-term. We find the strongest interventions bridge approaches—engaging artists as/and researchers, educators, and community leaders—and mobilize residents as participants in knowledge/cultural production. This is a key finding for community engaged scholars, as it suggests the need for partnerships across disciplines, as well as between campus and community.

While advocating for an immediate uptake of more than material interventions in gentrifying neighborhoods, there is also a need to concurrently expand the research of these interventions. Systematic inquiry can assist to catalogue the various modes of intervention, to understand their differing effects, and to consider whether particular intervention approaches are more appropriately suited to communities at different stages of gentrification (Mallach, 2008). For example, community organizing might be best deployed when neighborhoods are in early stages of gentrification, as building power at this point increases the likelihood that neighbors can shape the trajectory of change. Relatedly, public pedagogy interventions might be most effective in neighborhoods that are already incorporating a critical mass of newer residents, who may lack place knowledge and neighborhood-based social ties. Research in this area can help practitioners better match interventions to their specific contexts. Furthermore, longitudinal study is necessary to evaluate the contributions of more than material interventions in gentrifying neighborhoods. Ultimately, the more we understand what more than material interventions can offer, the more strategically and effectively they can be utilized.

Findings from this review have implications for policy and practice in gentrifying neighborhoods. At a policy level, this review suggests that alongside the continued need for mechanisms to create and preserve affordable housing, cities ought to attend to and invest in more than material dimensions of place. This could involve creating a program similar to Percent for Art, in which a percentage of overall redevelopment cost is designated for community development.⁵ Local organizations could then submit proposals to fund place-based projects addressing community concerns related to gentrification. To be clear, we are not suggesting funding for arts-based, educational, research or organizing efforts in place of resources for affordable housing. Such funding should occur alongside investments in housing.

⁵ Many jurisdictions have ‘Percent for art’ programs that mandate a designated percent of the cost of large scale development projects be earmarked for public art.

Funding for housing alone is insufficient to addressing gentrification's harms, just as investing in place-making projects that honor a community's cultural heritage without committing resources for housing would be grossly negligent to the community's needs.

Practitioners working in community development (such as city staff who focus on housing, development, and health, or staff of community-based non-profits) can strategically draw on creative placemaking, public pedagogy, public science, and/or community organizing approaches—in addition to traditional housing development, case management, advocacy, and referral services—to meet community needs. For example, if residents face displacement from homes and businesses, rental evictions, and rising property taxes, community organizing and public science interventions may help residents mobilize to study and take action in their community. If the knowledge of long-time residents is being dismissed, there are diminished opportunities for their civic engagement, or there is disregard for culturally significant places, creative placekeeping interventions may amplify residents' place-stories, create spaces of resident representation, and commemorate important places, moments, and/or people in the neighborhood. Where residents mourn disrupted social ties, escalated social stigma, and ruptured place-attachments, public pedagogy projects might serve to build relationships among neighbors, reduce bias and discrimination, and create contexts for people to care for and enjoy their neighborhood. Ultimately, more than material interventions have the potential to multiply the ways that residents of gentrifying neighborhoods might come to know, care for, and fight on behalf of, one another.

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Appendix A. Summary of studies in review

Project Name	Author (Year)	Project Design			
		Creative Place-making	Public Pedagogy	Public Science	Community Organizing
1. “Reilly Park” Photovoice Project	Burke, Greene & McKenna (2017)				
2. The Fed up Honeys	Cahill (2006), Cahill (2006), Cahill (2007)				
3. Hamden Community Archeology Project	Chidester & Gadsby (2016)				
4. Residents Voices Project	Darcy (2013)				
5. Restorative Listening Project	Drew (2012)				
6. Over-the-Rhine People’s Movement	Dutton & Mann (2003)				
7. Myatts Field North	Hodkinson & Essin (2015)				
8. Toronto Free Gallery	McLean (2014b)				
9. Manifesto Community Projects	McLean (2014)				
10. P.S. Kensington	McLean & Rahder (2013)				
11. Action for Neighborhood Change	McLean, Rankin, Kamizaki (2015)				

12. !Huntington Park NO SE VENDE!	Nam (2012)				
13. Rebuild Foundation	Reinhardt (2014)				
14. We Call These Projects Home	Sinha & Kasdan, (2013)				
15. Mission Wall Dances	Somdahl-Sands (2008)				
16. Cayce United	Thurber, Collins, Greer, McKnight & Thompson (in press); Thurber & Fraser (2016)				
17. Neighborhood Story Project	Thurber (in press)				

Visualizing Inclusive Leadership: Using Arts-based Research to Develop an Aligned University Culture

Virginia L. McKendry

ABSTRACT Values of exclusive leadership characterize the administration of the neoliberal university, but are incongruous with values of inclusive leadership often enacted in the work of teaching, learning, and research. This article explores how an action research project to advance inclusive leadership at Royal Roads University adapted a visual data elicitation method and used metaphor analysis to reveal opportunities to align espoused, communicated, and enacted values. Images evoke metaphors (Mumby & Spitzack, 1983; Vakkayil, 2008) that enable researchers engaged in their own organizational development to elicit creative possibilities that are “covered up by the familiarity of everyday experience” (Koch & Deetz, 1981, p. 13). By eliciting desired qualities associated with inclusive leadership (Rayner, 2009), we have been able to make visible and model inclusive messages, structures, behaviours, strategies, and actions as the building blocks of a culture built on the value of inclusivity and collaboration, and the principles of diversity and interdependence. One key insight of the research is that arts-based action research effectively equips academic and administrative leaders to transcend deficit-based problem solving and the reductionism associated with neoliberal university management and to approach organizational development with the creative energy that arts-based research inspires.

KEYWORDS Arts-based methods, inclusive leadership, engaged scholarship, organizational culture, neoliberal university

The author of this study is a faculty member at Royal Roads University, a special-purpose public university launched in 1996 that has been mandated to offer graduate and undergraduate degree programs and graduate certificates, primarily to the non-traditional student—the mid-career, working professional. Born of a unique charter that expressly commits the university to supporting the economic prosperity and environmental sustainability of the province, the university has distinguished itself as a “life-changing” campus dedicated to producing transformative research and transformed graduates (Harris & Walinga, 2016) who are equipped to transfer their knowledge and innovation skills into their spheres of influence. Through a process of extensive self-study aimed at understanding our own model and its value to our operations (Weimer, 2006), the university has articulated its identity as a provider of applied, professional, community-responsive teaching and research, espousing values of collaboration and inclusion (Grundy, Veletsianos, Agger-Gupta, Marquez, Forssmann, & LeGault, 2016).

From its inception, the university has championed and lived an ethic of engaged scholarship: its faculty members are actively engaged with diverse partners in co-creating transformative pedagogies, community-based research, and institutional partnerships that are of mutual benefit for all (Barge & Shockley-Zalabak, 2008; Van de Ven, 2007).

At the same time, the university is also embedded in a wider education sector approaching the work of the academy as a competitive business with value metrics, ceaseless growth, and profit (Ball, 2012; Deetz, 1992; Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2015; Peters, 2009; Shultz, 2013). This has required engaged scholars working in administrative and other positions of leadership to work in a parallel organizational culture grounded in values of neoliberalism incongruent with the relational, collaborative values of engaged scholarship and teaching. From Schein's (1990) position that organizational culture is its communicated values, the university, like others, is caught between relational, inclusive values and subjectivities of scholarly and pedagogical engagement and the "financialized", individualist, exclusive values of neoliberalism (Mumby, 2015). This presents members of the university, and particularly educational leaders who work in the "messy middle" of the university's operations, with organizational systems that cut against the values of inclusive, collaborative learning and shared leadership that supports faculty and staff engagement (Cushen, 2013). Barge and Shockley-Zalabak (2008) have argued that, in addition to research and teaching, the institutional context of academic life is a third and vital site for engaged scholarship performed in the pursuit of collaborative inquiry and organizational learning. To that end, and in the spirit of living our learning/teaching, a group of women in various academic and administrative leadership roles at the university recently launched a research project aiming to align the values communicated by the operational side of the university's work with the values of the high-engagement experiences of course development, teaching, student service provision, and research.

Upon ethical approval from the university's research ethics office, the colleague initiating the idea for this research community sent an email meeting request to all female university leaders in her network. Included in the call were faculty members (most of whom are assigned administrative service at the school and program level), deans and senior administrators, and directors and managers from the full range of university service units (e.g., continuing studies, student services, computer services). Since the inaugural meeting, we have encouraged participants to invite other newly-hired female leaders or those who have not otherwise heard of the initiative. Bringing knowledge, skills, and experience from our various disciplines, ranks, and roles, as well as the insights from our work *as* women, we sought to collaboratively research "not just on the processes or management issues related to leadership but also the outcomes for communities we work with" (Thompson & Franz, 2016, p. 79). To move toward the goal of a values-aligned, more engaged organizational culture, we formed a research community committed to advancing inclusive leadership values in our various units and areas of responsibility. In theoretical alignment with the concept of engaged scholarship (Rayner, 2009), inclusive leadership is a "post-heroic" (Taylor, 2011) style of organizational cultural management integrating the four principles of engagement, engaged scholarship, orientation to possibility, and learning as transformation (Agger-Gupta & Harris, 2017). Inclusive

leadership theory does not expressly critique the managerialism of corporate environments nor neoliberal values in the university, but it implicitly offers a method of “dialogic change” (Bushe & Marshak, 2015) for transforming neoliberal organizational culture through leadership imagined as engaged, dialogical organizational communication.

In what follows, I report on how our research community used an arts-based research (ABR) approach called photo-elicitation to inquire into what inclusive leadership looks like in our own organization. It proved to be a powerful catalyst for clarifying shared values, deepening analysis of our organizational culture, transcending habitual thinking and professional subjectivities, and provoking dialogue constituting creative solutions to the seemingly intractable incongruencies between managerialism and the knowledge work of teaching, learning, and research. I explain the rationale for employing ABR, followed by the results of our process and a brief discussion of the value of ABR in fostering an engaged university culture.

Using Images to Catalyze Organizational Learning

The study described here is part of a long-term research project conducted by and for a group of university women leaders who seek to advance inclusive leadership values in various aspects and areas of university life. We adopted a participatory action research (PAR) design, a transformative, typically critical research approach that engages stakeholders in reflection and dialogue to define and co-construct solutions for the issues that affect their lives; it has the goal of praxis, offering a collaborative change-making framework for the people with intimate knowledge and skills associated with the issue at hand (Lykes & Coquillon, 2006; Bradbury & Reason, 2006). Adopting a PAR approach allowed us to frame our research agenda as a long-term research endeavour involving shifting levels of participation and the potential for any one of us to lead research projects with and about our group. Research process is just as key to PAR as are the outcomes of research (Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Bradbury & Reason, 2006), and thus PAR offered an ideal engagement methodology for this loosely knit research group to integrate our own organizational development goals with research on ourselves and our process. After securing ethical approval, a core group reached out to colleagues we know in academic and administrative leadership roles, and began meeting periodically to determine our purpose and scope. After a year of such meetings, we arrived at a loose consensus that inclusive leadership offered a conceptual touchstone for moving forward with our goal of organizational cultural transformation, electing to use an ABR technique to deepen our discussion and begin problem-solving the cultural discordances we had already identified.

The application of arts-based research has become part of the pantheon of education scholarship research methods (Barge & Shockley-Zalabak, 2008; Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2017), valued because “they are capable of yielding outcomes taking researchers in directions the sciences cannot go” (Rolling Jr., 2010, p. 110). ABR is equally applicable to the operational side of academic workplaces, inviting unexpected innovation in business organizational cultures. In her study on the use of ABR in business contexts, Eaves (2014) explains ABR’s impact through the metaphor of the musical *fugue* state, a state which simultaneously harmonizes and creates new lines of improvisation. Eaves (2014) argues

that bringing arts-based research into business research offers a powerful way to promote innovation: “By building a discursive space that reduces barriers; emancipation, interaction, polyphony, letting-go and the progressive unfolding of thoughts are supported, benefiting ways of knowing, narrative (re)construction, sensory perception and capacities to act” (p. 347). For our research community, ABR offered a way to build a discursive space for developing a shared organizational language (Griffin, 2008) that could allow us to envision what inclusive leadership could look like in our organization, allowing us to transcend scarcity thinking to approach organizational development with the creative energy that arts-based research inspires. Using ABR within a PAR framework allowed for research productive of feminist transformative praxis (Lykes & Coquillon, 2006), creating space and focus for us to be both critical and constructive, to create energizing connections with women across our disciplinary silos and ranks, and to use our collective knowledge to explore the questions of “how we should live our lives” and determine for ourselves “what effective practice looks like” (Wicks, Reasons, & Bradbury, 2008, p. 24) within our own area of remit.

Images are powerful tools for advancing organizational change because they evoke metaphors (Mumby & Spitzack, 1983; Vakkayil, 2008). These metaphors then enable researchers engaged in their own organizational development to prompt creative possibilities “covered up by the familiarity of everyday experience” (Koch & Deetz, 1981, p. 13). By eliciting desired qualities associated with inclusive leadership, we have been able both to make visible and to model inclusive messages, structures, behaviours, strategies, and actions as the building blocks of a culture built on the values of inclusivity and collaboration and the principles of diversity and interdependence. In our case, we adopted an ABR called photo-elicitation, which involves use of images (usually photographs) “to evoke a different kind of information” (Harper, 2002, p. 13) in an interview or focus group context. Our use of this ABR allowed us to forge a “fugal” discursive space (Mann, 1965; Eaves, 2014) that temporarily enabled members of our group to become conscious of the personal and institutional costs of “psychic life” of neoliberalism (Berlant, 2007; Scharff, 2016), the ubiquitous economic calculus that shapes our subjectivities around largely exclusive entrepreneurial values (e.g., managing one’s self as a sole enterprise, and constantly competing against oneself).

Like other forms of arts-based research, photo-elicitation serves as a reflexive method for generating meaning, critiquing, and creatively intervening in the neoliberal presuppositions of academic work, and “avoids the distortion of fitting data into a pre-existing paradigm” (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 382). The polysemic qualities of images (Margolis, 2008) also make them a powerful catalyst for focus group conversations among leaders coming from diverse personal and professional perspectives and social subject locations, thus building inclusion into the change-focused inquiry itself. For Fotaki and Harding (2013), finding ways to disrupt the (sexist) managerial assumptions structuring the neoliberal university’s organizational discourse is critical for “developing ways of thinking that disrupt the symbolic from within” (p. 8). Although these authors are not specifically concerned with specific methods of inquiry, it can be argued that using an ABR-like photo-elicitation within organizations can allow for institutionally unspeakable thoughts to be expressed through the emancipatory potential of

art. As a community of education leaders, our use of a photo-elicitation method nurtured a collaborative, disruptive space wherein engaged, inclusive leadership became more connected to our already engaged scholarship and teaching.

Although each session involved a different format or focus, the project as a whole has produced an emergent “conscientization” process of identifying our research problem and forging our own solutions. To answer the research question—*What do inclusive values look like at our university?*—we embarked on fulfilling the following research objectives: a) articulating our values to ourselves; b) understanding more systematically the barriers to inclusive leading; and c) advancing inclusive leadership to transform the organization in connected and sustainable ways. For the photo-elicitation phase of our research, we began by dedicating time for this project during three of our recurring meetings, using our group’s Wordpress site to store data and to track and communicate progress.

Data for this study was collected in two ways: firstly through a process of photo-elicitation, and then through a set of two subsequent focus groups allowing for sharing of meaning and collaborative problem-solving based on discussion. Photo-elicitation was conducted both virtually and in person. The call for participation in this ABR-based study occurred at one of the earliest meetings of this emergent collective, where I asked participants to select or create either digital or print images that resonated in some way with the leadership model we were keen to advance among ourselves and within the university. This in-person call was complemented by an email to all women on the ever-growing distribution list; in total, the call for participation netted our group eleven images with accompanying annotations explaining the metaphor(s) elicited by the image. One participant took her own photo, another selected an image from Visual Explorer™ (a discussion tool we use frequently in our classrooms), and the remainder of participants found images on the internet that evoked one or more inclusive qualities. These images and annotations were saved to a digital Padlet™ tool embedded in our project website so that participants could reflect on and learn from each other’s choices and interpretations. Following the photo-elicitation phase, I collated the images and texts, bringing the data to two focus groups convened to discuss and collectively thematize our findings.

The first focus group (four participants) occurred about a month after the initial session launching this study, and the second meeting (six participants) was held about a month after that. For everyone who had volunteered to participate, the two-hour focus group format allowed for everyone to share some time with the others to talk about their own and other’s images and about how each image sparked metaphors of inclusive leadership in ways most important to each participant. Sitting together, with the tape recorder running while I took notes (also participating in discussion), we were able to expand the meanings latent in our images based on insights from our colleagues, adding additional layers of interpretation and deepening our own understanding of what it means materially to lead inclusively in our various units and roles. In addition to the images and the personal reflections I gathered at the outset, these discussions became further sources of data for this study. In addition to creating data, conducting analysis in a focus group setting constructed for us a rich fugal space (Eaves, 2014) that allowed us to temporarily evade the exclusive, managerialist subjectivities

(Peters, 2009) innate to working in the modern university. This in turn allowed for alternative mental structures for imagining ways of aligning our work (and thus the university culture we are tasked with leading) with inclusive values. It is the process of personal cognitive (and emotional) restructuring, values alignment, and the development of a vision of inclusive organizational change that is presented next.

Images and Applications of Inclusive Values

The images selected by participants fell into four general categories. Three participants chose illustrations or photos of singular human figures, with annotations focused on the leader and leaderlike traits and responsibilities. Another grouping consisted of photos or illustrations depicting colourful objects or stylized people—a circle of different kinds and colours of chairs, chained circles arranged in a mosaic, a pair of human hands “holding” liquid particles of energy, and a platform on which stands people who are seen to be moving in and out of a loosely tied circle—each speaking to diversity and inclusion in some way. Photos and drawings of natural settings formed the third cluster of images, including an old tree with gnarled roots, an image of woven hair/fibers in multiple hues, an unfurling fern leaf, and a photo of yellow poppies breaking through an asphalt surface. These images elicited metaphors related to the autopoietic nature of complex human systems and the movements among people bolstering inclusivity in an organization. A final set included images of objects large and small, with annotations focused on the qualities of those objects and how they connected to inclusion and leadership.

A further thematic analysis of the focus group data (in reference to the analysis of the data elicited from the images and annotations) yielded three general categories of findings: a) the purpose of inclusivity in our leadership; b) the performativity (in the discursive sense) of inclusion (i.e., inclusive intellectual, physical, and emotion actions that transform the leader as they are enacted), and c) sites for advancing values of inclusion. Each of these themes is discussed next, illustrated through selected participant annotations and insights from the focus groups.

Articulating Why Inclusive Leading Matters

As a participatory, professional action research group, we regularly use our PAR meetings to reflect on why it matters to us to understand, support, and seek to advance inclusive values in our roles as leaders in post-secondary institutions—particularly in our own special purpose university with its focus on applied, world-changing learning and research. To ground our exploration of how photo-elicitation could enhance our ability to clarify the mechanisms of inclusive leaders in the discussions that had preceded this research phase, we circled back to that question of purpose. We used elements from the gathered images to illustrate six distinct and overarching reasons for more intentionally adopting inclusive values that we grouped into two wider themes: a) how leading from a principle of inclusion involves the organization itself, and b) how inclusive values benefit the people whose words and actions constitute the organizational culture.

Inclusion's benefit to the organization

A discussion on the question of how inclusive values have an impact on the organization surfaced three related themes: by enabling an organization's potential, or its ability to make the most of its resources; by ensuring access to the knowledge contained in the people constitute an organization; and, how attending to unleashing human potential and acting on grounded knowledge allows us to live into our mission of providing world- and life-changing research and education.

At the level of the organization itself, we first identified how inclusive values can surface organizational potential. For this insight, we took from the image of the unfurling fiddlehead fern a metaphor for looking at our university as a complex adaptive system in which inclusion of diverse voices and skills contributes to the autopoietic emergence of a system's latent potential:

Inclusive leadership supports the unfurling of each individual element or piece and the larger system or whole. Inclusive leadership recognizes the interconnectedness of each element and that growth and development and flourishing occurs through relationship with each component of ourselves, with each other, and the land. Inclusive leadership does not exist in isolation, rather it recognizes that complex dynamic relationships, facets, and unfurlings are integral to inclusive leadership in practice. Inclusive leadership is a process: a way of being and becoming.



Figure 1. Wingchi Poon [CC BY-SA 3.0], Wikimedia Commons.

This annotation sparked a great deal of affect, engaging the members of the focus group in a vivid discussion of the how welcome it would be to devise systems that not only anticipate complexity, movement, and change, but also offer ways to capture the value of that movement

and interaction. We noted too how, that intentionally inclusive process promotes unfurling of potential because it grounds an organization in knowledge and skills that already exist in the organization's history and its people. It was photo of the tree with the deep and spreading roots that evoked this metaphor of "grounding" leadership in a living system that is always in flux and redolent with the nutrients and information needed for the tree to grow, just as the tree serves to nourish the soil:

The messy, complexity of a rooted community that lives both above and below the surface of things with its dark workmanship of insect and worm and deep communication conduits of mycelia and microbe that make all of this grandeur [of the leaderly tree] possible.

That glorious image of unruly but enlivened complexity led to some group reflection on the ultimate purpose of our work, which is to provide education experiences and conduct research designed to make positive change to human and non-human lives, economies, and the lifeworld that sustains us all. Just as a tree is rooted in a soil that it simultaneously shelters and depends on, for its existence, on, if an organization exemplifies inclusive values, "it creates positive connections, it involves layers of creativity, it is a never-ending process (always in motion, always developing), it is respectful, contemplative, critical and self-aware"—and is thus more likely to sustain itself through times of stress and economic, technological, or other forms of disruption.

To this point, our photo-elicitation and discussion led us to confirm for ourselves that inclusive values are core to our university's ability to fulfill its mission in a way that is sustainable for the people who work here. We needed next to complete the circle, to explore the purpose of inclusive values in the context of supporting effective leadership.

Inclusion's benefit to the leader's capacity to lead

While the metaphor just noted shows how difficult it is to separate out the organization from its people, there were key insights taken from the photos and illustrations that spoke directly to the benefit of an inclusive style to people with leadership responsibilities, including these three related themes: how inclusive values' benefit to human sustainability in a neoliberal education context; the improvement in human affect and creativity unleashed by from inclusive leadership practice; and, therefore, how an inclusive leader is more likely to engage people in addressing seemingly impossible problems.

The theme of sustainability threaded through the ensuing discussions about inclusivity's value, not solely to the organization and its outputs, but to the leaders and the people who make those outputs possible. The image depicting a circular mandala of differently coloured polka-dots elicited metaphors connected the idea of sustainability to the needs of people have to be heard, understood, and otherwise cared for, and the role of the leader in providing that care and attention: "It's not enough to be ok with people being different, or having different views. We need to create space for diversity, and we need to actively and constantly work

towards inclusion.” When everyone is recognized and addressed as a valuable, unique source of knowledge and skills, their overall affect improves, and in seeing their efforts as essential to the sustainability of the university, there is a sense of purpose, which breeds a lively joyfulness, even greater sense of purpose: engagement. Some among those gathered for our focus group saw that joy as represented in the image of the two hands meeting to hold—but not smother—the sparkling, ethereal lightforms could be likened to a living, palpable fluorescence of human creativity. It is from this basis of a loosely connected grouping of people who feel empowered in expressing relationship and shared purpose (physically, emotionally, and organizationally) that fresh thinking and renewed energy emerges. In her intuitive response to an illustration of differently shaped and coloured chairs arranged in a circle, one participant noted how that when inclusive leadership is enacted, “the vision then becomes the leader, guiding decision making, acting as a touchstone to bring the group back to center.”

This phase of metaphor analysis arising from photo-elicitation and annotation confirmed for us the benefit of inclusive values to our own institution and practice. We then returned to the images for visual metaphors that could help us articulate *how* the inclusive leadership happens, and what an intentionally inclusive leader looks like in action.

Inclusive Actions and Attitudes

In addition to each participant’s annotation of their own selected image, our focus group sessions generated several more metaphors descriptive of what inclusive leadership looks like in action, and some of those connected action to a leader’s attitude and awareness of their surroundings. We gleaned three distinct but related actions/attitudes from the data, including: communicating values, convening difference, and cultivating the mundane—those aspects of organizational life that typically evade notice in neoliberal university environments and exclusive managerialist leadership styles, but are essential to thriving complex human systems.

Communicating values

Two of the photos elicited metaphors directly related to the theme of communication, characterizing the inclusive leader as someone skilled in using, distilling and communicating the values and vision of the organization they lead. One figurative illustration of a mythic female “waterbearer” elicited a complex metaphor about the leader as a communicator, and communication as the “water” that joins people, and leadership as the work of listening for and diffusing the shared values and vision that allows the people in an organization to co-create and share culture. To enable the free flow of the “water” (the medium for sharing information, meaning, and knowledge), the inclusive leader cultivates awareness of the whole system for which they are responsible, maintaining external relationships on behalf of those she leads: “The wings on her back allow the inclusive leader to rise above the topography to see the whole landscape, and what lies beyond, so she can bring context to her work within her community.” Another image spoke to the quality of intrapersonal communication necessary to inclusive leadership; the participant who selected the photo of the young male child peering out shyly behind the crooked arm shading his face interpreted his shielding of his eyes as

a metaphor for how equally important a leader's inner vision is to her ability to synthesize what she is seeing and learning. That inner "shell" "enables us privacy and a calm and safe space to dig deep and reflect. We need to remember, however, to look through/up/out and see what else is happening... to see the whole picture." We were struck by this final insight that a key aspect of inclusive communication is the act of retreat and reflection, of oversight and "innersight," both of which are not visible to the management and therefore difficult to track and measure—but vital to living inclusive values, nonetheless. As we discuss below, this particular metaphor provided us with ideas for how we can radically advance inclusive leadership in the most mundane ways.

Convening difference

Several of the photos and illustrations women found or sought out suggested the themes of complexity, difference, diversity and the role of the inclusive leader in actively seeking out and convening people with different personal and professional backgrounds, skills, and responsibilities. For example, a stylized illustration of a rainbow-hued dancing female form spoke to what inclusive leadership looks like in motion, engaging her in a multidimensional dance with difference, and change. For another woman, the photo of a cluster of pencil crayons elicited this insight on the purpose of including different kinds of people and perspective, "...and not just to check off some boxes, but to truly engage with diverse views, ideas, and bringing it all together." Our focus group spent a good deal of the session using this and related images to explore why diversity matters, drawing on metaphors elicited from a participant's selection of an otherwise nondescript image of a bowl of colourful cereal bits in a bowl of milk. The imagined movement of the cereal pieces in the milk provoked her to recall "Boid's rules" (Reynolds, 1987), principles derived from observing "the flocking and swarming behaviour of birds" that are exemplary of complex human systems, a view of organizations inherent to inclusive leadership. From there, a wide-ranging discussion ensued about the value of "loose ties" and of making time to visit and get to know people just for the sake of relationships, with the knowledge that keeping in touch advances the university's ability as a whole to mobilize and change direction quickly.

Cultivating positive affect

In the process of communicating inclusive values and convening diverse people, the inclusive leader also enacts taking care of human feelings, aspirations, and attitudes, the elements of organizational life that do not make it onto spreadsheets and annual reports. By that, we mean the ordinary but typically undervalued, affective, relational activities of workplaces that lay outside the parameters of what is typically the focus of managerial thinking. For example, a photo of a woven fibres of different hues not only sparked more discussion of diversity, but the importance of coaching, caring, looking for what is already working, and building up the emotional intelligence and resilience of its people; metaphorically, "inclusive leaders weave strengths together to create strong durable solutions. They focus on the overarching purpose rather than the individual contributions. They also integrate a sense of belonging."

One innocuous image of a glass-faced building generated a metaphor of transparency, which we connected to actions at the level of affect and how it moves organizations forward or slows them down.



Figure 2. Reichstag © Márcio de Moura [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0]
 from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mcdemoura/5301418586/>

We discussed how inclusive values require the leader to feel feelings, be vulnerable in showing these feelings and allowing them as valid and needed elements of a sustainable organizational culture, knowing that she is creating the conditions for excellence and creativity to emerge without her coercion. The colleague who chose the image commented, “Inclusive leadership is transparent. It provides a framework within which thoughts and ideas can thrive, develop, and evolve. It generates connection between those within the system and those outside. Inclusive leadership provides guidance rather than direction.”

We learned from this discussion that, while the fungible aspects of our work (e.g., targets, revenues, costs, retention rates) are important to the financial sustainability of the university and can be enhanced by living our inclusive values, they are not the actions and artefacts constituting our ability to live our learning and teaching model.

Finally, I present the various sites open to advancement of inclusive leadership across and throughout the university in the final phase of data analysis.

Sites of Inclusive Leadership Practice and Transformative Dialogue

A third way in which the arts-based metaphor elicitation process contributed to creative problem solving was in provoking a discussion of *where* in our daily work and the cycles of the academic year that we could use our leadership roles to advance inclusive values. Having confirmed a strong alignment between inclusive leadership values with our espoused institutional values, we further mined the images for insight into how to connect the idea of inclusivity to the operations of the university. It was a poetic annotation of an image of

yellow flowers breaking through an asphalt surface that focused discussion on where inclusive leadership could exploit or create “cracks” in the exclusive organizational spaces, places, and processes of our workplace:

finding fissures that
 disrupt
illusions of impenetrability
 and give space
for colour and joy and
 wild expression
bravely exposed

This image and the participants’ metaphoric interpretation served as the most energizing outcome of our arts-based research intervention, and for good reason. Constituted by language and a graphical structure gently defiant of any attempt at capture or fungibility (a quality of financialization that refers to the homogenization of difference in aid of commodification), it generated discussion of four general domains in which we could enact inclusive leadership and find “fissures” through which to nourish our organization with its “wild expression”: in our communication (interpersonal and intrapersonal), our teaching and learning, our research, and sites of service and administration.

Inclusive communication

Inclusive leadership is by definition relational and uses dialogue as a mechanism of change. It is no surprise, then, that we identified the disposition of the inclusive leader as that of a communicator, a *discursive* leader attentive to the link between culture and communication. Our discussions revealed concrete ways to advance inclusivity at the level of communication (organizational, interpersonal, and intrapersonal). For example, we noted how the use of corporatized organizational language like “the executive” and “targets” works subtly to turn us away from a collegial focus to one more akin to a business environment; instead, we could use terms like “university leaders” and “sustainable cohort size”, and still attend to protecting the financial viability of our programs but in a way that implies a more collaborative relationship between academic and financial administrators. We also realized how we could use our speech to maintain focused awareness of the temporal “edges” of the university as an organization; as one participant noted, “so much project work goes on outside of the porous walls of the institution”. By speaking of the university as a community of people collaborating in teaching, learning and research across space and time, we can better capture and showcase the cultural impact of the work we and our graduates do by virtue of what and how they have learned, considerations typically absent from discussions of the university’s worth in the world.

As leaders in our organization, we knew that the process for diffusing inclusive values would entail grounding our interpersonal interactions in inclusive language. In a similar vein, and in that psychic, subjective dimension of our professional lives, we realized we could be more

intentional in advancing inclusive leadership by attending to the qualities of our intrapersonal communication, our self-talk. One line of discussion in this vein saw four participants dwelling on the need to lead by voicing and normalizing the limitations of our energy and time, and to do so first with ourselves. As an example, the issue of “imposter syndrome” (Pedler, 2011) came up and one of us noted how, for someone in a leadership position, “It’s very scary for me to be a not-knower but...AND, we are in an uncertain world.” In that and similar statements, there is a recognition and then acceptance of vulnerability as a reality lending itself to inclusive leading. It is not the role of the leader to create the vision or to exert discipline over (human) resources, but rather to learn by convening with and caring for others in creative problem-solving grounded in shared values, communicating back those values in a dynamic, dialogic feedback loop.

More than that, eliciting metaphors of vulnerability disrupted the presupposition of an exclusive, “heroic” managerial leadership style that vulnerability is a risk. There was a subtle movement in our discussion here, away from the entrepreneurial psychic life of neoliberalism toward a reframing and validating of the felt experience of inclusive leading—the recognition that we are all important, that all of our knowledge is partial, and that caring about and leading others in learning together is the pathway to effective problem-solving. As a small moment of group “conscientization”, it woke us up to how changing our organizational culture also means transmuting neoliberalism’s inner voice. This meant leading ourselves towards more realistic, life-affirming self-talk in spaces like our daily commute, or rejecting an attitude of cruel optimism (Berlant, 2007; Moore & Clarke, 2016)—the false hope that the pace of work will level out, and that one’s incessant striving and personal sacrifice will be rewarded—which is so often emblematic of the entrepreneurial subject. As we transformed feelings of lack into acknowledgement of real barriers inviting creative-problem-solving, we were able to look beyond our personal endeavours and outward to our communities for support and a multiplicity of perspectives.

Inclusive teaching and learning

Our institution is built on a unique and well-articulated model of collaborative, engaged teaching and learning and is already notable for how it expresses inclusive values in the contexts of teaching, learning, and research. However, as we asked ourselves what inclusion looks like in the realm of teaching and learning, we were able to identify additional ways to plant seeds of inclusion in the context of institutional culture. At Royal Roads University, inclusive values are everywhere in the classroom. Nonetheless, behind the scenes, program administrators and instructors face barriers dampening our ability to nimbly respond to crises and innovate when opportunities present themselves.

At the level of course delivery and teaching, we brainstormed how we might bring the principles of relationality, diversity, and affective engagement to course and program design. We recognized that we could enliven the process and produce high quality educational programming and course content by intentionally convening diverse perspectives, including those of alumni, students, instructional designers, and subject-matter experts. As we have

learned to work collaboratively across units and the operational parts of the university have learned more about the academic missions, we have been better able to develop a habit of flying by “Boid’s rules” (Reynolds, 1987). This has promoted simpler systems, and has allowed for greater trust in these simpler systems to reduce the rigid layers of approvals and the incessant accounting that have sometimes served as blocks to creativity. When we have involved students and alumni in the collaborative process, we have amplified our learning and teaching model, and engaged graduates in a life-long partnership with their alma mater. The resulting feedback loops, along with the likelihood that alumni will continue to nourish our programs with community-based research and teaching opportunities, have been thus far positive and remain central to our mission.

Inclusive research

From our focus on the classroom, we turned our sights to considering what inclusive leadership could look like in the area of research and how it could allow us to deepen our ability to engage students, partners, sponsors, and communities in our research. We could immediately see how the inclusive values of engagement, relationality, and collaborative problem solving were already present in the research that many do or support through administrative roles. Most of the members of our research group have led or have supervised action research and community-based research projects, while others have worked in theory-building to further advance engaged scholarship and organizational learning. Adding elicited visual metaphors to our awareness allowed us to consider how we could be intentional in crafting research that promotes collaboration, is encouraging of human and cultural diversity, and engages communities in addressing thorny problems through the sharing of knowledge, perspectives, and skills.

Inclusive service and administration

Unsurprisingly, we found the vast majority of the inclusive-leading sites of opportunity to lie outside of the classroom or research site and within the operational and administrative levels of the university. Meeting design and process was flagged as one of the first sites we saw that could benefit from a cultural “makeover”, with the goal of making meetings a natural place for engaged learning (with collaboration to arise as a matter of course). From the program level to the overarching committees overseeing the business and academic missions of the university, we committed to using our voices to support one another and encourage collaboration by changing placement of seating to be more circular (less hierarchical) so as to suggest a council of equal voices. To promote greater inclusion of more women’s perspectives, members of the research group also committed to amplifying one another’s voices in meetings. For the meetings within our own control, we noted how we could use our agendas to create more spaces in the day for staff and faculty to get to know one another, to ground our “business” in a knowledge of one another as people with families and roles in the wider community, and to connect to key people in other parts of the campus (once again using the “Boids’ rules” metaphor, and its wisdom of relying on “loose ties”) who have a stake in what we are doing. With meetings

occurring at every level of the organization and with external partners and clients, we have identified opportunities to enact our inclusive values (through communication, convening, and cultivation of people) in marketing and recruitment meetings, hiring committees, faculty association affairs, and promotion and tenure committees.

Summary

Using eleven simple images to elicit metaphors of inclusive values catalyzed our momentum and purpose as a research group, transformed our own subjectivities, and advanced our own thinking and ability to imagine the actions, attitudes, sites and other organizational cultural artefacts open to better alignment with the espoused inclusive values of our learning and teaching model (Schein, 1990).

Final Reflections on Using Arts-Based Research for Engaged Academic Leadership

The ABR process has better equipped us as academic and administrative leaders to transcend deficit-based problem solving and the reductionism associated with neoliberal university management and to approach organizational development with creative energy that arts-based research inspires. Using the ABR method opened a fugal space (Eaves, 2014) and allowed us to “dig a hole” (Berlant, 2007) that enabled our discourse to move beyond critique of our neoliberal work environment toward a multi-dimensional set of tactics for advancement of inclusive leadership principles—leadership as engagement, engaged scholarship, orientation to possibility, and learning as transformation (Agger-Gupta & Harris, 2017)—in all of the formal and informal ways we exercise influence as leaders and colleagues.

Advancing inclusive values through a reflexive form of ABR has proven to be immediately energizing for our research community. We find that the aesthetic elements of the process provide a respite from the incessant pressures of financialization and ceaseless competition (intra- and interpersonally) endemic to the pressures of neoliberal university environments that are not likely to change in the near term (Ball, 2012; Cushen, 2013; Eaves, 2014; Mumby, 2015). Ultimately, we find that ABR-driven action research offers a tool for organizational learning that offers a means of psychic revitalization, equipping us in our roles as educational leaders with site-specific knowledge and relationships needed to serve as *engaging* orchestrators of human potential and activity in our organization, our classrooms, and our research.

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Drawing Gender Equality: A Participatory Action Research Project with Educators in Northern Uganda

Shelley Jones

ABSTRACT This paper reports upon an arts-based participatory action research project conducted with a cohort of 30 teachers in rural Northwest Uganda during a one-week professional development course. Multimodality (Kress & Jewitt, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) was employed as a “domain of inquiry” (Kress, 2011) for social semiotics (meaning-making within a social context) within which the participants both represented gender inequality as well as imagined gender equality. Multimodality recognizes the vast communicative potential of the human body and values multiple materials resources (such as images, sounds, and gestures) as “organized sets of semiotic resources for meaning-making” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 246). Providing individuals with communicative modes other than just spoken and written language offers opportunities to include voices that are often not heard in formal contexts dominated by particular kinds of language, as well as opportunities to consider topics of inquiry from different perspectives and imagine alternative futures (Kendrick & Jones, 2008). Findings from this study show how a multimodal approach to communication, using drawing in addition to spoken and written language, established a democratic space of communication. The sharing and building of knowledge between the participants (educators in local contexts) and facilitator (university instructor/researcher) reflected a foundational tenet of engaged scholarship which requires “...not only communication *to* public audiences, but also collaboration *with* communities in the production of knowledge” (Barker, 2004, p. 126).

KEYWORDS Multimodality, gender, education, drawing, Uganda, engaged scholarship

Gender inequality in education remains problematic in Uganda, as well as many other parts of the world, despite initiatives and policies—international as well as national—intended to eradicate these inequalities. The nature and prevalence of gender discrimination is deeply embedded in cultural constructs around gender that have become normative through their embeddedness in practices, both institutionalized and cultural, over a long period of time.

In North West Uganda, where this study took place, the challenges girls face with respect to equal educational opportunities are more pronounced than in most other parts of the country (Faughnan, 2016; Stoebenau et al., 2015; Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), 2012).

Educators are tasked with establishing “gender-responsive” and/or “gender-sensitive” learning environments, and yet there is little, if any, consultation with educators about their local contexts and their needs to promote gender equality. In addition, many educators—

especially in rural areas—are not even aware of the policies intended to guide their practice with respect to cultivating gender equality in schools. Without dialogue between policy-makers and policy-mentors, policies will have little chance of being enacted. What is required, therefore, are opportunities for such dialogues to transpire.

However, the policy discourse around gender equality, like most policy discourses, is typically limited to the modality of formal language (spoken or written). It excludes the voices of those who do not operate competently or confidently in this formal modality and who are therefore denied access to official contexts in which decisions are made. And, gender-based experiences differ, based on context, so those creating policies and programs may not fully grasp the realities that teachers must grapple with on the ground. With the intention of sharing and building knowledge between the community and the university, this project was undertaken within the parameters of an engaged scholarship model that emphasizes the “pedagogical value of collaborating *with* publics instead of providing information *to* or services *for* publics” (Barker, 2004, p. 127) through “bidirectional interactions, reciprocity, and mutual respect” (Sandmann, 2008, p. 94). In order to expand the discourse of gender equality beyond the mode of formal language, and include marginalized voices, this study employed multimodality as a “domain of inquiry” (Kress, 2011, p. 242).

This study draws on data gathered during a week-long professional development course that I, along with a Ugandan Professional Development Tutor, facilitated for 30 pre- and primary school educators in North West Uganda. The workshop was concerned with creating gender-responsive learning environments, and the participants conducted explorations into the nature of gender constructs and inequalities through a variety of modes—drawing, theatre, and creative writing—in addition to spoken and written language. This paper is specifically focused on how drawing as a mode contributed to the discourse of gender equality. (Discussion of other modes used have been written about in another paper, see: Jones, 2018.)

Multimodality as a “domain of inquiry” for engaged scholarship

This study draws upon multimodality as a domain of inquiry within which social semiotics (meaning-making) can be explored and understood (Kress, 2011). Social semiotics involves sign-makers (individuals who initiate a communicative act) who chose from a selection of materials/ materiality—or modes (such as images, gestures, sounds, colours, framing)—to produce signs (representations of meaning). Signs are created in response to prompts, such as questions or messages to be answered or communicated, and the social semiotic process begins with individuals’ experiences, knowledges, and understandings of the world (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Jewitt, 2008) and is then acted upon through practices that engage with resources/modes to create signs, which are then taken up and interpreted by those who interact with the sign.

Within formal institutions of power—such as government, the judiciary, and education—language (spoken and written) has long dominated as the preferred and privileged communicative mode. Furthermore, particular kinds/aspects of language (for example, accent, dialect, and lexicon) are and have been valued more than others (Norton, 2013). Language, and these

specific, hegemonic forms of language have constituted a modal ‘social capital’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) for those who possess and are adept at expressing themselves in this mode. Individuals who speak/write the dominant language of power and the specialized languages (of, for example, politics, finance, trade) within that language are entitled to power, privilege and opportunities that are not available to those who are not proficient in this mode (Foucault, 1980; Norton, 2013; Tozer, 2000). Decisions made within this monomodal, prioritized, realm of dominant language often do not involve, or consider the voices of those marginalized from this realm—such as women and girls in highly patriarchal societies—but who are nonetheless deeply impacted by the decisions made.

Multimodality, on the other hand, challenges the primacy of monomodality by considering language as just one of multiple, legitimate communicative modes (Kress, 2011; Kress & Jewitt, 2003). Within the domain of multimodality, sign-makers have a choice of modes through which they can convey their ideas, and thus the hierarchical precedence of language is subverted. The use of different modes produces signs which although perhaps presenting the same knowledge, present it from a different epistemological orientation: “knowledge’ appears differently in different modes” (Kress, 2011, p. 242). Modes can be complementary and interact with each other, which can infuse the semiotic process with additional layers of meaning at both the creation and interpretive stages: “any communicative event involves *simultaneous modes* whereby meaning is communicated in different ways through images, gestures, and speech” (Kendrick, Jones, Mutonyi, & Norton, 2006, p. 97).

The creation and interpretation of signs is a social act that happens within social contexts that are infused with culture, history, and knowledge that also contribute to the significance and communicative potential of the signs (Kress, 2011). Context is, therefore, also an integral aspect of social semiosis. The shared space and time within which signs are made and interpreted contributes to the depth and complexity of meaning-making and lends itself to a particular understanding of the discourse with which they are engaged:

Which discourses interpreters or users may bring to bear on a semiotic product of event has everything to do...with their place in the social and cultural world, and also with the content. The degree to which intention and interpretation will match depends on context (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 8).

When different modes are recognized as having equal semiotic potential and the communicative context of space and time is intentionally inclusive, voices that are not typically heard within the dominant discourse through the dominant mode are able to contribute to discourses through modes with which they are adept and feel comfortable. Kress (2011) states that “semiotic affordances of modes have a large epistemological effect” (p. 249); the inclusion of often unheard voices through these varied modes enables the discourse to be understood from new and unfamiliar perspectives. Multimodality thus has the potential to provide a means by which to transform and democratize communicative social capital by extending modes of inquiry and expression far beyond the traditional, hegemonic, limiting, and often exclusionary

modes (such as formal speech and written text) in a deliberate attempt to include and value the contributions of those who are often not heard (often women).

Policies and initiatives that are intended to bring about transformative social change through implementation by individuals *on the ground* require their input and commitment. However, these individuals, who are enmeshed in local contexts, are often not well-versed in the hegemonic power of formal, institutional language and do not have easy access to power structures that prepare the directives they are meant to follow. Their voices are often marginalized, overlooked, unsolicited, or ignored. Therefore, in the spirit of engaged scholarship, a multimodal approach was taken for this study so that the discourse of gender equality could be explored in poignant, authentic, unconventional ways and establish a “two-way street of interactions or partnerships between the academy [and other institutions of power] and the outside world” (Spanier, 1997, p. 8). Semiotic engagement with multiple modes offered participants communicative potential and opportunities that would not be available in a normative, formal professional development context where language was privileged over all other modes.

Through drawing, drama, and creative writing, in addition to formal language, the participants explored complex constructions, enactments, and experiences of gender relationships and gendered experiences related to school contexts in rural Northwest Uganda. Although each mode offered rich data with respect to insights into the complex nature and multiple manifestations of gender inequality, this paper focuses on the drawings created by the participants and the layers of meaning they embody. These drawings became semiotic points of engagement that stimulated perceptions and sensations in others (Pink, 2011; Roswell & Pahl, 2007), serving semiotic points of reference for not only the “what is” but the “what might be”:

Providing opportunities...to explore and consider their worlds through alternative modes of communication and representation has immense potential as a pedagogical approach to cultivate dialogue about the nature of gender inequities, and serve as a catalyst for the positing of imagined communities where those inequities might not exist (Kendrick & Jones, 2008, p. 397).

Background to the Study

In Uganda, gender equality with respect to education remains problematic (Blackden, 2004; Bantebya, Muhanguzi, & Watson, 2014; MoGLSD, 2007; Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda [MoES], 2016; UNDP, 2015). Despite the significant quantitative gains that have been made with in terms of girls’ access to and enrollment in school, where full, or near gender parity at both the primary and secondary school levels has been achieved (Kwesiga, 2003; MoES, 2013; UNESCO, 2017)¹, many cultural, social, economic inequalities persist (MoES, 2013, 2016). These include: unfair burden of domestic duties (Jones, 2008, 2011; MoES, 2013;

¹ It must be noted, however, that although net and gross enrollment rates for both females and males is relatively high at the primary school level, primary completion rates are low, as is secondary school attendance.

Stoebenau et al., 2015); risk of sexual assault/harassment commuting to/from school (Geiger, 2002; Jones, 2008; 2011; MoES, 2013, 2016); and parents' prioritization of boys' education over girls' (Jones, 2008; 2011; MoES, 2013, Stoebenau et al., 2015).

Within the school itself, there are numerous environmental, pedagogical, and social factors that mitigate against girls' equal participation and treatment. Didactic pedagogical approaches centered around compliant behaviour, closed questions, exam-based teaching, tend to favour boys (to whom most of the teachers' attention is directed, and of whom most questions are directed) and marginalize or exclude girls who are expected to be submissive and take a back seat to the boys (Kakuru 2006; Mirembe & Davies, 2001; Mlama, Dioum, Makoye, Murage, Wagah, & Washika, 2005). Girls are often perceived by their teachers as not possessing the same academic capabilities (Geiger 2002; Jones, 2008; Mirembe & Davies, 2001).

Table 1. 2013–2016 education statistics, Uganda

	Pre-primary - gross enrollment (%) (2016)	Primary net enrollment (%) (2016)	Primary gross attendance (%) (2013)	Primary net attendance (%) (2013)	Primary school – survival rate to last primary grade (%) (2014)	Primary to secondary transition rate (2014)	Secondary – gross attendance (%) (2015)
Girls	11.84	--	110.91	95.11	21.63	52.82	22.13
Boys	11.63	--	108.87	92.21	21.09	54.98	24.34

Source: UNESCO (2017)

In addition, resource materials are often replete with depictions of gender stereotypes which serve to reinforce negative and/or limiting conceptions of girls' abilities and opportunities (Jones, 2015; Mlama et al., 2005). Also, it is not unusual for girls to be required to assume extra domestic duties at school (e.g., serving tea to the teachers, washing dishes, cleaning the compound), which are not expected of boys, which negatively reinforces stereotypes and demeans girls' images as equal and respected participants in the learning environment (Jones, 2008). Furthermore, sexual harassment, assault, and exploitation by both male students as well as male teachers in the school context, as well as by men in the surrounding area during the girls' commute to and from school are prevalent (Jones, 2008; 2011; Mirembe & Davies, 2001; Mlama et al, 2005; MoES, 2013, 2015). All of these factors hinder girls' equal participation in school as well as contribute to their lack of confidence in their own abilities (Stoebenau et al., 2015). The extent to which girls are impacted by these (and other) factors vary throughout the country, and are largely reflective of regional and socioeconomic disparities (Lawson, 2003; MoES, 2013, 2016; UBOS, 2017). The West Nile Sub-Region of Uganda, where this study took place, has the highest gender gap in enrollment in the country, with only six girls in school for every 10 boys (UBOS, 2015). In the West Nile region of Uganda, girls' attendance and retention in school are particularly problematic (Faughnan, 2016; MoES, 2016; Stoebenau et

al., 2015; UBOS, 2012).

National planning documents, such as Uganda Vision 2040 (Government of Uganda, 2007), and policies and documents such as the National Strategy for Girls' Education (NSGE) (MoES, 2013), the Gender in Education Sector Policy (MoES, 2016), and the Uganda Gender Policy (Government of Uganda [GOU], 2007), as well as external organizations' initiatives such as UNDP Uganda's Gender Equality Strategy 2014–2017 (UNDP, n.d.) all recognize the urgent need to work towards achieving gender equality. However, there remains a large gap between policies and strategies and their effective implementation on the ground. In fact, teachers are very often utterly unaware of the existence of these documents, let alone provided with the professional development required to operationalize them. Thus, there is need for an engaged scholarship approach to working with local educators to not only ensure they are familiar with relevant policies and initiatives, but to ensure that their experiences, knowledge, and voices inform these directives.

The Study

Participants and location

This study involved 30 pre-primary and primary school educators from the West Nile Sub-Region of Northern Uganda. The participants attended two, one-week professional development courses (October, 2014 and March, 2015) which was a part of the Strengthening Education Systems in East Africa (SESEA) initiative (funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Department of Canada, and implemented by the Aga Khan Development Foundation). Data collected for this paper was from the first workshop (October, 2014). With support from a Ugandan Professional Development Tutor (teaching assistant), I developed and facilitated the courses which focused on promoting and establishing gender-responsive schools. The following chart indicates the sex and designations of the participants.

Table 2. Sex and designation of study participants

Designation	Female	Male	Total
Head teachers	1	4	5
Pre-primary Teachers	9	6	15
Primary Teachers	10	5	15

The course was held in a Teachers' College in a rural setting. Participants who lived and worked at a distance from the college resided in the college dormitories. All accommodation and meals (or daily travel costs for those who lived nearby) were provided.

Feminist, participatory action research framework

As the focus of the study was finding ways to work towards promoting and sustaining gender equality in educational contexts, I employed a feminist, participatory action research (FPAR) methodology for this study. The FPAR methodology positions participants as the experts of their contexts, and the researcher as a facilitator who defers to their expertise (Lather,

2004). As a white Canadian female, I positioned myself as an etic facilitator: I could offer information, strategies, and observations, but it was the participants' knowledge and insights that constituted the material we worked with.

The FPAR approach intentionally challenges and disrupts normative, patriarchal, hegemonic structures that hinder gender equality by ensuring that all voices are included and valued, with particular attention and support provided to those whose voices have traditionally been excluded to overtly acknowledge the importance of their contributions. Active democratization of voice and participation is essential to create a community of trust and support where deeply complex and highly sensitive issues—such as those relating to gender discrimination and abuse—can be meaningfully explored (Maguire, 1996). As a facilitator, I strove to accomplish this through the activities, and established, agreed-upon codes of interpersonal conduct that we engaged with throughout the course.

Admittedly, the participants were not involved in the research design and so their input was not sought to determine which research methods they would think to be most effective and meaningful, given the topic; this is acknowledged as a shortcoming of the *participatory* nature of the study. However, drawing is considered conducive to feminist research methodology:

...the physical act of creation and the bodily engagement with one's environment fosters, according to Gauntlett (2007), a different type of cognitive process, which transcends the domain of purely cerebral thought. In view of these features, Rattine-Flaherty and Singhal (2007) convincingly argue that visual participatory research strategies are an inherently feminist approach, due to their valuing of subjective, emotional, and co-constructed ways of knowing. (Literat, 2013, p. 88)

The participants assumed the role of researchers as they engaged in the discourse around gender, and investigated and deconstructed assumptions and constructs associated with this discourse.

Methods

A mixed-methods approach was employed for data collection. The participants completed pre- and post-course questionnaires for the course, as well as end-of-course reflective summaries on the activities undertaken during the course. Throughout the course, the participants engaged in a number of multimodal activities (including drawing, drama, and creative writing) that were recorded—through photographs and videorecording—as data; this paper, however, focuses on the drawings produced by the participants. In addition, discussion and observations during the activity sessions were recorded by notes taken by me.

Analysis

I drew upon a constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006, 2008) approach to analysis, in two stages. During the first stage, I worked inductively and iteratively from the data collected at the beginning of the course where the discourse of gender (in)equality was considered. I

triangulated and coded drawings, notes taken from discussions and participant observation, brainstorming charts, questionnaire responses, drawings, and video footage according to key signs/concepts (such as “beating”, “ignored”, “fetching water”) that emerged. I then grouped the codes in categories to identify salient themes (such as “sexual abuse”, “physical abuse”, and “neglect”). I discussed these themes with the participants to ensure their validity. The analysis process was iterative (Grbich, 2013) and collaborative.

The second stage of analysis involved a deeper examination of data produced as representative of social semiotics within the domain of multimodality. Data considered for the purposes of this paper are the drawings produced by the participants. I studied the drawings and coded elements that might convey particular, shared meaning and sub-text to the participants beyond the interpretation of the image at surface level for someone unfamiliar with the context. For example, objects represented in the drawings—such as jerry cans, machetes, school uniforms, and firewood—evoke embodied, sensory associations for those, such as the participants, who have experience with these objects, but would not have the same impact or associations for those who are not. I grouped these codes into themes—physical and sexual abuse, neglect and exclusion, exploitation of girls’ labour, gender roles and stereotypes, and disruption of traditional roles and responsibilities—which then enabled me to begin to understand the multiple meanings and depths of meaning each drawing represented. It was through this second level of analysis that findings related to multimodality as a domain of inquiry emerged.

Findings and Discussion

Identifying Gender(ed) Discourses

Limitations of formal, spoken language as mode. The study began with discussions on discourse(s) on gender in the local context. Key points made from initial discussions, were recorded on chart paper. We then discussed these points in relationship to gender-based challenges that negatively impacted girls’ educational opportunities. Again, observations were recorded on chart paper:

- Unfairly onerous domestic chores for girls that prevented their attendance at school;
- High drop out rates for girls;
- Boys privileged over girls—generally, and with respect to educational opportunities in families;
- Girls’ low self-esteem; girls’ late enrollment in school; prescriptive, rigid gender roles and expectations in society that girls were expected to adhere to;
- Gender stereotyping of subjects, directing girls away from, for example, math and science;
- Pedagogical approaches that favoured boys;
- Fewer girls in leadership positions; teachers’ negative attitudes about girls’ abilities;
- A lack of access to sanitary materials during menstruation;
- Early marriage and/or early pregnancy that led to girls’ drop out; and
- Sexual harassment, assault exploitation to/from/at school.

These issues were generally agreed upon by all participants and concurred with various other studies and reports concerned with gender inequality in education.

Although I had actively encouraged everyone to share their thoughts, the men dominated the discussions, and many of the female participants—particularly those who held the lesser respected positions such as pre- and early primary schoolteachers, were reticent to say anything at all. Clearly there existed a fundamental power differential based on gender alone, but that seemed to be exacerbated by the mode of spoken language in a formal/professional context. In addition, many of the female participants had had fewer years of education and were less fluent in English (the dominant, official language in formal contexts) and so at times found it challenging to articulate their ideas through the mode of (spoken, formal, English) language. Thus, within a very short time (less than an hour from the time the course began) gender(ed) and status-related power dynamics between the participants had been established: the men dominated discussions and many of the younger women, or women in *lower* positions were silent. However, it was the voices of the women in the course who felt intimidated or reticent to contribute that were precisely the voices that needed to be heard.

Drawing as an alternate mode of inquiry. In order to extend communication beyond the limitations of this mode of formal, spoken, English language, I asked the participants to engage with the mode of drawing to explore representations of gender inequality. This suggestion met with much laughter and some nervous comments about lack of artistic abilities. I assured the participants that artistic ability was not being evaluated, simply that drawings might reveal some interesting details and nuances that might otherwise not come through in verbal exchanges. The room became quiet—except for murmured exchanges and some laughter—as the participants focused on creating their drawings representing an aspect of gender inequality that they wished to share. All participants taped their drawings to the wall. We then took a gallery walk and closely viewed each of the drawings.

The creators of the drawings were not identified unless they chose to be. Some of the participants included captions (some short, some quite detailed). Most of the themes, discussed below, that had emerged through the opening session were also represented in the drawings, but the drawings embodied messages, knowledge, and implications beyond what had been conveyed in the verbal discussion and the written text of the list of issues (Figure 1) related to gender discrimination.

We discussed each of the drawings, and rich and layered meanings represented in these drawings became more evident as the people, objects, places, situations, and actions depicted were interpreted. As an outsider, I would have not understood many implications visually represented. Rose (2016) argues that it is important to understand “visual images as embedded in the social world and only comprehensible when that embedding is taken into account (p. xxii), and I acknowledge the critical necessity of shared analysis with the participants to interpret (or rather relay their interpretations) of these visual representations with reasonable accuracy. Below are the major themes that arose from these drawings: physical abuse, sexual violence, neglect and exclusion, and exploitation of girls’ labour.

Physical abuse

Figure 1 depicts a theme that was common to many of the drawings—a boy beating a girl.



Figure 1. Boy beating girl with stick

In Figure 1, the boy is clearly in the position of power, standing tall, right arm raised, hand holding a stick with which is beating the girl. The girl is bent over, facing the ground with her right arm twisted behind her back. The girl's tears are visible, falling to the ground. The caption, using writing as a complementary mode, reads, "A big boy caining [sic] a girl for performing better than him in class." This picture represents the intersectionality of numerous, prevalent discourses around gender: the power males assume they have over females; the fear males have over females who rival their superior status become successful (i.e., "performing better"); the commonplace practice of physical violence against girls and women. In addition, the action of males beating females with sticks or other objects is a form of violence that was a shared knowledge/understanding of violence for the participants, as they had all witnessed it (and perhaps themselves

been victims of it) in their schools and communities. Interestingly, the picture seemed to prompt speculation beyond the content of the drawing itself from the creator about the motivation behind the boy assaulting the girl—that is, he was jealous of her performance. Figure 2 shows a boy assaulting the girl.

This drawing, too, was accompanied by a written description of the situation:

Boys tend to challenge girls, they feel stronger than the girls, fluent in spoken English (language). In the picture, the boy is challenging the girl thinking that she cannot speak good English. He want to know whether she can defend herself. Boys do not want girls to pass ahead of them in examinations and other activities.

Figure 2 conveys similar messages as Figure 1 with respect to boys' fear of girls' academic success. However, as discussed by the participants, the reference to speaking English is an important aspect of the reflective description. Fluency in English is representative of power,



Figure 2. A boy assaulting a girl

success, and opportunities for social, political, and economic advancement and the boys are protective of their perceived advanced standing/abilities in this area. The drawing itself does not immediately communicate this message to the viewer, but it is the written engagement with the drawing—the result of intersections of two different modes—that has drawn this reflection from the creator. And, it was the participants' understanding of the significance of fluency in English that provided a further layer of meaning and expanded the semiotic implications beyond the act of physical violence portrayed to dimensions of power (associated with language, education, as well as gender) in society.

Discussions around these two drawings revealed some interesting underlying sociocultural assumptions—that boys are men generally consider themselves to be more “powerful” (stronger, more intelligent, more capable) than girls and women and this often lends itself to a position of male dominance, whether in the family home, in the classroom, or in the workplace. When girls or women are seen to be challenging their position through academic or professional success or advancement, men often feel threatened and violence can ensue. The participants discussed the importance of enabling girls and boys to both be given opportunities to succeed and to learn to support each other's successes. In one of the reflective pieces written at the end of the course, a participant commented, “Both boys and girls are to be considered equal especially in answering questions, playing roles, discussions, leadership, and other activities at school.”

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is another theme that arose in the drawings. Figure 3 shows a boy sexually assaulting a girl. The drawing shows the girl and boy both in their school uniforms, suggesting that this is an occurrence at school. The boy is leaning towards the girl and, almost nonchalantly, lifting the girl's skirt. The girl is leaning away from the boy slightly, but seems to demonstrate a submissive, or resigned, acceptance of abuse/assault.

Figure 4, below, shows girls and boys seated separately in the classroom.



Figure 4. Girls and boys seated separately in classroom

The accompanying summary of this drawing, however, reveals a message that extends beyond the simple image:

The boys and girls do not want to sit together on the same desks because boys disturb the girls by pinching, kicking their legs, knocking their heads even when teacher is teaching and worse when teacher is not in the classroom. Some boys touch the girls in the private sensitive regions like the breast or pubic region. Some boys steal girls' belongings like pens,



Figure 3. Boy lifting a girl's skirt

sets of books.

The semiotic significance underlying the reasons for the girls and boys sitting separately would likely not be interpreted by a viewer who is not familiar with this context, but the participants easily recognized these reasons from their own experiences.

Figures 3 and 4 inspired a larger discussion around the sexual abuse of girls by both male students and male teachers. The participants shared instances with which they were familiar, as well as various strategies, policies, and procedures for preventing and punishing assaults against girls. Participants discussed strategies that they could employ in their schools to reduce sexual harassment and offer support to girls when needed. In the reflective writing piece at the conclusion of the course, one male participant wrote: “[We need to] reduce drop out rates and [increase] retention of girls in schools [by ending] gender based violence.”

Neglect and exclusion

A number of drawings depicted the many ways that girls’ educational opportunities are compromised by neglect and exclusion in the classroom context. The following drawings speak powerfully to the argument that access to schooling is not enough to bring about gender equality in education (Jones, 2008; 2011). Girls are entitled to quality of education and educational experiences and the same (if not more, given the long history of discriminatory practices that have perpetuated their marginalized positions in society) opportunities as boys, such as attention from, and support by teachers, access to resources, leadership positions, freedom to play and rest outside of class time. However, disparities between girls’ and boys’ experiences at school are starkly depicted in the drawings following.



Figure 5. Boy doing math calculations; girl in background

Figure 5 depicts a boy at the blackboard calculating a math problem, while a girl stands behind him and watches.

The girl and the boy are both in their school uniforms, and are both in the same math class, but their experiences are very different. The accompanying summary of the drawing states: “Girls fear math as a result of the societal beliefs that math is too difficult for girls and can only be well done by boys. They get the negative idea from the society.” The comparative sizes of the boy (very large) and the girl (about half his size) suggest a significant power differential. Discussion around this drawing evoked observations that boys typically have access to resources that are not available to girls, including access to the attention of the teacher, who—in this case—will presumably review the boy’s calculation.

Figure 6 is another example of the exclusion of girls from equal learning opportunities within the classroom.



Figure 6. Girl sitting alone on floor in classroom

This drawing depicts a classroom setting where two schoolboys are seated at a desk, with books. The teacher is standing at the chalkboard, giving a lesson. A girl is sitting on the floor, with no book, looking after an infant. The infant is most likely that of the teacher, as it is not uncommon for teachers to bring their young children with them to school and for the female students to be expected to take care of them. Aside from the obvious inequities with respect to access to resources and equal learning opportunities, the representation of the power differentials between the boys and the girl—the boys seated on a higher level on formal classroom benches, and the girl seated on a dirt floor without even a cloth beneath her clothes—is clearly evident.

Figure 7 directly contrasts the attention received by a boy and a girl from their teacher.

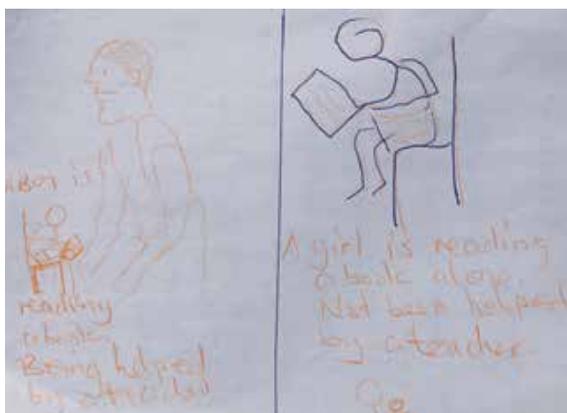


Figure 7. Contrast of attention given by teacher to boy and girl

On the left, a boy is sitting on a chair, reading a book, while the teacher leans towards him, providing him with assistance. The caption reads: “A boy is reading a book being helped by a teacher.” On the right, a girl is sitting by herself, with a book, and receiving no attention from the teacher. The caption reads: “A girl is reading a book alone. Not been [sic] helped by a teacher.” The participants articulated that this drawing conveys the message that even if girls have access to school, and even if they also have access to the same material resources (book, chair), this does not guarantee that they

have equal learning opportunities (e.g., support from their teacher).

Figure 8 shows a girl reading alone, outside the school, communicating the message that she does not have access, or is not included, or does not belong (or feel she belongs) within

the school.

The creator's full summary of the drawing reads: "Girl reading alone without help by teacher. In some schools teachers tend to help boys in their studies more than girls. Girls were not given opportunities [in] other areas especially leadership, and their rights area abused..."



Figure 8. Girl reading alone

These drawings instigated an in-depth discussion about the discrepancies in attention and opportunities received by girls and boys at school, and the participants eagerly shared and proposed a number of strategies to overcome this. Following are some select excerpts from the final reflective writing relating to this topic include: "girl child education [should be] a priority"; "[there needs to be] gender consideration in our schools and classrooms." The complementary nature and integration of the three modes—drawing, writing, and spoken language—enabled the participants to explore the semiotic depth and richness of the sign from various perspectives and senses.

Exploitation of girls' labour

Schools require ongoing maintenance as well as provision of services, but because so many schools (particularly those in poor, rural areas) are very poorly resourced, much of this maintenance and service falls upon the students, with an inordinate amount expected from the girls. Figure 9 shows two schoolgirls washing the classroom floor.

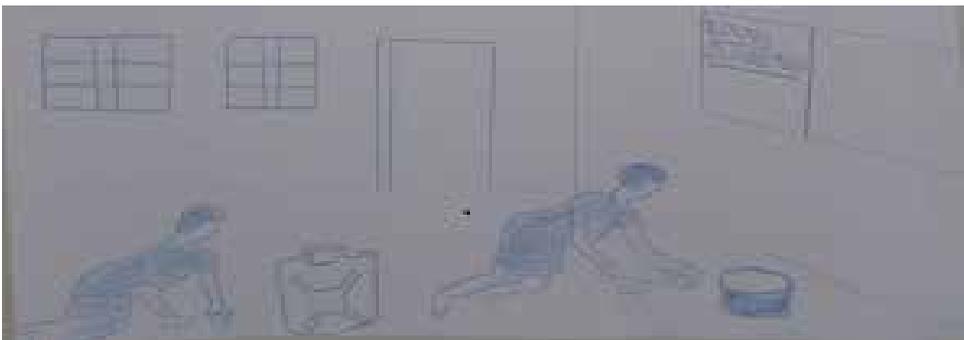


Figure 9. Schoolgirls washing classroom floor

The girls are sprawled on the ground, with a jerry can containing water (which they would have fetched from a local well or other source), a bucket, and cloths for wiping the dirt floor. Above the girls, on the chalkboard are the words, "Room Sweepers." Girls have onerous, gender-specific domestic duties at home, and these duties, as well as the girls' identities as *doers* of these duties are very often reinforced at school. Figure 10 contrasts girls and boys' non-instructional time at school.

In this drawing, three girls are transporting water to the school, while boys are playing football in the school grounds. The longer description provided on a separate piece of paper reads:

The girls are kept busy fetching water while the boys are playing. This denies the opportunity for the girls to play. This work as well could be done by the boys, i.e., fetching water. Girls are overworked, kept busy, boys free.



Figure 10. Girls transporting water;
Boys playing football

Most family homes, and even many schools, do not have running water, and so water must be fetched from a nearby stream, river, well, or other source. This is typically done by girls and women. Yellow jerry cans and large gourds represent the collection of water, which is very demanding labour, often involving multiple trips per day over long distances. The loads are heavy, and the paths can be steep, rocky, and/or unsafe, and the journey exhausting, especially in the mid-day heat without sufficient nourishment. The surface level contrast between work and play is stark, and the freedom differential between girls and boys is apparent. However, deeper analysis and extrapolation based on contextual familiarity speaks to expectations of girls' servitude and unpaid labour, as well as the harsh physical demands (hard labour often without sufficient nourishment or rest) that impact not only their bodies but their overall well-being and capability to learn to their full potential.

These drawings prompted participants to discuss not only the unfair burden of work for girls, but also the time cost; the many hours of domestic labour severely constrained the time left for studying. In their reflective pieces, participants made the following comments: "...boy and girl both should be given time to do their homeworks at home"; "...made men realize there should be no [unequal] division of labour"; "the roles should be divided [equally] for the children [girls and boys]".

Participants' observations on drawings

Interestingly, the female and male participants alike all agreed that each of the inequalities depicted in these drawings existed and were even commonplace. I had anticipated that perhaps the male participants might be unaware of particular forms of abuse or discrimination against girls, or might suggest that injustices perpetrated against girls were not as serious or prevalent as the female participants believed them to be, but this was not the case. The male participants, generally, were as passionate as the female participants about the urgent importance of bringing about change to protect and support girls so that they were able to fully and equally participate in education.

Drawing as a Mode to Imagine Gender Equality

The participants were then asked to create drawings representing gender equality and girls' empowerment. Drawing imagined future identities and communities has the potential to concretize and more fully develop ideas because "one has to actually draw a world into existence" (Literat, 2013, p. 88). Below are some of the drawings of imagined gender equality.

Disruption of traditional roles and responsibilities

Many of the drawings depict girls and women assuming roles typically performed by boys and men, and vice versa. Figures 16 to 21 show boys and men performing tasks typically undertaken by girls and women. In each of these drawings, the objects (pots, baskets, jerry cans, homes, clothes, crops, landscape, brooms, etc.) featured were all familiar to all participants and representative of the context of rural North West Uganda, as were the actions associated with them.



Figure 11. Boy carrying water



Figure 12. Boy washing clothes

There are no washing machines in areas with no electricity and so girls and women must wash all clothes by hand, using scarce water resources. This is a daily activity that requires a significant amount of time. In this drawing, the boy is washing the clothes.

Girls and women are responsible for washing dishes ("utensils") several times a day. In this drawing, a boy is doing that task.

Typically, households do not have access to electricity and/or do not possess gas or propane-based stoves, so all of the cooking is done using firewood. Firewood is collected by girls and women everyday from the surrounding area and transported back to the home. This is a time- and labour-intensive task. It can also be a dangerous undertaking due to vulnerability to many environmental factors, such as poisonous snakes, wild animals, challenging terrain, as well as assault by men. Girls and women typically prepare all meals.



Figure 14. Boy carrying firewood



Figure 13. Boy washing dishes



Figure 15. Boy cooking

At a surface level, these drawings depict boys and men doing the tasks normally assigned to girls and women. However, in the shared context of the participants, who were intimately familiar and experienced with these tasks, a deeper and more complex meaning was represented. For example, all the participants understood the intense effort, enormous amount of time, and drudgery involved in transporting water in jerry cans over long distances several times a day. Even though this is the task of girls and women, most boys and men have had to do this at some point in their lives and so they appreciate how difficult it is. Almost all the tasks are focused on the home, domestic work and caring for others, or very specific movement to and from a designated destination (water source, market). Thus, the visual representations of the objects, as well as the subjects' interactions with them, offers a sensory immediacy and imprinting that reaches beyond words.

Drawings also represented girls and women undertaking roles and activities generally only available to boys and men, as indicated in Figures 16 to 18.



Figure 16. Girl grazing goat



Figure 17. Female cattle-keeper

Many families have some kind of livestock, and it is typically the boys' responsibility to feed and care for the animals. One of the striking aspects of Figure 17 is that the girl is wearing trousers. This is almost never seen, and in this context makes a radical break with gender norms.

Skilled, paid labour positions, such as that of a carpenter, are almost exclusively occupied by men.

These drawings of girls and women performing work usually considered the domain of boys and men again communicate meaning beyond the surface level of the images. Aspects of



Figure 18. Female carpenter

freedom, value, and power are associated with these visual productions. For example, grazing animals affords a certain freedom of movement that is available to boys and men, but not to girls and women. And, more highly paid vocations, such as carpentry, are generally the domain of men. The ability to earn an income and the associated authority to determine how this money is spent affords the earner a great deal of power. Typically, the men in the family earn the most money and thus wield the most power. Portraying a woman in this position has important implications for her empowerment.

Reflections related to the themes expressed in these drawings include: "...girls can also do activities done by the boys...and boys can cook, fetch water, etc"; "...a boy should be able to cook at home....a girl should be able to graze animals"; [there are] gender related problems both at schools and in our communities [that] we need to solve"; "Not only men can undertake hard tasks but also women."

Imagining possibilities through drawing

Imagining gender equality through the mode of drawing also inspired some participants to consider contexts and opportunities beyond the local and familiar.



Figure 19. Female bus driver



Figure 20. Female pilot

Local transportation around villages and towns consists primarily of boda-bodas (small motorbikes, operated almost exclusively by men, that are often hired out), bicycles (although women and girls are not permitted to ride bicycles), cars/taxis (mostly driven by men), and matatus (passenger vans driven by men). Buses are used to travel longer distances and are almost always operated by men.

Figure 20 depicts a female pilot. Although all the participants had seen planes flying in and out of the local airport, planes as means of transportation was beyond their financial capacity. But, planes transported politicians, dignitaries, and professionals who visited their towns and villages. Almost all, if not all, pilots who operated these planes were men.

These two drawings offer glimpses of jobs and careers that women could have if they had the opportunity to pursue them. The women in these drawings are portrayed as perfectly

capable of executing the skills required for these jobs, as well as succeeding in the math and science-based programs required to gain the necessary qualifications. Thus, the underlying message to the prompt “*imagine* what gender equality looks like” is that if there were not obstacles that prevented them from girls and women from working towards and taking up these kinds of careers, they would be capable of doing so. And, these obstacles are a subtext of the drawings, at least for the participants. In very poor rural areas of Uganda, such as the area in which this study took place, the multitude and complex challenges related to education result in very few students completing secondary school and continuing on to post-secondary education. And, in areas of extreme poverty, girls face even greater obstacles than normal to accessing education; therefore, the few students who might achieve a post-secondary education would primarily be male.

One female teacher noted in her reflection: “...[as] female teachers, we are supposed to guide, counsel, care, advise, whenever they [girls] are in problems...so that they aim high become somebody.”



Figure 21. Girl and boy playing netball

Envisioning equality and positive gender relationships in the school context

Finally, some drawings were created that depicted the gender equality within female/male interrelationships within the school context. Figure 21 shows a girl and boy playing netball together.

They are in the schoolground, wearing their school uniforms. Netball is considered to be the game for girls (football is the game for boys), so the semiotic significance is the dissolution of gendered binaries with respect to sports.

Figure 22 depicts students in a math class. Interestingly, there are two girls and only one boy, and one of the girls has her arm raised to presumably answer a question, or to ask for clarification. The message being conveyed in this drawing is one of inclusion, equality, and empowerment. Unlike Figure 5 where the boy is receiving resources (access to chalk, chalkboard) and attention from the teacher, and the girl stands behind him, neglected, here the girls sit beside the boy and are enabled to fully participate. Also, it is significant that this is a math class, as girls are often thought to be much less capable than boys in math and science.



Figure 22. Students in a math class

Figure 23 features girls and boys equally sharing in responsibilities, chores, and play around the school.

The drawing at the left shows a girl and boy acting as security guards around the school; this is considered a role for male students. In the middle drawing, a girl and boy fetch water together; this is considered work for female students. And, in the drawing on the right, a girl and boy play together in the schoolground.

Figures 21–23 offer representations of imagined gender equality, and healthy, positive gender relationships. There is a strong sense of collaboration, camaraderie, and mutual respect.



Figure 23. Girls and boys engaged in activities around school

Discussions around promoting gender equality in the classroom were animated and enthusiastic. Reflection comments included: “both boys and girls are to be considered equal especially in answering questions, playing roles, discussions, leadership, and other activities at school”; “giving equal opportunity for both girls and boys in discussion questions in class”; “women and men should have equal

rights”; “girls can also do the same as boys if the chance is given to them”; “I have learned that girls/boys can do well in all the aspects...[and]should be treated equal.”

Multimodality as a Way to Facilitate Engaged Scholarship

Drawing was offered as an alternative mode to language as a means by which all participants—particularly those who were reticent to contribute to the initial discussions but whose voices

were perhaps the most important to be included—could share their thoughts and experiences. Drawing, in this case, served as a catalyst for other modes—writing and discussions that, when integrated, enabled participants to explore issues in more complexity and encouraged contributions from all participants. Reflective comments on this process included: “women and men both should be encouraged to answer questions and contribute in meetings/seminars” (male participant); “made women to feel that they are equal to men”; “we were able to share experiences in our discussions which was so interesting”; “both male and female participants were active in the discussions and gave solutions and way forward....”

A multimodal approach to investigating the complex and sensitive topic of gender inequality sufficiently disrupted normative power dimensions and anticipated discourse patterns to create a new social dynamic in which voices (women’s) that were not normally heard, or were typically sidelined, were sought out and openly valued. In the end, spoken and written modalities remained as the dominant modalities, and the modalities of cohesion, yet the forays into alternative forms of communication and representation that imbued participants with power of expression that they were unaccustomed to, were critical to democratizing these dominant modalities.

The report submitted at the end of the workshop—for review by university, donor, and government stakeholders—included all voices, through drawings as well as text. The intention was for this report to apprise the stakeholders of the realities of gender inequality in local contexts, the needs of educators with respect to implementing gender-responsive measures in their schools, as well as to inform future policies and programming. This two-way knowledge exchange, argues Boyer (1996), is essential to engaged scholarship: “...the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic and moral problems, and must reaffirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement” (p. 11).

Conclusion and Recommendations

As a communicative mode, drawing enabled the participants to represent a wide range of issues related to gender inequality related to education, within the school context, but also as it extended into the community more generally. Unequal power relationships, gender(ed) divisions, exclusion and marginalization, victimization and abuse were represented in a concrete and sensory way through the mode of drawing, as were possibilities for gender equality. The inclusion and communication of important details (e.g., school uniforms, jerry cans for carrying water, benches and desks, schoolgrounds, tears falling from a girl’s face, and the postures and actions of the subjects), were aspects of design and production that drawing as a mode opened up for distribution, or consideration, amongst the participants. The presence of these drawings constituted a *felt* experience as they inhabited the space (taped to the walls) in which we worked. The drawings were also powerful as representations of the voices of all participants. Each participant’s voice had equal weight, value, and presence and thus represented an inclusive, empowering, and democratic space of co-learning. In addition, within that shared space and time of the course were also signs whose meanings

resonated in particular ways with the participants who shared understandings of them and what they represented. For example, the participants immediately recognized school uniforms as signs that situated the children at school. Houses and schools were signs identified by their architectural features common to schools and houses in the region. Everyday objects such as machetes, jerry cans, gourds, sticks, benches, long desks, and even mango trees were significant signs embedded within the pictures, each with semiotic significance. Although someone not familiar with the context might be able to interpret or surmise much of the intended meaning, the semiotic depth and impact was intensely resonant with the participants as they were intimately familiar with the signs.

This immediate access to the signs embedded in the drawings enabled the participants to probe more deeply into questions around gender stereotypes, discrimination, and abuse. The visual representations were both points from which discussions emanated, as well as anchors to which discussions returned. The multimodal investigation included all voices and enabled participants to *stay* with images in ways that encouraged and supported focused and multi-layered reflection on gender constructs and assumptions as well as worked in conjunction with other modes—such as written text and spoken language—to offer deeper, richer, more complex meanings representing a multimodal experience. Multimodality as a *domain of inquiry* served as means by which a more collaborative and supportive professional community was established and a scholarship of engagement established to share the experiences and ideas of the participants with larger educational institutions and structures. Based on this study, I have the following recommendations:

- 1) Involve the frontline implementers of important, socially transformative policies and initiatives—such as teachers—in consultations where they are encouraged to communicate their experiences and ideas through modes other than the formal, often intimidating spoken and written modes that represent power and authority. True partnership and engagement requires a safe space and receptivity to a wide range semiotic representations that encourage, value, and respect all voices; only policies and programming that are accessible, relevant, and respond to the needs of the implementers will have life beyond the documents.

- 2) Use drawing as a pedagogical method that engages children in imagining what gender equality might look like to them. This could enable children who are often excluded, or are too shy to verbally communicate their ideas to share their thoughts and feelings. This in turn, could be used as an opportunity to build a safe and inclusive community that models positive gender relationships.

About the Author

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Unpacking the Layers of Community Engagement, Participation, and Knowledge Co-Creation when Representing the Visual Voices of LGBTQ Former Foster Youth

Moshoula Capous-Desyllas, Sarah E. Mountz, Althea Pestine-Stevens

ABSTRACT This article highlights the various ways in which we represented the visual voices of LGBTQ former foster youth through photovoice methodology in order to engage various stakeholders, diverse communities, and the participants themselves. We locate our research within other similar community-based, participatory projects and weave in our collective experiences. Through the juxtaposition of academic literature with the various steps of our research process, this article provides our critical reflections of our engagement process as we prepared for the research, interacted with the community, shared our findings, and incorporated social change efforts through the dissemination of the visual data in various formal and informal spaces.

KEYWORDS LGBTQ foster youth, photovoice, community-based participatory research, engagement, social justice

Locating Ourselves and our Theoretical Framework

Our intersecting identities, feminist values, and commitment to social justice inform our theoretical framework and methodological approach. This community-based research project was inspired by various theoretical perspectives including intersectionality, queer theory, and feminist theories. An intersectional theoretical lens, articulated by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), takes into account the ways in which overlapping social identities inform individual and collective experiences of privilege and oppression at the individual, social, and structural level.

Intersectionality centered our attention to the ways in which the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer former foster youth in this study experienced individual and systemic oppression, based on converging identities along the lines of race, class, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, ability, and citizenship status.

Queer theory serves to challenge hegemonic discourses and binaries around gender and sexual orientation (Gunn & McAllister, 2013). A queer theoretical lens maintains that identities are fluid, embodied, socially constructed, and performed (Butler, 1990). Queer theory informed our view of LGBTQ former foster youth as being impacted by the effects of hegemonic heteronormativity and cisgenderism within various social systems and institutions.

Feminist theories, while diverse and multifaceted, share commonalities that serve as a framework for challenging patriarchal assumptions about the construction of gender and

gender roles (Renzetti, 2010). Feminist theories center the voices of women and marginalized groups, while attending to issues of power, language, difference, diversity, human agency, self-determination, and connecting the personal experience to a political agenda for equality and social change. Feminist theories provided the platform from which to center the voices of the LGBTQ former foster youth and attend to their lived experiences.

Our process: Locating

Locating ourselves within this research study serves to provide a deeper understanding for why we chose to engage in arts-based approaches to research that lend themselves to praxis, emancipation and transformation. Collectively, our research team embodies diverse intersecting identities and diverse connections *to* and experiences *with* the child welfare community and the LGBTQ community as members and allies. We all have professional training and practice experience in the field of social work as practitioners, professors and graduate students. We are all dedicated to making a difference in the lives of others through community-engaged research and arts-based approaches to co-creating knowledge. Our experience with activism within the community and academia served to inspire us to engage in a photovoice project that would center the voices and participation of LGBTQ former foster youth as well as the broader community. Our desire to democratize knowledge creation and consumption while engaging key stake holders in the community provided the foundation for embarking in a community-based participatory research project through photovoice methodology.

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and Photovoice

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is an approach to research that focuses on involving people who are affected by a problem in the development of solutions. This is done through “collaborative research, planned action, along with process and outcome evaluation” (Shalowitz et al., 2009, p. 350). Photovoice is an art-based research method within the CBPR orientation that uses photography as a way to provide voice and to promote an effective, participatory means of sharing individuals’ experiences and expertise. Participants obtain the power to represent their lived experiences through the act of taking pictures. These photographs are then shared within the community beyond academia in order to promote social change. CBPR in general, and photovoice in particular, have been used to engage vulnerable communities, including Indigenous peoples (Flicker et al., 2014), people in developing countries (Atalay, 2010), marginalized groups (Windsor et al., 2014; Minkler, 2005) sex workers (Capous-Desyllas, 2014), persons with HIV/AIDS (Pinto et al., 2011; McKay et al., 2007), and various youth communities perceived to be “at risk” (Conrad & Kendal, 2009; Gomez et al., 2014; Rice, Girvin, & Primak, 2014). Working with a particularly stigmatized population in ways that encourage self-representation can help to raise community awareness, create knowledge, and generate art, all of which can be used for action planning and advocacy in the community.

Photovoice with LGBTQ Former Foster Youth

Photovoice can be a particularly empowering research method to use with LGBTQ-identified former foster youth because of the power disparities they face within the foster care system, which may make them unwilling to share in more traditional research practices, and because the child welfare system does an inadequate job of cultivating spaces for their voices to be heard (Mountz, 2011). Foster youth are particularly vulnerable to challenges with mental and physical health, placement stability, and long-term life trajectory due to the stressors that they have experienced, including family violence, poverty, and neighborhood crime (Rice et al., 2014). Youth who are street-involved and also identify as foster youth can potentially be harmed by participating in traditional research, because such participation can attract negative attention or cause them to neglect tasks necessary for their survival (Conrad & Kendal, 2009). On the other hand, expression via arts can provide these youth with an opportunity to build relationships, trust, and a sense of family. Arts-based research can serve as a “vehicle to connect with youth and for youth to explore and express their experiences and understandings of world around them, in ways that accommodate them emotionally, physically and psychically; the arts also accommodate their often turbulent lifestyles” (Conrad & Kendal, 2009, p. 258). Thus, arts-based research methods such as photovoice can empower youth to share things that they may have found difficult to share through other means. Using critical consciousness raising research methods, such as CBPR with photovoice methodology, can serve to empower marginalized communities. Giving community members a camera to represent themselves and their communities serves to shift the power dynamics, acknowledges community members’ contributions to the research process, and provides a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the complex realities of their lives (Capous-Desyllas, 2014).

Preparing for the Research and Laying the Groundwork

Engagement with communities should happen at all stages of the CBPR and photovoice research process. Israel, Schulz, Parker, and Becker (1998) provide lessons learned from conducting community-engaged research that can lead to benefiting the participants either directly through an intervention, or through the actions and changes that result from the findings of the research. In order to have this impact, community members, organizational representatives, and researchers collaborate equitably in the processes of generation of knowledge in all components of the research process. Key principles of community-based research are outlined by Israel and colleagues (1998, pp. 178-180) as the following:

- 1) Recognizing community as a unit of identity;
- 2) Building on strengths and resources within the community;
- 3) Facilitating collaborative partnerships in all phases of the research;
- 4) Integrating knowledge and action for mutual benefit of all partners;
- 5) Promoting a co-learning and empowering process that attends to social inequalities;
- 6) Involving a cyclical and iterative process;

- 7) Addressing health from both positive and ecological perspectives; and
- 8) Disseminating findings and knowledge gained to all participants.

Photovoice can engage and empower participants and communities throughout its processes (Brazg et al., 2011; Conrad & Kendal, 2009). Through art-making, participants can be empowered to “reflect upon their life experiences, interrogate the social context of their lives, and plant the seeds for personal and social action” (Conrad & Kendal, 2009, p. 251). Such engagement processes can be fertile ground for reshaping and reclaiming the narratives that are often imposed upon marginalized youth communities. Involving youth in all phases of the research is ideal: “rather than exploiting youth as informants, research can engage them in producing knowledge and working for change to benefit themselves and other youth” (Conrad & Kendal, 2009, p. 255).

Participants and communities are frequently engaged in the preparations for research through serving on Community Advisory Boards (CABs), designing the study, and recruiting participants (Pinto et al., 2011; Windsor et al., 2014; Atalay, 2010; Minkler, 2005; McKay et al., 2007). Rogerio Pinto (2011) noted that Community Advisory Boards (CAB) have their origins in LGBTQ community activism and arose from queer activists’ response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In the face of the profound and immoral negligence of scientific and public health establishments to respond to a medical crisis that was brutally killing massive numbers of queer and transgender people, groups like ACT UP mobilized the community to demand the allocation of resources for research in order to understand the nature and course of the epidemic. CABs are utilized as substantive collaborators, not just advisors to the research procedures. Such collaboration can be achieved by taking steps to ensure members are engaged, their relationships are developed, information is exchanged, decision-making is shared, members are retained, and the CAB is maintained. Trust-building, shared risk-taking and honest and open communication regarding clarification of ideas enhances the quality of the relationships of the CAB members (McKay et al., 2007). Forming community partnerships in the form of CABs and involving the participants in all phases of the research process serves to ensure accountability to the community, as well as co-ownership of the research project.

Our process: Preparing

The community was engaged as a stakeholder in the research planning process primarily through a Community Advisory Board (CAB). The CAB consisted of six members; two CAB members were LGBTQ former foster youth, and four CAB members were practitioners with significant experience working with LGBTQ youth who were involved in the child welfare system and/or were homeless. The CAB was multiracial, multilingual, and members all held queer and/or trans identities. CAB members were recruited either because they were known to the research team, or because they had been recommended through people known to the research team. The CAB met on a bimonthly basis for two to three hours each time. Because Los Angeles (LA) is vast and sprawling, and because CAB and research team members worked and resided in different parts of the county, meetings rotated between the university, located in

the more northern San Fernando Valley, and an LGBTQ center in central Los Angeles, where several of the CAB members worked. CAB members were given a small stipend from the research grant money to cover travel expenses, and meals were provided during CAB meetings.

Although the Community Advisory Board assisted with every stage of the research process, they were most notably instrumental in the preparation stages of the research. In this capacity, they served several functions. First, the CAB helped in creating a name for the research study that they felt captured the spirit of the research, made it clear to prospective participants that it was them with whom we wanted to speak, and that we honored the way participants may wish to think of themselves as a community. The CAB additionally helped by reviewing and revising both recruitment materials and research instruments, including the interview guide and photovoice prompts. Specifically, CAB members gave considerable input in phrasing questions in a way that would not make participants feel stigmatized in sensitive areas of inquiry, such as their experiences of homelessness, self-harm, or engagement in sex work. CAB members additionally took care in helping us to select language that elicited information about a full range of experiences associated with a phenomenon (e.g., rather than simply asking if participants had ever been homeless, asking if participants had ever couch-surfed, slept in cars, and so forth). Finally, prior to engaging participants in the research process, CAB members helped us trouble shoot ethical considerations that might arise and ways in which we could be responsive. Specifically, they helped us develop a system as a team for making determinations about the need to file child protective service (CPS) reports in cases of participant disclosures about previous experiences of child abuse, given our role as social workers with mandated reporting responsibilities. This was an especially tricky issue to negotiate due to our dual roles as researchers and social workers, and our strong desire to maintain integrity in our relationships with participants. Additionally, CAB members with clinical backgrounds offered themselves as resources for participants who wished to debrief with an anonymous person following the interview, since participants would likely be discussing difficult memories from the past in the course of the interview.

Engaging with Participants, the Community, and Various Key Stakeholders

In CBPR, communities are ideally engaged in data collection and analysis. In arts-based research, such as photovoice, participants may also be involved in the art exhibition of the raw data, such as photographs. Involving the participants and communities in the data collection and analysis process improves the quality of the research in the following ways: the researchers gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants, the ways that social systems have failed them, more sensitive topics, and more accurate/richer data codes and themes are identified (Conrad & Kendal, 2009; Minkler, 2005), while simultaneously building research capacity and empowering those communities.

By involving participants in data collection and analysis, participants learn and employ the research methods (Brazg et al., 2011; Conrad & Kendal, 2009; Minkler, 2005). Participants may in fact code the photovoice data themselves, coming up with the themes for qualitative data analysis (Brazg et al., 2011). In other studies, it may be more appropriate for the academic

researcher to conduct the coding and analysis, inviting the participants to do member checks and decide which photos and descriptions will be presented at exhibitions. Involving participants in this capacity as co-researchers “will allow them to see themselves as agents of change within their social context,” rather than simply as subjects being studied (Conrad & Kendal, 2009, p. 261). In addition to the specific research skills learned, participants can engage in consciousness-raising, capacity building, skills training, work experience, paid employment, leadership development, peer mentoring, and self-advocacy.

Communities can also be engaged in the exhibition of arts-based research. Participants can help with setting up the display or exhibit, debrief and give feedback about their participation, and facilitate community dialogue about the topic (Brazg et al., 2011; Capous-Desyllas, 2014). Exhibits in the community, in locations such as local cafes, public libraries, universities, art galleries, bookstores, and social service agencies, may capture the attention of additional media sources, furthering the reach of participants’ voices to realms such as newspapers and television, while empowering the artists with their freedom of sharing, self-representation, confronting stigma, and the possibility to reinvent themselves (Capous-Desyllas, 2014). Additionally, through the use of new media such as digital productions, youth can share their experiences and have a voice in places that they are usually not heard (Flicker et al., 2008).

Our process: Engaging

Recruiting and interviewing participants. Our research team was made up of faculty and student researchers. They represented members of the LGBTQ community and allies. With the assistance of our CAB members, we engaged in outreach to various social service organizations and tabled at a drop-in center at a large organization in LA. We also reached out to LGBTQ-oriented and foster care alumnae campus groups and centers, list serves, and social media, spreading the word about the purpose of our photovoice project with LGBTQ former foster youth. Through purposive and snowball sampling, we were able to recruit a total of 25 LGBTQ former foster youth who participated in this project. These youth participated in in-depth qualitative interviews, which lasted from one to three hours. Participants were asked questions related to family history, foster care placements and transitioning out of care, educational experiences, mental health, substance abuse, LGBTQ identity and coming out,



Figure 1. Books featuring Artists’ Biographies

resilience, romantic and sexual relationships, mentorship, and systemic change. Of these 25 youth, 18 participated in the photovoice portion of the project where they photographed their experiences before, during, and after foster care. As researchers invested in participant-driven approaches, the youth were given freedom to deviate from these themes and to take photographs of important things in their life. Many chose to do so, taking photographs of their identities, challenges, dreams, and aspirations. To

engage the participants in the power of self-representation, most of the youth wrote the artist-biographies that would accompany their photographs in a community-based art exhibit. The participants who preferred to have one of the researchers write their biography had the opportunity to review how their intersecting identities would be presented in their artist-biography. It was crucial for us to place the power of representation in the hands of the participants. The artist-biographies provided a context for each participant's identity and served to accompany their photographs featured at the exhibit. The artist-biographies were also placed in a book that was distributed during the art exhibits (see Figure 1).



Figure 2. Decision-making process for photos featured in art exhibit¹

Group dialogue session. After the participants shared their lived experiences and photographs through individual interviews, they were invited to partake in a group dialogue session aimed at collectively planning for the community art exhibits. We reserved a conference room next to the gallery space that was allocated for the art exhibit. Having the opportunity to hold a dialogue session with the photovoice participants next to the space where the first art exhibit was held provided the chance for the research team and the participants to serve as curators of the exhibit. To prepare for this, student members of the research team placed each participant's numbered photographs on a poster board and laid them out on the floor of the conference room. This provided the opportunity for each youth and researcher to vote on their favorite numbered photographs to be featured in the community art exhibits (see Figure 2). Although we expected many more participants to attend the group dialogue session, those who showed up were very excited to take part in the planning and decision-making process. The photographs featured in the community-based exhibits were voted on, discussed, and collectively agreed upon.

At the group dialogue session, we also discussed other activities that were important to the participants and the LGBTQ community. As a result of our discussion and brainstorming session, we decided to have food, beverages, live music, a photographer documenting the event, and a Graffiti Board alongside one of the walls of the gallery. This Graffiti Board was created to serve as a place for guests of the exhibit to share their thoughts, emotions, and creative responses to the photographs taken by the LGBTQ foster youth using colored markers, glitter sticks, magazine cut-outs, and other art supplies (see Figures 3, 4, and 5). The Graffiti Board also

¹ Appropriate Institutional Research Ethics Board approval was secured, prior to all data collection, and all participants signed consent forms to release their photographs and any images of themselves for publication.

help



Figure 3. Graffiti Board in action



Figure 4. Graffiti Board artwork

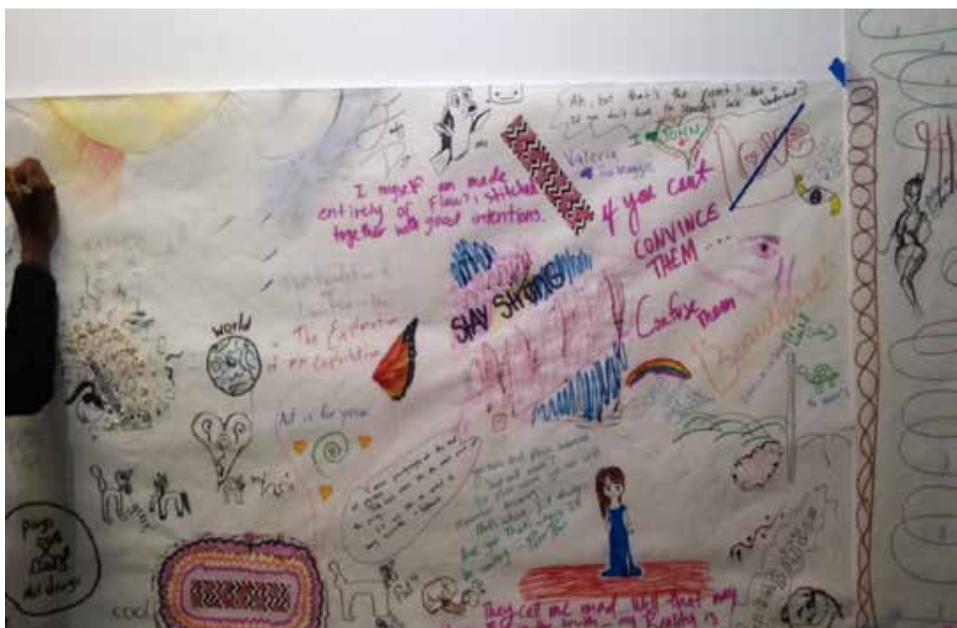


Figure 5. Graffiti Board artwork

Ambassadors Program. As we were preparing for our first gallery show in Downtown Los Angeles, we wanted to more broadly engage with members of the LGBTQ youth community who were not a part of our study. One way in which we did this was through collaborating with the Ambassadors program. The Ambassadors are a group of youth leaders associated with the youth drop-in center at a large organization in LA. They are engaged in community organizing both inside and outside of the Center. We had become acquainted with them through one of our Community Advisory Board members who worked for the drop-in center, where we had recruited many of our study participants. We attended several of the Ambassadors meetings to solicit their input for the planning of the gallery show and invited members of the group to the dialogue planning session (discussed above) that we had with the gallery show participant-artists. All of the Ambassadors had at some point experienced homelessness, and some of them were child welfare involved. We were particularly interested in what they felt their community might view as an enriching event that honored their community. The primary outcome of this collaboration was the youths' assistance in planning an open mic event that was held in a room adjacent to the gallery towards the end of the exhibit's opening night. Ambassadors, participants, and other young people from the community participated in the open mic (see Figure 6). Many shared music and poetry in which they reflected upon their identities as queer and trans youth, their foster care experiences, and their experience of participating in the project and/or attending the exhibit. One of the ambassadors also video-recorded the art exhibit opening. This video footage was used in the interactive website created after the community art exhibit. Since the event was being held in Los Angeles, one

Ambassador felt strongly that there should be a red carpet at the entrance to honor and welcome the youth into the show. Sure enough, there was a red carpet lining the way to the exhibit on the opening night of the show.



Figure 6. Open mic performance during community art exhibit

Gallery shows. Over a period of six months, we held two community-based art exhibits in the Los Angeles area where we featured the visual voices of LGBTQ former foster youth. One of the venues was in a large, well-known gallery space in the downtown area and the other venue was the university's gallery. We selected two diverse spaces to hold the exhibit with the hope of sharing the photographs within and beyond academia. The art exhibit held at the university engaged students, faculty, staff, and others connected to the institution, including social workers and other foster youth. The art exhibit held downtown expanded the audience to include various stakeholders. In addition to the participants and their friends, the individuals who attended the exhibit's opening night included members of the general public, artists, social workers, policymakers in the field of child welfare, advocates, mental health specialists, foster youth (including an entire group home and their line staff), outreach workers, program directors, and other critical players with institutional power to create change. The atmosphere that we tried to cultivate at each exhibit was one of acceptance, celebration, connection, community-building, and creative self-expression. As a means to engage with the guests of the exhibit, we had a book (in the form of a diary) where they could write down their thoughts about the exhibit and share their heightened sense of consciousness around important issues (see Figure 7). This book of guest reflections was shared with the project participants after

the exhibits and used to engage them in dialogue about the importance of their photographs. Having a collection of personal reflections about the art exhibit was useful for gaining a deeper understanding of the impact of the exhibit within the community and how various individuals engaged with the project on a personal level. Over 500 guests attended the two art exhibits combined. Since then, two “mini-exhibits” featuring a portion of the larger body of photos have taken place to celebrate Pride month (June) at a regional office within the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services and at the University of Albany, where one of the authors is currently on faculty.

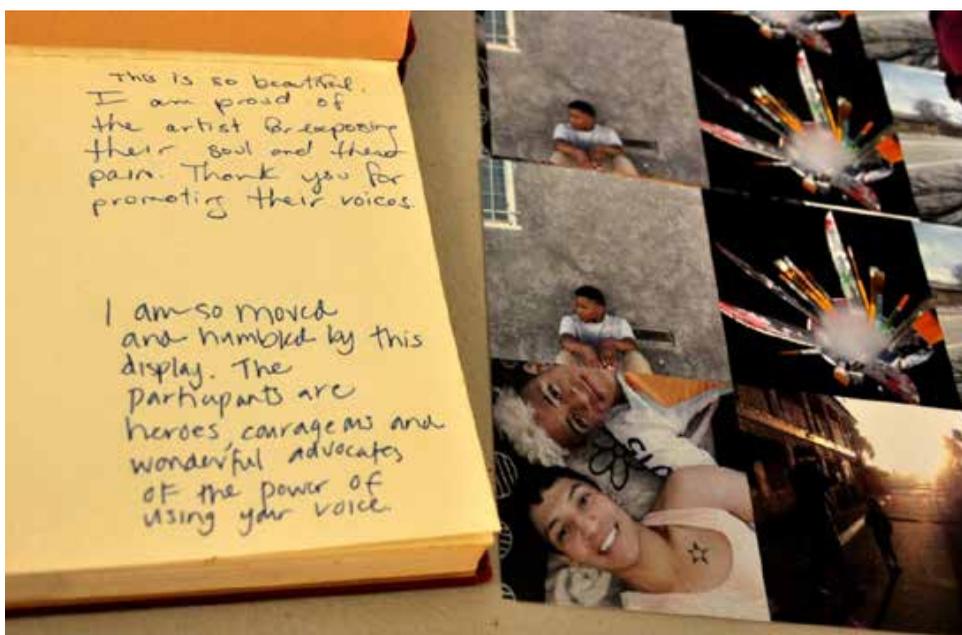


Figure 7. Audience engagement book of reflections about the exhibits

Resilient scholars facilitated dialogue session. In the course of planning for the second exhibit hosted at the university art gallery, we reached out to various departments and programs on campus to invite collaborators and co-sponsors as a means to maximize our outreach and impact on campus. A particularly rewarding collaboration involved the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP), a university organization that houses Resilient Scholars which is a program for students on campus who are current or former foster youth. The Guardian and Resilient Scholars programs are unique to California and are a part of the California College Pathways. Both programs have been heralded as a national model for expanding the accessibility of higher education for current and former foster youth. Upon hearing about the upcoming gallery show, the Resilient Scholars director reached out to us to inform us that group members were interested in having a private viewing of the show before it opened to the general public. We arranged for the gallery to be closed to outside visitors on a weeknight and held a private

tour followed by a dialogue session facilitated by two of the research team members. Resilient Scholars members—some of whom identified as LGBTQ, many of whom did not—were asked to share their reflections about the exhibit. The discussion was facilitated by a Graffiti Board activity in which group members were asked to share thoughts and feelings elicited by the exhibit using words or images. Then, we had a larger group discussion using the Graffiti Board as a jumping off point.

Many participants shared that aspects of the visual stories resonated for them based on their experiences in foster care and/or aging out of foster care, also noting ways in which their experiences might have diverged based upon identity. Several group members noted that the event made them reflect on the importance of having a space like Resilient Scholars in which to commune with others who shared the experience of having been in foster care and attending college, and noted the surrogate family role that the group played in their lives as students. A number of group members also noted that the exhibit represented the first time that they had experienced a campus event organized explicitly to honor and amplify the voices of foster youth. They also shared that they took pride in the event and wanted to tell people about it, bring friends to see it, and to attend the opening of the exhibit that was scheduled to take place a few days later. Many of the former foster youth from the Resilient Scholars participated in the opening, by helping us set up and welcome guests to the event. At least one group member volunteered to be interviewed for a mini-documentary about the project.

Public Broadcasting Services South California Initiative. After our second gallery show, we were contacted by PBS SoCal about a project they were working on, called *To Foster Change*. As a social impact initiative, *To Foster Change* was designed to inspire change and improve life outcomes for foster youth in Southern California.² One aspect of what they do is feature innovative local programming for foster youth. The director of *To Foster Change* contacted one of our collaborators at the Los Angeles LGBTQ Center to learn more about their programming for LGBTQ foster youth, and was referred to us. After being interviewed about our project, *To Foster Change* featured our mini-documentary and a link to our website on their own web platform, drawing broader attention to the project and participants' stories. Thus, through our collaboration with PBS SoCal, we were further able to engage with the community in a broader, less geographically constricted manner, via digital methods and new media.

Website. One of the ways in which we hoped to engage an audience beyond the Los Angeles area was through an interactive website. This consisted of photographs and artist biographies from each participant, a description of the project and the process, and two mini-documentaries featuring our community engagement activities through art exhibits and interviews with participants and guests at the two art exhibits. The website was created to provide a platform for the voices of the LGBTQ foster youth and to raise awareness about important issues in their lives. The creation of a website featuring this photovoice project served to create an

² See <https://www.pbssocal.org/programs/to-foster-change> for more information.

online presence for the LGBTQ foster youth as a means to educate and mobilize support at the local, national, and international levels. Through this medium, the visual voices of the youth were amplified, allowing them to share their lived experiences, as seen through their own lens, with a diverse audience.

Understanding Our Findings

The photographs and captions collected from the 18 LGBTQ former foster youth were analyzed using a systematic process. We began by analyzing the in-depth interview transcripts informed by Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR). This process involved asking specific open-ended questions about a topic from the participants' transcripts that were then organized into domains in a consensual manner by our research team (Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, Hess, & Ladany, 2005). The next step in our process involved coming together as a group to dialogue about the codes that emerged. After extensive discussion, we consensually arrived at eleven general domains: (1) family history; (2) foster care placement history; (3) educational experiences; (4) transitioning out of care; (5) mental health; (6) substance abuse; (7) LGBTQ identity and coming out; (8) mentorship; (9) resilience; (10) systemic change; (11) sexual and romantic relationships. Participants discussed these domains within the context of their experiences before, during, and after foster care.

Our process: Understanding

Themes that emerged in participants' photographs. The photographs taken by the LGBTQ youth were diverse in content and style. Their images included landscapes, cityscapes, buildings, various objects, pets, significant people in their lives, and self-portraits. Many images depicted their dreams for the future, as well as their strength and resilience. After a cross-case analysis of the eleven domains previously mentioned, various areas emerged as significant in the participants' lives including specific photographs that represented their experiences while in foster care and the challenges of transitioning out of foster care. Specifically, many participants shared stories and images of abandonment by their family of origin, compounded by rejection from foster parents and social workers because of their LGBTQ identity. Some photographs symbolically depicted their feelings of dehumanization and voicelessness within the foster care system and the lack of emotional and monetary support and guidance upon exiting care. There were quite a few images that represented the participants' LGBTQ identity and coming out, as well as their process of moving from shame and stigma to empowerment and pride. Many images were taken to depict how the youth overcame barriers in their life related to mental health struggles and substance abuse. The participants also took various photos related to education as an aspiration and a source of resilience.

Portrait of our participants. Collectively, the eighteen LGBTQ youth who participated in this photovoice project embodied diverse identities along the lines of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. The youth were between the ages of 18 and 26 years old, with seventeen identifying as youth of color, two identified as trans, one identified as gender fluid, and fifteen

identified as cisgender. Their sexual orientations varied, with two who identified as lesbians, five who identified as gay, five who identified as bisexual, three who identified as queer, one who identified as pansexual, one who identified as straight, and one who identified as non-heterosexual. Of the eighteen participants, two had dropped out of high school, two had completed high school, two had a general education diploma, two were pursuing GEDs, and eleven had some college experience. The participants had experienced anywhere between one to thirty different foster care placements, with an average of seven placements.

Sharing Findings Within and Beyond Academia

The sharing of research findings does not have to be limited to traditional venues such as academic journal publications and conference presentations. Findings and photos shared with the broader community can increase the relevance of an intervention, program, or research study, which can then influence the attitudes of practitioners, advocate for policy, and make the program or intervention more likely to succeed. Without strong input from the community, there is a risk of researchers designing interventions that do not apply to the community (Minkler, 2005, p. 7; Capous-Desyllas, 2014). More specifically, findings about risk and protective factors can be presented at community-wide events, to local groups, such as Parent Teacher Student Association meetings, and to government agencies, such as Youth and Family Services agencies (Brazg et al., 2011). These findings can then be used by these entities to inform the alteration of action plans, ensure effective programs, encourage dialogue, and educate community members (Brazg et al., 2011). Such wide dissemination can mobilize a community to engage in social change on a particular issue. By expanding dissemination of findings beyond academia, a consciousness raising intervention can additionally be aimed at the general public, as was the case with this project.

Our process: Sharing

Academic and Community-Based Conferences. In addition to sharing the research project with various communities through non-traditional means (e.g., art exhibit, website, printed materials), we also presented the findings at five conferences. Three of these conferences were positioned within the social work academic discipline, were national and academic in nature, and comprised an audience of social work researchers and practitioners. The other two were local, community-based conferences that primarily comprised of social work practitioners, outreach workers, activists, policy makers, and other individuals who worked specifically with the LGBTQ community. These last two conferences were also attended by youth and families who are consumers of these services. It was important for us to share the photovoice research project at distinctly different conferences so that we could engage individuals working with LGBTQ foster youth in various capacities, as well as LGBTQ youth and families. At the latter of these two local conferences, there were LGBTQ former foster youth in the audience who provided important insights into their experiences as they related to the findings, thus generating rich dialogue about the research and its application.

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). One of our most impactful experiences of engagement outside of traditional academic modes of research dissemination was presenting our findings at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCSF) regional directors' meeting. This meeting was convened by the director of DCFS, and attended by directors of each regional office in the county. The invitation to present at this meeting was facilitated by one of our master of social work students who is a long time employee of DCFS, and who had attended the campus gallery exhibit with her research class. Like many Masters in Social Work (MSW) programs, our university hosts a federally funded title IV-E stipend program that provides financial support to MSW students committed to working in the field of public child welfare. This program draws many seasoned child welfare employees. One such student came to the exhibit with a mature working knowledge of the child welfare system and left feeling moved by the participants' visual stories and with a strong conviction that the testimonies of alumni of the Los Angeles County foster care system ought to be shared with employees of the system itself. This was anxiety producing, as many of the participants were critical of DCFS and their stories often did not reflect positively on the system. However, we were also able to share testimonies of youth who noted the transformative impact of authentically caring and affirming workers who made a difference through practices such as correctly using their asserted gender pronouns. This modeling of affirming practice through youth testimony, paralleled by the raw and inescapable feelings of LGBTQ foster care alumni who felt ill prepared for the transition to adulthood and/or re-traumatized by their experiences in foster care, elicited what felt like heartfelt inquiry by many in attendance about ways they could do better. Although certainly not everyone in attendance was on board, and there were some linguistic shortcomings that emerged in referring to our participant community, we received several follow up inquiries from individuals seeking more information following the presentation.

Implications for Practice, Policy and Research

The images and voices of LGBTQ former foster youth in this study hold several implications for practice, policy and research. From a practice perspective, the use of photography allows LGBTQ foster youth to identify and creatively represent their lived experiences, challenges in life, and sources of resilience, thus informing social service design and delivery. Photovoice methodology provides an opportunity to engage the participants and various stakeholders throughout the research process through public sharing of the findings. This process has the potential to bring together individuals and empower communities to work for long-term social change. Visual images can serve to educate and influence social workers, activists, academics, and other influential community advocates working on foster care issues as they relate to LGBTQ foster youth. Dissemination of photovoice findings through various avenues of communication allows for individual and collective engagement beyond academia. Specifically, our aim throughout the project has been to engage in public consciousness-raising that will heighten the visibility of, and generate a public ethic of care and concern for, the experiences LGBTQ youth within and beyond foster care.

Practice

LGBTQ foster youth should have a central role in the design and delivery of social services. Photovoice supports participant-driven identification and determination of appropriate social service needs. The participatory aspects of photovoice provide social workers, diverse mental health professionals, and outreach workers with collaborative tools to include the perspectives of LGBTQ foster youth. The youths' perspectives "may lead to culturally appropriate solutions because participants are involved in the collection, interpretation and dissemination of the findings" (Valera, Gallin, Schuk, & Davis, 2009, p. 312). Photographs provide visual data from the homes, streets, schools, community centers, workplaces, and other spaces where LGBTQ youth spend their time. This lends itself to a more culturally appropriate understanding of social services needs and potentially more innovative service designed to meet and deliver those needs. Photographs form visual evidence to facilitate the prioritization of issues identified by LGBTQ former foster youth and to support their advocacy endeavors.

Policy

Photovoice art exhibits that involve the engagement of various stakeholders in the research process have the power to influence local and state organizations and policies. Through the visual representations of the needs expressed by LGBTQ former foster youth, more attention can be placed on specific needs, particularly those expressed by queer, transgender, and nonbinary youth of color whose intersecting experiences of racism, transphobia, homophobia, and adultism are often underexplored. Several participants in this project expressed the importance of having social workers who were affirming of their sexual orientation and gender identity, and the detrimental impact of workers and organizations that lacked competency and knowledge about appropriate services and resources for this community. Visual representations of the lives and nuanced experiences of LGBTQ youth in the foster care system have the power to provide individuals with a new consciousness of what actions to take and how to proceed with creating organizational transformation and policy changes.

Direct actions, such as implementing worker trainings, can impact the culture of an organization that works with youth and their ability to provide appropriate resources and care from the perspectives of the youth. For example, placing LGBTQ youth in residential spaces that are congruent with their own identity or experience of their gender is critical to their health and well-being. Expanding the scope of foster parents who identify as LGBTQ can contribute to placements that are more appropriate and affirming for foster youth. Ensuring that policies support various aspects of medical transition, such as safe access to hormone blockers and/or gender affirming hormones, is vital to the physical and emotional well-being of trans and nonbinary youth desiring medical transition.

Research

Incorporating the arts in community-based research serves to counter the dominant forms of representation produced within the social sciences. Photovoice data supports the use of art to deepen meaning, expand awareness, and enlarge understanding of lived experiences

of LGBTQ former foster youth. Creative forms of data representation promise to increase the variety of questions that we ask about the phenomena we study since they present new ways of seeing and new settings for their display. Exhibits, websites, facilitated community dialogues, and other forms of engagement in the community featuring art by LGBTQ former foster youth can serve to educate the public and share research beyond academia, taking it to diverse groups of people and different communities. Photovoice projects can foster relationships between researchers and community members while building capacity within the community. Photographic representations of LGBTQ former foster youths' diverse lives and multiple realities can serve to challenge stigma and assumptions about their needs and work towards enhancing visibility and awareness related to their intersectional experiences and needs holistically.

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Hey, Hey, Hey—Listen to What I Gotta Say: Songs Elevate Youth Voice in Alberta Wildfire Disaster Recovery

Tamara Plush, Robin Cox

ABSTRACT Music pulses emotion in its lyrics, its tune, and in the creative process. A song can move people to dance, to reflect, and—often—to act. For an artist, a song’s creation can also reveal and clarify one’s own emotions. When people listen, a song can legitimize that the artists have something valuable to say—especially when the artists are youth who believe their ideas need a wider audience. This article talks about the power of song for youth recovery post-disaster in the context of the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfire disaster in Alberta, Canada. It highlights the use of music in a community-engaged research project that aimed to understand and amplify youth ideas for improving their community. The article draws on the value of Youth-Adult Partnerships, where eight youth worked with a professional recording studio in the wildfire-affected community to produce original songs for a youth-centric social media campaign. Focusing on the youths’ songs and personal experiences of their development, the article offers ways forward for wildfire recovery through processes that strengthen youth voice and wellbeing. The community-engaged research process underscores the power of music creation as an empowering method for enhancing youth engagement and reveals youths’ insights through their musical reflections on their priorities for a resilient community after disaster.

KEYWORDS Music creation, community-engaged research, youth voice, disaster recovery

In downtown Fort McMurray, Hannah, age 15 (Figure 1), strums her guitar to tune it, and then nods; she’s ready to record. The song producer sets the levels, nods back, and she belts the chorus of *Hey, Hey, Hey*¹ into the microphone: “Hey, hey, hey. Listen to what I gotta say. I’m not silent; I’m just not being heard. Things can be better here I’m sure.” Hannah’s song lyrics give voice to ideas she has for her community to build back better and stronger after the 2016 Horse River wildfire (a.k.a., the Fort McMurray wildfire) devastated her town in Alberta, Canada. Hannah created her song as part of the Youth Voices Rising (YVR): Recovery and Resilience in Wood Buffalo² research project facilitated by the ResiliencebyDesign Research Innovation Lab at Royal Roads University. It included a social media campaign named #YouthVoicesWB that featured creative content created by youth.

¹ www.thedistrictstudio.ca/youthvoiceswb.html

² www.resiliencebydesign.com/yvr



Figure 1. Hannah

RbD Lab researchers from the YVR project issued a call to youth³ aged 14 to 24 for their creative responses to the question: “**What would you do to make your community better?**” #YouthVoicesWB⁴ was an integral part of a two-year community-engaged research process that worked with local youth in the campaign’s naming, development, content creation, and execution.

As both research and a campaign, #YouthVoiceWB aimed to not only generate knowledge through supporting arts-based opportunities and resources for young people to create their own messages (Barone & Eisner, 2011; Leavy, 2015). It also supported activities with youth that could strengthen, amplify, and legitimize their concerns as active participants in the disaster recovery; actions that can foster greater youth agency and resilience (Fothergill & Peek, 2015; Macpherson, Hart, & Heaver, 2016; Seballos & Tanner, 2011).

This intentional connection between university research and the wildfire-affected community (Hall, Tandon, & Tremblay, 2015) served as a catalyst to both advance knowledge and strengthen local capacity for supporting and mobilizing Youth-Adult Partnerships (Y-APs) (Camino, 2000). It also led to diverse expressions of youth voice through creative arts, supported by multiple local organizations participating in the research project.

Creating opportunities for youth to build new connections and a sense of agency is at the

³ The project used the United Nations universal definition of youth as age 14-24.

⁴ See www.facebook.com/YouthVoicesWB, www.instagram.com/youthvoiceswb, and <https://twitter.com/YouthVoicesWB>

heart of creative arts-based activities (Flicker et al., 2016; Conrad & Campbell, 2008). When integrated into research, they can be used to deepen conversations and meaning making. They can also enhance and amplify the voice of participants and generate knowledge and actions with potential to influence decisions and policies (Peek, Tobin-Gurley, Cox, Scannell, Fletcher, & Heykoop, 2016). In this way, art creation within a research process produces generative, impactful, and useful data and knowledge mobilization tools. Such approaches can also act as interventions for and with young people (D'Amico et al., 2016; Walls, Deane, & O'Connor, 2016).

This was apparent in the high level of participation in the #YouthVoicesWB campaign. In addition to the youth songs described in this article, more than 350 youth across the region responded to the research question through various creative means from photography to poetry to podcasts and sticky notes. The researchers analyzed their answers, and 20 additional interviews with youth participants, to identify five key youth priorities for improving the disaster-affected region: “transportation, health and wellbeing, education, volunteerism, and participation and activities” (ResiliencebyDesign Lab, 2018, p. 13), as explained in the *Youth Voice & Vision in Wood Buffalo* report. This article will share how one of the activities—creating songs through a local Y-AP—operated to the benefit of youth for recovery within the larger community-engaged research process, especially in relation to enhancing youth voice and wellbeing. It will also include insight from the eight youth who created seven original songs (six soloists and one duo) for the #YouthVoicesWB campaign (Hannah, Shekinah, Willi, Genoveve, OG, Kyler, Chris, and Robyn⁵). The youth also participated in follow-up interviews and videos about these songs, which are also highlighted. The song lyrics and quotes from the interviews and videos provide insight into the meaning-making process and the impact of producing and sharing their songs on the participating youth. They also demonstrate the range of their concerns and ideas sparked by the campaign question and by the wildfire experience itself.

For instance, multiple songs reflected young peoples’ sense of hope and the potential for a stronger sense of community to emerge from the wildfire experience. This is heard in the lyrics by Shekinah, age 15, in her song *Recovery*, “We’re building from the ground up/Hand in hand here we stand” (see Figure 2); and in Hannah’s words “Change is what I need to see.” Willi and Genoveve, both age 20, link their song to hope in explaining to community members that “It’s time to return wandering souls.” The song *Change*⁶ also reflects the young peoples’ experience of a deepened connection to the natural environment that arose because of the wildfire’s visible impacts on their environment, as this comment by Willi illustrates:

Taking a walk outside, you see the burnt trees but you also see the green coming through...I tend to connect to nature a lot, so even the scenery and the nature around it have this hopeful bit waiting to come.

⁵ The RbD Lab would like to thank the youth (and their parents and guardians for those under age 18) for being part of the *Youth Voices Rising* project, and providing their permission to use their names, insight, songs, and photos for academic scholarship. We also thank them for their beautiful songs in the #YouthVoicesWB campaign.

⁶ www.thedistrictstudio.ca/youthvoiceswb.html



Figure 2. Shekinah

The idea for the song *Change* started with a stroll through a nearby forest and paints a picture of their experience of walking in the burnt landscape:

The trees stand bare in the warm August air; black bark bears witness to the flames.
The flowers, they're growing; all the while full-knowin' it'll be a while before the forest
looks the same. But we'll press on. Come together, join in the song. 'Cause there's
strength in waiting. Together we're making a change. Yeah, there's gonna be change.

These examples show that youth have strong connections to their community and a desire for positive change after disaster strikes. They exemplify ideas that participation in creative arts can help cultivate empathy (Malin, 2015), and contributes to optimism and positive youth development (Elpus, 2013), subjective wellbeing (Wheatley & Bickerton, 2017), and the development of critical thinking skills amongst other things. As discussed in the following sections, the songs also illustrate how using creative arts in community-engaged research not only generates knowledge, but also can support youth in their own recovery.

Validating and Legitimizing Youth Voice

Research shows that young people's active involvement in their own recovery helps them to understand and enact their rights as citizens able to determine their own future (Cox, Hill, Plush, Heykoop, & Tremblay, 2018; Fletcher, Cox, Scannell, Heykoop, Tobin-Gurley, & Peek, 2016). Youth engagement also supports the capacity of communities, and in building current and future leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators (Back, Cameron, & Tanner, 2009; Ho, Clarke, & Dougherty, 2015). Engaging youth, however, is not always as straight-forward as inviting them to meetings or focus groups; especially for reaching youth who may not be the first to step forward to participate (Cox et al., 2018). This is why the YVR project focused on

creative arts as a youth-friendly engagement method for both understanding youth concerns and strengthening their capacity as citizens with valuable ideas to share in the context of rebuilding after disaster (Haynes & Tanner, 2015).

Such contribution is illustrated in Hannah's song *Hey, Hey, Hey* where she shares her unique ideas for a more resilient community including the need for adult mentorship, street cafes, bike lanes, and opportunities for artistic youth. She points out issues she feels strongly about in her song: "There's lots here that's just not right. Downtown suburbia has been a plight. Neighbourhoods silent; streets are bare; nothing is walkable; destinations rare." Her lyrics also emphasize a sense of shared responsibility for finding solutions to these problems, singing: "I work to change this town of ours to make it better; to make us proud."

Despite feeling distant from policymakers, research shows that the idea of influencing power is important to youth—especially on decisions that directly affect them and their families (Grauenkaer & Tufte, 2018; Haynes & Tanner, 2015; Plush 2009). Illustratively in a video interview about her song, Hannah explains the challenges she and other youth find in being listened to and having equal representation in decisions in her community:

Young people can't vote, but they still have opinions on things in the community. Because they don't have the power with voting and stuff, it's really hard for them to speak their voice. So, it's really important that we start bringing more awareness to that and motivate people to create change in the community.

For the #YouthVoicesWB campaign, supporting youth to contribute their creative ideas through social media was informed by research on the positive role of youth empowerment and engagement through arts-based methods on youth development and resilience. For instance, youth empowerment has been identified as a mediator of positive developmental outcomes and influential in reducing marginalization (Christens & Peterson, 2012; Fernandez & Shaw, 2013). It also plays a role in strengthening youth resilience in the face of stress and change (Ungar, 2012). From this perspective, meaningful and authentic youth engagement in issues of concern to them can contribute not only to the greater civic engagement but also to the individual wellbeing of youth (Cox et al. 2018). Including youth perspectives in disaster recovery decision making also helps to ensure their unique perspectives are included, as called for in the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* (UNISDR, 2015).

Local government partners can also provide opportunities to strengthen the legitimacy of youth voice and spark action. For instance, RbD Lab researchers ran the #YouthVoicesWB campaign specifically during the 2017 Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) mayoral election cycle. The campaign also included "Mayoral Mondays" in its Instagram and Facebook posts to feature interviews with the Mayoral candidates⁷ on their opinions on meaningful youth engagement. This timing reflected the desire to not only amplify youth voice, but to cultivate possibilities for meaningful and responsive listening to occur between decision makers and youth with legitimate concerns and innovative solutions (Dutta, 2014;

⁷ www.youtube.com/watch?v=dh--6Jzsa1M

Plush, 2016). Used in this way, the campaign served as a catalyst to raise awareness and build youth capacity on one hand; and on the other to support youth-driven advocacy efforts that put young people in a better position to influence policies and decisions connected to the wildfire recovery (Peek et al., 2016; Plush, 2015).

For instance, the researchers were able to leverage the relationship they had built during the campaign to invite the newly elected Mayor, Don Scott, to a youth talent showcase of #YouthVoicesWB artists. This provided an opportunity for youth to see and hear that their ideas have weight in community decision making. During this event, Mayor Scott (Nov. 10, 2017) spoke directly⁸ to the importance of listening to young people:

I want you to believe that what you think and say makes a difference... If you don't think your voice matters; that is totally incorrect. Your voice matters... But unless you're telling us what you are experiencing, we are not going to know what to make better... So, believe in yourself. I just want you to know that you'll have a voice in the Mayor going forward. We want to make this community better not just for us, but for all of you.

The young performers noticed and remembered his message months after the event, and even offered advice to improve the connection, as OG described:

It's not that we don't want to express our ideas and whatever. There are not the right outlets for us to do it. When the Mayor was talking at the Youth Voices thing he said that he has his phone number public and he has his email public, and we can message him directly. I thought that was cool 'cause, see 'I have a problem with how things are going, and I can tell someone to actually fix them,' right? I think that making outlets useful to us [*to share ideas*]*—not a Dropbox that never gets read... something that we can express ourselves and make it as if it was an actual thing that can actually change.*

The campaign also highlighted challenges in providing space for authentic, uncensored youth voice. For example, concerns were raised about how the line in Kyler's song, "Fuck the rules. I ain't ever been complying," might be received by youth, parents, and community members following the online campaign. The words are a powerful statement that directly connects with and reflects Kyler's life experiences. Rather than censor the line, the researchers and community partner approached Kyler as a professional artist. They explained the dilemma of wanting to give him free reign to express himself and the challenges that might ensue from posting the song on a site that included a younger audience. Negotiation and respect were key to legitimizing Kyler's voice as he himself had talked in a video interview about how people might respond to his song:

I'd like some positive feedback but there are going to be those few that are going to be like 'man, he's talking about going to jail and stuff like that,' but I'm not trying to hide who I am. This stuff really happened to me. I don't want people to judge me.

⁸ www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5tWwS8JfzI



Figure 3. Kyler

Rather than removing or censoring the lyric, the researchers and local recording studio team worked with Kyler to add a message warning of explicit content, thereby honouring Kyler's authentic voice and story (see Figure 3). This is an example of how arts-based activities can result in creative knowledge products with the potential to be controversial. However, honouring and supporting the integrity of what young people share—as well as positioning the research alongside local Youth-Adult Partnerships—is important to ensure youth will be validated and legitimized.

Strengthening Youth Wellbeing

Promoting youth-generated music within the project also recognized its value in supporting youth wellbeing (Davis, 2010; Papinczak, Dingle, Stoyanov, Hides, & Zelenko, 2015). As an example, in his song *Happiness*,⁹ Chris, age 18, asks: “How do you know where to go when you feel so low?” and ends with the lyrics, “That when I’m walking, I will be alright. And when I’m broken, you will be by my side. And out of nowhere, I will find you tonight. Yeah, I believe.” After recording the song, Chris made the link between his song’s message, the wildfire, and depression. He explained he would like the song to connect to people struggling to cope following the fire; and help them find happiness. He highlights this in the song’s lyrics, “You just need to hold on; you need to keep going no matter how tough things are.” He explains that the song ties into who he is now and to the hope he himself has taken away from the experience:

With the wildfire people lost stuff. Personally, I lost my house and the things that were

⁹ www.thedistrictstudio.ca/youthvoiceswb.html

in there. I mean everything is fine now, but still. And with that, with the song and relevance to the wildfire and people having to go through that, I think it would help people who are going through stuff... It's a reflection of what people needed to do just to keep on going. And what people needed really is happiness, to have hope and faith, and everything's going to be alright.

Considerable evidence shows that youth can be at greater risk for developing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following natural disasters (Fothergill & Peek, 2015; Peek, Abramson, Cox, Fothergill, & Tobin 2018). Resource allocation for youth-centric mental health, however, is often overlooked or underfunded (Blanchet-Cohen & Nelems, 2013). Specific programs that allow youth to connect and discuss their disaster experiences can aid in reducing such symptoms, as well as guide children and youth in healing and capacity-building (Powell & Holleran-Steiker, 2017). Accordingly, multiple strategies are required to address youth wellbeing after a disaster event, including the use of arts (Fletcher et al., 2016; Peek et al., 2016). This link between music creation and wellbeing is evidenced in how youth discussed their songs. For instance, Willi explained that, "Songwriting or writing of any sort is always a good process to work through your own junk." Another songwriter, Robyn, age 18, agreed. She described that she was "going through a lot of depression back in high school" and stated that music was the only thing that helped. She also said that the opportunity to engage in the arts—such as was provided by the #YouthVoicesWB campaign—could make things for youth "a lot more better, a lot less suicidal, a lot less cutting, a lot less people being in high schools" thinking "why is this so crazy?" Similarly, OG offered his thoughts on how song writing linked specifically to his recovery from the wildfire:

It's a mind clearing, you know, when you can just be chilling; just thinking about random things, and that you all of the sudden end up making art basically. I personally feel if you are touched by the fire that just being able to relax and just put down, write down your thoughts—that's all. It's 'being' really. So...making music can definitely help somebody who is affected by the wildfire.

As another example, in describing her song *Recovery*,¹⁰ Shekinah expressed empathy with those of her peers who had lived through the wildfire disaster, stating that, "even if they didn't have a lot of damage done to their house, they still had to leave. So, it's trying to bring back hope." She makes this connection through her lyrics:

There's something about this town that nobody sees. No matter what tries to bring you down, you can't be beat. And the fire that burnt down all your hopes and dreams. You came back twice as strong ready to take on anything. If I could do something to make this place any better. I would bring back the people that stuck together. Our hearts stayed strong we'll carry on forever. It's all a part of our recovery.

¹⁰ www.thedistrictstudio.ca/youthvoiceswb.html

As the examples show, creating opportunities for musical expression provides a youth-friendly pathway for supporting youth recovery through songs' creation, sharing, and reception (Davis, 2010; Papinczak et al., 2015). Engaging in arts activities can also foster a sense of belonging for youth, which can support their wellbeing (Bower & Carroll, 2015). As illustration, Robyn's song *Saltwater Kiss*¹¹ conveys her sense of detachment from community after moving to Fort McMurray soon after the wildfire disaster. Her lyrics speak of her sense of longing for her childhood home in Newfoundland: "To feel the ocean's embrace; oh, saltwater kiss. My heart's rushing with the waves, there's nothing like this. I can always come back, no matter how far I roam. Oh, what I wouldn't do, to go back home." Robyn described



Figure 4. Robyn

how one performance sparked a new realization that others may be feeling the same way (see Figure 4). She described how at the #YouthVoicesWB Talent Showcase a few people came up to her after she performed, stating, "Some of them were like crying; happy with a smile on their face to know that you are actually not the only one who is suffering while I am suffering."

While the act of producing a song alone may not be enough to tackle feeling isolated in a new town, the opportunity to participate in creating the song and performing it at multiple events did offer potential to address this disconnection and support her wellbeing.

Working Through Youth-Adult Partnerships

As a community-engaged research project, the #YouthVoicesWB campaign aimed to understand and elevate youth voices through highlighting their priorities for local improvement after the 2016 wildfire disaster. In doing so, multiple local youth-centred organizations across the Wood Buffalo region—and the youth they support—joined the campaign. They did so through developing their own ideas for arts-based activities that fit their organizational mandate, goals, and ways of working (i.e., art installations, graffiti walls, dance, photography, etc.). This approach supported the powerful synergy that can emerge through Youth-Adult Partnerships by prioritizing mentoring models and strengthening community cohesion (Camino, 2000; Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013).

¹¹ www.thedistrictstudio.ca/youthvoiceswb.html



Figure 5. Chris

The songs produced for #YouthVoicesWB are one example of the Y-AP process. Here, two local organizations, 91.1 The Bridge FM¹² and the District Recording Studio,¹³ worked with RbD Lab researchers to develop a research and arts strategy that reflected their commitment to building youth confidence and enhancing youth wellbeing through music. Together, the two organizations used their networks, social media, and audio-visual production skills to reach local youth¹⁴ and work with them to professionally produce the seven original songs (see Figure 5).

The organizations shared these songs as part of the #YouthVoicesWB campaign. They also used the campaign brand to launch interest in a wider initiative called *Soundforce Youth*¹⁵ that aims to host youth talent showcase events in the region and support a community of young artists through youth engagement programming. The campaign itself did not create the *Soundforce Youth* initiative as the project was in development before the wildfire disaster. However, the community-university research partnership allowed youth talent to be showcased in a collective and public way through #YouthVoicesWB that helped to raise the profile of and interest in the new initiative. Youth and community engagement was fostered through the internet-based campaign and local #YouthVoicesWB Talent Showcase that profiled the youth's songs in person, online, and on local television.¹⁶ The process of song creation and community engagement that emerged as part of the #YouthVoicesWB campaign serves as an example of the potential for community-engaged research partnerships that support not only knowledge generation (Hall, Tandon, & Tremblay, 2015), but also the sustained engagement and empowerment of young people in the wildfire-affected region.

¹² www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=13&v=f1BD-ZzZzf4

¹³ www.thedistrictstudio.ca/youthvoiceswb.html

¹⁴ www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=13&v=f1BD-ZzZzf4

¹⁵ www.thedistrictstudio.ca/soundforce-youth.html

¹⁶ www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLARu0rgVPBmwEI5AmSxEpc8FDfkwDqDrU

Through the partnership, not only was the act of creating music experienced as beneficial by participating youth, the experience of professionally producing their songs and having an opportunity to perform them publicly was experienced as further validation of the value of their ideas and voices. For instance, Willi was both a song artist in the campaign and one of the primary song producers from the District Recording Studio. He explained the value he saw in his interactions with youth in the studio sessions:

This was really a transformative experience for them... It legitimized that they had a voice in the community and that people cared about what they wanted to say, that they believed that their stories were worth telling. And that is such an advantage to a young person, to any person, but especially a young person.

The youth songwriter Kyler highlighted the relational benefits of having his song shared with others. In a video interview, he described why he was motivated to record *Twenty-Sixteen*, and how he hopes doing so will inspire other youth to learn from his experiences:

I want to get my voice heard because I got some things to say. I got some stories to tell. And I know that there's a lot of people out there who can relate to what I'm saying. It's [*the song*] like walking through the lessons I learned, you know... I think most kids that I know can relate to that, so that once they hear it maybe they'll be motivated to come, even to the studio.

Presence and relationships are critical for providing meaningful opportunities for youth engagement. It is often easy to give space for youth voice through invitation, but often harder for youth to come into that space unless they feel safe, and trust that they will be genuinely listened to (Dutta, 2014; Fletcher et al., 2016). As Willi explained:

You make yourself available and nothing happens, it's so easy to be like: 'They don't care! I'm out!' But that's totally not the case. It's like cultivating relationship and showing over time that it's safe for them to talk to you. Being persistent and being always available because then it's the conversation down the road, where it's just a small conversation off to the side where they share something big with you and that's so important. It takes time with any relationship, and we just need to be willing to take the time.

Willi's observation speaks to the value of partnering with local community organizations that have a Y-AP orientation, including the time, commitment, and capacity to create positive, sustained relationships in youth-friendly environments.

Conclusion

In the context of disaster recovery, the importance of engagement and contributions by youth has been recognized in global frameworks such as the *Sendai Framework for Disaster*

Risk Reduction (UNISDR, 2015). As well, the need for greater youth engagement in disaster recovery to support their wellbeing has been identified as an often-missing component for building resilience in the post-disaster environment (Fletcher et al., 2016; Macpherson, Hart, & Heaver, 2016). Yet connecting to how youth feel, and to their concerns, hopes, and ideas for rebuilding their community is not always a priority as governments, organizations, and individuals focus on rebuilding infrastructure, homes, and services that have been destroyed or damaged during the disaster (Cox et al., 2018). This means youth can often be less visible as a target for recovery activities due to the developmental paradox of their continued dependence on adults and their emerging independence (Cox, Scannell, Heykoop, Tobin-Gurley, & Peek, 2017). In such an environment, engaging youth in post-disaster decisions requires innovative, creative, and youth-centric strategies by individuals and organizations committed partnering with youth. When given an opportunity to meaningfully contribute their voice to the recovery process and to their community, youth are clear that they have something to say.

The *Youth Voices Rising* project with its #YouthVoicesWB campaign offers insight into how community-engaged research, creative arts, and Youth-Adult Partnerships can support this agenda for greater youth wellbeing after a disaster event. It provides examples of the engagement and action opportunities that can be generated through the process of arts creation, production, and sharing. It also shows how such efforts can contribute to the capacity of disaster-affected communities to meaningfully engage youth, legitimize their authentic voice, and work alongside them as active citizens in the recovery process.

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Reflecting on my Assumptions and the Realities of Arts-Based Participatory Research in an Integrated Dance Community

Kelsie Acton

ABSTRACT The arts-based research paradigm prioritizes creativity, relationships and the potential of transformative change (Conrad & Beck, 2016). Arts-based research may be useful in disability communities where people may prefer to communicate artistically or through movement, rather than through spoken word (Eales & Peers, 2016). Participatory action research (PAR) involves researchers working with communities to create research critical of dominant power relations and responsive to the needs of communities (McIntyre, 2008). Both arts-based research and PAR value an axiological approach that is responsive to the community's needs over a dogmatic procedure, meaning that researchers must be reflexive and responsive to the often unexpected realities of the field. Over four months in 2017, eight dancers/researchers from CRIPSiE (Collaborative Radically Integrated Performers Society in Edmonton), an integrated dance company, came together to investigate how integrated dancers practice elements of timing in rehearsal, through an arts-based, participatory process. In this paper I examine the gap between my assumptions of how research *should* be conducted and the reality of the field, specifically: the tension between university research ethics and the ethics of the CRIPSiE community, the differences between the value of the rehearsal process and the performance as sites of data collection, and the assumptions I had made about the necessity of a singular research question.

KEYWORDS Arts-based research, participatory action research, integrated dance, research ethics, disability

In the spring of 2017, seven dancer/researchers from Edmonton's integrated dance company, CRIPSiE (Collaborative Radically Integrated Performers Society in Edmonton) and I came together to research how integrated dancers practice timing in rehearsal, particularly moving fast and slow, unison movement, transitions in improvisation scores, and the coordinated timing of partnering. Integrated dance (also called mixed-abilities dance or inclusive dance) is an art form that brings together disabled¹ and non-disabled people to train, create, rehearse, and perform together (Benjamin, 2002). The group reflected the diversity of CRIPSiE in that of the dancer/researchers involved in the research; four identified as disabled (with a variety of impairments), two as seniors, one as hard of hearing, three as queer and one as a person of colour. We used arts-based participatory research where moving together was one of many ways of investigating our research question.

¹ In this article I use the language that I, and the dancer/researchers from CRIPSiE use for ourselves. We draw on the social model of disability (Shakespeare, 2006), using 'disabled people' to draw attention to the ways that people are disabled by physical space, social expectations, attitudes and public policy.

I write these sentences often. I write them for grants, scholarships, and conference applications — anywhere where I need to summarize my research. I write these things and it sounds simple and complete, a modest example of arts-based research in a disability arts community. In reality, the process was messy, complex, and surprising. In particular, as I journeyed through the process with the dancers/researchers, I found I had made assumptions about the research process that I needed to re-evaluate. These assumptions highlighted differences between how I imagined the research process based on my graduate training in the University and what was valued by the community I was researching with. Specifically, I encountered: differences between the ethics of the University and CRIPSiE; differences between the importance that the dancers/researchers and I placed on performance; and, differences between how I assumed *good* research was designed, specifically the relationship between research question and research study design, and how the dancer/researchers related to the research question as the research/rehearsal process unfolded. Both arts-based research and participatory action research (PAR) call on researchers to critically reflect on the research process (Finley, 2011; Nygreen, 2009). While calls for reflection often center around reflexivity, critical self-evaluation of the researcher's social position and the ways researchers' social position affect the research (Berger, 2015), I believe that critical reflection on the research process as a whole is a valuable exercise. My research process included reflecting on my social position as a neurodivergent², white, cis woman who was raised middle-class with significant access to the arts and the power dynamics inherent to my position of Co-Artistic Director of CRIPSiE. Here, I focus on my assumptions about conducting research, the reality of the research process and what I learned from the gap between the two. As such, this paper is concerned with what I learned about conducting research, rather than on the results of my research.

Arts-based research, particularly arts-based research informed by PAR, is a vital tool for researchers working with disability communities. Mertens, Sullivan, and Stace (2011) advocated that given the violence perpetuated on disability communities by academic research, researchers must find ways to share power with disability communities and to conduct research in ways that are credible and useful to members of the community. Snyder and Mitchell (2006) similarly argued that the university cannot simply divorce itself from the invasive, eugenic practices that have characterized research relations with disabled people for the past two centuries. Eugenics was the scientific and political movement that aimed to improve human genetics. Eugenic policies and practices were often twofold: they encouraged white, able-bodied people from Western Europe to reproduce, and simultaneously used marriage prohibition, institutionalization, sterilization, and death to limit the reproduction of people of colour and disabled people (Malacrida, 2015). Researchers must be accountable to the eugenic histories of universities in their relationships with disability communities (Dolmage, 2017; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). In arts-based research, relationality is the primary tool used to enable a collective, transformative imagining of better worlds (Conrad & Beck, 2016; Finley, 2011), making it ideal for work in disability communities. In PAR, accountability to the community

² Neurodivergent means that my brain functions in ways that are outside dominant, socially constructed understandings of *normal* neurological functioning (Walker, 2014).

involved is one of the guiding principles (McIntyre, 2008). As Eales and Peers (2016) pointed out, arts-based research can allow us to communicate that which cannot be captured in words, especially if words are not easily accessible to all members of the community. I further suggest that arts-based participatory research may be particularly appropriate to research within disability arts communities as these communities are familiar with their medium and skilled at finding ways to communicate with it.

Given all these reasons to do arts-based participatory research with disability arts communities, I offer my reflections on my experiences conducting arts-based participatory research with the integrated dance community of CRIPSiE. I hope my experiences can offer other researchers deeper understanding of the potential complexities and tensions of doing arts-based participatory research in disability arts communities.

Participatory Action Research and Arts-Based Research

My methodology drew upon arts-based research, particularly performance ethnography, and PAR. Arts-based research and PAR are distinct types of research that emerged as responses to the ethical questions raised by the crisis of representation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) concerning researchers' relationship to the people they studied, and how researchers represented themselves, their subjects and their research. Both arts-based research and PAR share similar values of relationality and attention to power relations (Conquergood, 2013; Jordan, 2003).

Participatory action research centers relational and axiological concerns (Grant, Nelson, & Mitchell, 2008; Nygreen, 2009). These concerns are addressed by attention to power relations, particularly power relations between the community involved in the research and the researcher (Grant, Nelson, & Mitchell, 2008; Nygreen, 2009); by reflexive practices, particularly the practice of the researcher considering their own social location (Absolom & Willett, 2005); by the participation of the community in every stage of the research process from determining the research question to knowledge translation (Brydon-Miller, 2008) and by a critical stance towards dominant structures and practices of the world (Chatterton, Fuller, & Routledge, 2007; Jordan, 2003). A PAR process may unfold through multiple cycles of research and responsive action, giving the community involved the information and tools they need to create change (Nygreen, 2009). Drawing from the principles of PAR, particularly the involvement of the community in every stage of the research process and the critical stance toward dominant ways of doing and knowing, is for me, key to an ethical research engagement with a disability arts community.

Arts-based research, "is grounded ontologically in a belief that we are all, at a fundamental level, creative and aesthetic beings in inter-subjective relation with each other and our environment" and "celebrates art's potential to transform the world" (Conrad & Beck, 2016, p. 1). The arts-based research paradigm prioritizes aesthetic creativity, relationships, and the potential of transformative change. In the search for transformation towards a better world the process of inquiry and aesthetics are related (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Within the broad category of arts-based research I looked to performance ethnography to design this study. Performance

ethnography uses the creation of performance and performance itself to collaboratively create knowledge (Conquergood, 2013; Denzin, 2003). Performance ethnography does not have a set process of research, but like PAR, emphasizes particular values when designing the research process. In addition to emphasizing ethical relationships with the community involved in the research, performance ethnography scholars have often emphasized the embodied nature of performance ethnography (Conquergood, 2013; Denzin, 2003; Hamera, 2011). This emphasis intends to disrupt the assumption that language is the default medium of knowledge generation and transmission, and to value knowledge generated and communicated through physical embodiment (Denzin, 2003). This emphasis on embodiment is particularly suited to research in a dance community, and especially an integrated dance community.

Given the compatibility of PAR and arts-based research to research with disability communities, it should be no surprise that research combining disability and dance, or using PAR in disability communities, is robust. Malling (2008), worked with Deaf dancers diagnosed with mental illness to explore culturally and linguistically affirmative dance therapy and creation. Kupperts's (2007, 2011) extensive body of research ranges from research projects involving community dance to writing collaborations (Kupperts & Marcus, 2009). Kupperts (2011) documented the work of the *Olimpias*, a disability arts collective who explored performance as a place where disability cultures are created. Eales and Peers (2017) explore materiality and the slippery line between disabled and non-disabled through performance art and writing. Peers' use of their wheelchair made their disability obvious while Eales' lack of mobility tool means that they are read as non-disabled. Eales (2013) worked with *iDance Edmonton*, the group that would become *CRIPSiE*, to investigate understandings of social justice in an integrated or mixed-abilities dance community.

Moving beyond arts-based methodologies researchers have used dance settings to investigate experiences of inclusion for children with disabilities (Goodwin, Kohn, & Kuhnle, 2004) and to investigate how children understood disability and difference (Zitomer & Reid, 2011). Integrated dance performance has been read as a cultural text for its attitudes towards disability (Cooper Albright, 1997; Sherlock, 1996; Smith, 2005). Irving & Giles (2001) conducted an ethnography with a professional integrated dance company to explore how dancers navigated dominant discourses of disability and dance. Of all these examples, only the research of Irving and Giles (2001) and Eales (2013) was located within professional or professionalizing integrated dance companies, and only Eales (2013) uses arts-based methods. Although arts-based research and PAR commonly work with marginalized communities, there is limited arts-based research done with integrated dance communities such as *CRIPSiE*.

Study Context and the Study

CRIPSiE is an integrated arts company focusing on dance and video in Edmonton. It was founded by Lindsay Eales in 2005 as *iDance Edmonton* and incorporated as *CRIPSiE* in 2013. Currently, I hold the title of Co-Artistic Director of *CRIPSiE* along with Lindsay Eales. This means that I work with my Co-Artistic Director, the artistic associates and the board to develop and deliver artistic and administrative projects. I also teach, choreograph, and

dance on a regular basis. While I am neurodivergent, my disability experiences do not erase my position of power in CRIPSiE, or my position of power as a researcher working in a disability community. CRIPSiE works with artists with a wide diversity of bodies, minds, and experiences, aiming to “challenge dominant stories of disability and oppression through high-quality crip and mad art” (‘About us’, n.d.). The dominant stories of disability that CRIPSiE challenges include those of pity and inspiration, stories that reduce disability to a tragedy to be overcome (Kelly & Orsini, 2016). Crip and mad are pejorative words reclaimed by disability communities as ways to describe new orientations to disability and mental illness. Crip and mad imagine what it is to desire disability (McRuer, 2006) and to desire what disability disrupts (Fritsch, 2013). In doing so, CRIPSiE reframes disability, impairment, and other experiences of marginalization as full of generative, creative potential.

CRIPSiE has positioned itself as a “professionalizing” (Acton & Eales, 2015, p. 27) arts company to granting agencies and presenting organizations. It performs in professional and pre-professional festivals, collaborates with arts professionals, and is supported by municipal, provincial, and federal funding intended both for professional and community arts organizations. Most of the artists, however, have not had access to professional arts training (Acton, 2017). Like many Canadian integrated and disability arts companies, CRIPSiE struggles to negotiate the standards of professionalism in the arts world while maintaining an emphasis on accessibility (Irving & Giles, 2011; Johnston, 2012). It is out of this desire for accessibility that my research arose.

The physical, administrative, and social barriers to disabled people’s full inclusion in society are well documented (Shakespeare, 2006). Critical disability scholars, however, are only beginning to think through how dominant understandings and practices of time exclude people experiencing disability from full participation in society (Kafer, 2013). Within integrated dance, Irving & Giles (2011) noted elements of timing in dance, for example extremes of fast and slow and the demands of unison movement, as particularly challenging to an integrated dance company making the shift to more professional dance work. For CRIPSiE, timing seemed to be an ongoing point of negotiation. In *A New Constellation: A Dancumentary*, which followed CRIPSiE through the creation of a dance piece, Iris remembered joining CRIPSiE for the first time (Duval, Eales, Peers, & Ulanicki, 2013). She said:

So for fifteen years I did without dancing, and then I walked in and I heard the words, five, six, seven, eight, and it’s like a shot of adrenaline, and I thought: “I’m home, I’m home, I’m home”. I love it.

For Iris, precise counts were something wonderful that connected her to her previous experiences of dance. Yet other moments in the documentary gave me clues that precise timing is not always an easy, joyful thing. For instance Alex said, “You have to listen to the music. And Lindsay’s, Lindsay’s music is tricky too!” (Duval, Eales, Peers, & Ulanicki, 2013). Or when Julie said, “I think a challenge for me is to find my timing isn’t what I think it should be” (Duval, Eales, Peers, & Ulanicki, 2013). These comments resonated with my own lived

experiences as a neurodivergent dancer whose ability to perform timing in normative and integrated dance spaces is deeply affected by auditory processing differences and a unique sense of time (Molenaar-Kumper, 2002).

I did not, however, want to assume that other dancers in CRIPSiE shared my experiences. Before embarking on this research I informally consulted with members of CRIPSiE to determine that there was interest in examining practices of timing within the community. I had conversations with five different community members, two of whom joined the research project, who agreed to that practices of timing were an area that CRIPSiE had not thought critically about yet and therefore were worth researching. One community member, who did not ultimately take part in the research project, suggested to me that our practices of timing assumed able-bodiedness and that this research was urgently needed to transform our current practices.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described the arts-based researcher as a bricoleur, who “uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand. If new tools or techniques have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this” (p. 4). As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggested, I drew upon my tools as an integrated dancer and choreographer, informed by PAR and performance ethnography with particular attention to the rehearsal process as a site of knowledge creation. My tools as an integrated dancer and choreographer arise from a decade spent in the CRIPSiE community and over fifteen years of dance training and teaching in normative settings.

I applied for research ethics approval from the University of Alberta’s Research Ethics Office (REO) and received it on February 2nd, 2017. In addition, this study also passed CRIPSiE’s research approval process in which potential researchers must submit answers to five questions for the study to be evaluated by a group of artistic associates for its fit with CRIPSiE’s values. I then drew upon my connections in CRIPSiE for convenience sampling (Patton, 2002). CRIPSiE’s artists are diverse, with some identifying variously as seniors, queer, racialized, mad, hard of hearing, and disabled (Acton, Chodan & Peers, 2016). The sole criterion for this study was experience in integrated dance since experience in integrated dance meant that dancers would have some experience with timing in the rehearsal process. I recruited seven dancers: Brooke, Chris, Sara, Robert, Sheena, Iris, and Alexis. These dancer/researchers reflected the diversity of CRIPSiE, since all of the facets of identity I mention above were reflected in this group. All the dancer/researchers opted to be identified by their own names as integrated dance in Canada is a small community and anonymity would likely be impossible.

We met for fifteen rehearsals, two hours each, for a total of thirty hours. Consistent with CRIPSiE’s current rehearsal practices, the rehearsals were closed to people not involved in the rehearsal/research process. On the first day we met I provided the dancers/researchers with the research question, but asked them to brainstorm around timing, allowing them to set the research priorities within the broad topic of timing. At the end of each rehearsal I would summarize for the dancer/researchers what we had and had not explored that day and ask for input on the plan for the next rehearsal. These measures meant that the dancer/researchers

controlled both the research and artistic process, consistent with the principles of PAR and arts-based research. I voice recorded rehearsals, video recorded movement phrases, and wrote field notes after every rehearsal.

Despite the careful planning that went into this process I still encountered significant tensions that revealed assumptions I had made about the research process. I now turn to a discussion of the first of the tensions I experienced; the difference between the research ethics of the university and the community ethics of CRIPSiE.

University Ethics and Community Ethics

Tensions between community ethics and University ethics processes are common in community-based work (Kendall, Nguyen, Glick, & Seal, 2017). Although the University of Alberta REO was responsive to the needs of this project, competing assumptions emerged over where the ethical authority lay for this project. The REO articulated the need for the university to serve the community through the discovery and dissemination of research. In addition, it followed the Tri-Agency Framework, and articulated that research ethics review, “is geared towards protecting participants by minimizing the harms or risk to which they are exposed” (‘Research Ethics’, n.d.). The research ethics application form reflected this, asking me to provide an assessment of the risks that participants may encounter in their research.

CRIPSiE itself has a robust ethical review process that this project passed in addition to the REO. The requirements of an application to do research with CRIPSiE revealed a very different set of concerns that those of the research ethics office. The questions were:

1. How much time will be required of community members?
 2. Will members be paid for their time and expertise? How will this research benefit the community?
 3. What kinds of ethical guidelines are you considering?
 4. Have you ever danced or participated in this community? Other communities like it?
 5. How will the results be made accessible to the community?
- (‘CRIPSiE Research Application, n.d.)

These questions revealed a concern with compensating marginalized members of the community for their time and energy and how the results would be made available and accessible to the community. CRIPSiE’s research application questions also revealed a preference for insider researchers, that is, researchers who have ties to CRIPSiE or other communities like CRIPSiE (Krpitchenko & Voloder, 2014). The research ethics that informed CRIPSiE’s application to do research in the community were similar to the concerns of arts-based research and PAR that prioritize the community and its values in the research process.

In this list of research questions, the potential researcher was asked directly if they plan to pay CRIPSiE artists. Paying participants is of particular concern for research in disability communities as Snyder and Mitchell (2006) identified, “the inexhaustible research machine”

(p. 187) that exploits disabled peoples' time and energies as a particular threat to the well-being of disabled people. Researchers have identified not paying, or minimally paying, research participants as good practice to avoid coercing low income participants (Polascek, Boardman, & McCann, 2016). This is, however, contested by researchers who argued that minimally paying or not paying research participants creates a situation of "mutually beneficial consensual exploitation" (Largent & Fernandez Lynch, 2017, p. 7) that should be of ethical concern to researchers. For Largent and Fernandez Lynch the fact that the participants have consented to the research and receive benefit from the research process, often in the form of feeling like they are contributing to important knowledge creation, did not make not paying research participants less exploitative.

Not paying dancers for their labour was not considered ethical within CRIPSiE (Eales, 2013). Indeed, one of the driving forces behind the formation of CRIPSiE was a desire to treat, and pay, disabled dancers as artists (Eales, 2013). I would also note that within the broader Edmonton arts context choosing not to pay artists is considered less than ideal. There is a sense that arts work is under-valued and paying artists values their time and skill. The cultural context of CRIPSiE, the broader Edmonton arts scene, and research into the challenges facing artists and disabled people all suggested that I should have paid my participants.

Unfortunately, concerns about the Research Ethics Office's objection to paying participants and the timing of arts granting cycles meant that I was unable to pay the dancers/researchers. I clearly communicated in recruitment and at the first rehearsal that working on this artistic research process was not a paid opportunity. All the dancers/researchers involved chose to engage anyway. Ultimately, I feel that the dancers/researchers did receive benefit from being part of this research project. Many of them repeatedly expressed that they found significant meaning in being involved in a collaborative research/rehearsal process and tackling questions that had meaning for the community together. For a few of them the opportunity to take on a collaborative, choreographic role where they were responsible for generating all the movement and making choreographic choices was novel and deeply important to them. I am troubled, however, by the expectation that artists or disabled people, especially disabled artists, will engage in research, including arts-based participatory research, that will likely require substantial time and effort, for minimal or no pay. In addition, I wonder if unpaid research instead of paid creation was the norm for CRIPSiE if the artists involved would have still found these experiences meaningful. I made the choice to go ahead with the research without funding to pay the dancers/researchers, but I still feel uneasy about the choice.

This was not the only time that the expectations of CRIPSiE and the university research clashed. Although these moments were not about major ethical conflicts, such as the question of paying participants, they revealed different assumptions about where the ethical authority of the project was located. Early in the ethics process the REO suggested that I change my recruitment procedure to navigate my position of power as Co-Artistic Director of CRIPSiE and avoid coercion. Initially I had suggested that I would email potential dancers/researchers directly to inform them of the study. The reviewer suggested that instead, I should provide my supervisors with contact information and one of my supervisors would email potential

dancers/researchers. When I took this change to CRIPSiE's research review process it was roundly rejected. The artistic associates were not comfortable with someone outside of the community, who artists had never met, emailing them to recruit them for a study. They suggested instead that my Co-Artistic Director email potential dancers/researchers.

This change was accepted by the REO, but reveals different assumptions about where the moral authority of the project was located. For the University, my supervisory team would naturally be involved in helping me navigate ethical sticking points. For CRIPSiE's artistic associates, my supervisory team was outside the relationship of trust that was being built with me as a researcher. Even though I had been clear that my supervisors would have access to all my data, my supervisors' direct involvement felt like too much to the artistic associates reviewing my study.

Another similar moment occurred when the dancers/researchers decided on the second to last rehearsal that they did not want to hold a focus group to reflect on the overall research process. Because of conflicting summer schedules the first time that everyone would be able to get together to hold a focus group would have been in mid-September, which left a gap of two and a half months between the final rehearsal and the focus group. The dancer/researchers decided this was too long and proposed that I send them my focus group questions to answer, individually, over email.

Changing from a focus group to an email interview, however, required me to submit an amendment to the REO. I submitted this request on June 28, 2017 and received permission for this change on July 20, 2017. Even this brief gap was baffling to a few of the dancers/researchers who asked me why I hadn't sent out the email interview immediately. There was confusion about why I would need to ask permission—after all they had unanimously told me to make this change to the research plan. For the dancers/researchers, the authority and ownership over the research rested with them, not the university.

The difficulty of anticipating how a participatory project will unfold is not unusual (Dyer & Löytönen, 2012). In retrospect, I should have anticipated possible changes to the research plan and taken more time at the start of the process to educate the dancers/researchers on the role of the REO and why it exists. I had been careful to outline the process and requirements of a PhD to them, particularly that it would be a long time before they were asked for feedback on my dissertation or any articles that might emerge from this research. I had not taken the same care to outline the role of the REO. A better explanation of the role of the REO to them would have given the dancers/researchers valuable insight and context into how the university imagines and conducts ethical research without dismissing the ways of researching and the ethics already present in the CRIPSiE community.

I take from these moments of tension that researchers engaging in community-engaged scholarship, particularly with communities like CRIPSiE that have a strongly developed sense of research ethics, must be prepared to navigate the sometimes significant divide between the ethical assumptions of the community and the University. In addition, I suggest that researchers must be prepared to explain and advocate for the ethics of the community to the university, and the ethics of the university to the community where appropriate.

Rehearsal and Performance

When I was designing this study I did not anticipate the differences between the ethics of the university and the ethics of CRIPSiE—I also made another significant error about the importance and relationship of rehearsal to performance. When I designed this study I deliberately excluded performance in order to manage the volume of data. Between field notes, transcripts of rehearsals and video of movement sequences there seemed to be more than enough data. At the time, my experiences as a researcher and an artist suggested that the rehearsal was far more significant to creating knowledge than performance. As a researcher, when I read arts-based research I often find myself craving deeper descriptions of the rehearsal. As an artist, I find the most meaning making occurs for me in rehearsal as opposed to performance. It seemed reasonable to exclude performance from the research process. In practice, however, excluding performance proved impossible. The combination of CRIPSiE's existence within the broader Edmonton arts context, and the meaning and significance that the dancer/researchers placed on performance meant that performance shaped the way the rehearsal process unfolded and was a significant event in and of itself.

Just a week before I started the rehearsal/research process CRIPSiE was offered a performance slot with Nextfest, Edmonton's large emerging artists festival that takes place each year in June. I felt that I needed to bring the opportunity to the dancers/researchers. My commitment to a participatory research process meant I should not predetermine the research process, but rather bring the dancers/researchers options for how the research process might unfold. In addition, Nextfest was a paid opportunity. As mentioned above, I felt ethically uneasy with not paying dancers/researchers. While I could not pay the dancers/researchers for the rehearsal/research process, the exemption of performance from the research process meant that CRIPSiE could pay dancers for the performance opportunity.

There was also a particular symbolic weight to this performance. Up until 2017 the dance performances at Nextfest had taken place in a physically inaccessible theatre. CRIPSiE had taken part twice before in Nextfest, once presenting a piece of site specific theatre in a church, and once presenting a piece that pointed out the inaccessibility of the theatre the dance performances were presented in. Having CRIPSiE perform the first year that Nextfest's dance program was in an accessible theatre seemed like an important, symbolic gesture. I brought the possibility to the dancers/researchers and after some discussion about how a performance date would change the research/rehearsal experience, we committed to the performance.

Once we accepted the performance, the relationship of the performance to the rehearsal process was evident in almost every rehearsal. The date of the performance shaped our attitudes to what we needed to accomplish at rehearsal. Alexis, looking back at the rehearsal process said:

And I think we all collectively, around that time, were like, okay this is where we're at, we're not going to like, keep adding or taking away, we just understood that. But you know, had the performance been in August we would have still been working on things right now.

The performance date forced us to grapple with questions of what was good integrated dance? What were we prepared to put in front of an audience? The pressure of an upcoming performance pushed the process from exploration and forced a kind of analysis on the dancers/researchers where we were forced to evaluate what we were prepared to reveal to an audience. This deepened the work in particular ways, making it more critical and analytic earlier in the research/rehearsal process than it might have been had we not had a performance date.

Most significantly, I learned that performance was deeply, personally important to the dancers/researchers. Our research/rehearsal period extended past the performance dates and when we returned to rehearsal following the performance it was clear to me that I had radically underestimated the importance of performance. Most of that rehearsal we spent talking about the experience of the performances, how the improvisation and the timing in the improvisation changed from night to night, and analyzing friends and family members' reactions to the piece. These conversations were deep and rich, producing invaluable insights into how we understood virtuosity and skill in integrated dance, and how we approach learning timing and other skills in the rehearsal process. The opportunity to perform was deeply meaningful to the dancers/researchers and provided significant insights into our research.

When I entered this research process I underestimated how important performance would be to the research. I was more concerned with managing the volume of data that would be generated from this study than with the data, and the personal meaning, the opportunity to perform could generate. Ultimately, I was lucky. I was lucky that the dance program at Nextfest had moved into an accessible theatre, that programmers were interested and invested in having CRIPSiE perform and that the dancers/researchers were interested in the opportunity. While I cannot predict where the research would have gone without the opportunity to perform, there is a richness to the data we collected that would not have been there without it. Based on my experiences I suggest that arts-based researchers working artistic mediums that include performance such as music, theatre, and dance should carefully negotiate the role and significance of performance in the research process with their co-researchers.

Multiple Research Questions

The other major area of tension I experienced was the research question and the design of the study. In the social science research process in which I had been trained, it is important to define as much of the study, and indeed, know as much as possible before you enter the field. While Markula and Silk (2011) acknowledged that qualitative research is necessarily messy and non-linear, they also advised that the researcher begin from a clear research question to enable the selection of appropriate, “paradigmatic approach, theoretical concepts and appropriate methodological practice(s)” (p. 61). Markula and Silk (2011) suggested that this approach—starting from the question and basing all subsequent research design choices off the question—provides the most potential for meaningful results. It was this approach, driven by a singular, specific research question that I had absorbed as the *right* way to do research.

I acknowledge that my research is not wholly consistent with this principle. The question, how do integrated dancers practice timing in rehearsal, might have been better addressed

by a participant observation study, rather than by arts-based participatory research. I felt, however, that the collaborative orientation offered by arts-based participatory research was more appropriate to working with a group of marginalized people from populations who are often under surveillance (Feely, 2016; Hilton, 2017). I chose to prioritize ethics over a clear connection between the question being asked and the methodology used³. The choice to address my research question through a methodology that was not clearly linked to the question turned out to offer myself and the dancers/researchers the freedom to acknowledge the multiple questions and desires in the research/rehearsal process.

Acknowledging multiple research questions and desires helped me navigate an ethical concern that I had not adequately prepared for. Even though it is obvious in retrospect, given my long history in the community, I had not taken into account the degree to which the dancers/researchers were invested in my success as a graduate student researcher. In early rehearsals, they often asked, “Are you getting what you need?”. I became worried that they were more invested in me being successful than they were in making the research/rehearsal process fit their needs and desires. Before embarking on the rehearsal/research process I had reflected on my position of power as CRIPSiE’s Co-Artistic Director and as a researcher. I had designed recruitment information to make it clear that involvement in the project would have no influence on future work with CRIPSiE. I had resolved to write field notes to encourage reflexivity around power dynamics in rehearsal and thought about how to create rehearsal plans that put the dancers/researchers in charge of decision-making. I had not anticipated friendship as a dynamic that I would need to think through and be reflexive about. In response to these questions about what I needed, I reminded the dancers/researchers that in arts-based participatory research it is important for the community to shape the research according to their needs. The research design also meant that I was able to reassure them that the research question I had started with, how do integrated dancers practice timing in rehearsal, would be answered regardless of where they chose to take the research. This seemed to reassure them and allow them to follow their curiosity, including exploring topics such as the relativity of time near black holes that were deeply important to the dancers/researchers but did not directly address my original research question.

It became obvious to me as the rehearsal/research process went on that the rehearsal hall held a number of questions and desires and these questions and desires changed day to day. Some days, dancers/researchers were concerned with asking, what are the conditions that create the possibilities of flow? Sara, in particular, returned again and again to the question of flow, asking, “I’ve always been observing when do I reach the flow state, like how many minutes in, with whom, what was the transition to the flow state”? Other days, the dancers/researchers asked, how do I embody extremes of fast and slow? One day, Chris was invested in the question of how embodying extremes of fast and slow shifted his perceptions of the space we move in, his body, and the relationship between the space and his body. Later in the

³ If I am being entirely truthful, this decision was also about desire. I returned to graduate school because I fell in love with the idea of arts-based research and desperately wanted to experience doing arts-based research. Barone and Eisner (2012) warn researchers against this...and I still followed my desires.

process we often asked, how do we embody the movement of celestial bodies in ways that honor the meaning I find in their movements? How do we create a piece of dance where the audience will read clear aesthetic choices that celebrate the ways non-normative bodies and minds move as opposed to failure caused by impairment?

These are just a few of the many questions that emerged from the room. It is important to note that these questions were not shared by all of the dancers/researchers. These questions reflect different paradigmatic orientations and different assumptions about disability and art. If we were to investigate each of these questions following the principle that the research question determines the paradigmatic, theoretical and methodological approaches, they would require separate and very different research studies. This diversity of questions and desires is familiar to me as an artist. For me, assisting a group of artists in sorting through curiosities and desires to arrive at a cohesive piece of art is at the heart of the work of a facilitator in performer-created performance. It is work that I take for granted in the rehearsal process as an artist. Entering this research/rehearsal process, however, I was so focused on doing research well that I did not account for this dynamic.

Reflecting on this dynamic, it is clear that this is actually a strength of arts-based participatory research. Regardless of paradigmatic orientation or methodology, participants in research enter into research studies for their own reasons. These reasons may include investigating questions that are very different from the researcher(s). Including many people in a research process means they will bring different interests, experiences, questions, and desires to the process. Inclusivity and accountability, particularly in the case of doing research in disability communities, may mean that the research needs to be porous enough to hold these different desires together. I initially thought my research design was flawed because it did not directly answer my research question. The indirect nature of the design, however, allowed me to navigate my concerns that the dancer/researchers might be prioritizing my success as a graduate student researcher over their own needs and desires by allowing for the presence of many research questions and agendas. This allowed me, as a facilitator and researcher, to be attentive and responsive to the many questions that the dancers/researchers were interested in investigating and how those questions changed from day to day. While my research question might have been more directly answered by an observational study, the indirect nature of my study allowed for this multiplicity of research questions and desires to be explicit in the room. In doing this research we proliferated questions and paradigms, just as Barone and Eisner (2012) called on arts-based researchers to do. In future, as a researcher, I will be attentive to the internal consistency of my research design but will also continue to try to make space for the proliferation of questions and interests that I suspect are inherent and vitally important to arts-based participatory research.

Conclusion

I drew on the methodologies of arts-based research and PAR to design this study, seeking an ethical relationship with the community and individuals I studied with. Both these methodologies value critical reflection as a tool to deepen the researcher's accountability and

engagement with their community. Here, I have tried to be reflexive about the research process itself, leading me to examine the tensions I experienced between my assumptions of how the research process should work and how it unfolded in the field. Sometimes these tensions were caused by my own assumptions about how research should work. Some, like the tensions between the ethics of the University REO and the ethics of CRIPSiE reflect larger structural concerns.

Barone and Eisner (2012) wrote of arts-based research:

The utility of this sort of research is thereby based on its capacity to fulfill a second important human need. This is indeed a need for surprise, for the kind of re-creation that follows from openness to the possibilities of alternative perspectives on the world. (p. 4)

If some of the vitality and importance of arts-based research is in its capacity to surprise, then this project was successful. It surprised me, forcing myself to confront conflicting ethical points of view, to question the relationship of rehearsal, performance and research in arts-based research, and to recognize the multiplicity of research questions that were present in the rehearsal hall. I reflect on these moments of tension and discovery, looking for the ways I can do better in future arts-based participatory research processes and best serve the communities with whom I will work.

About the Author

Kelsie Acton (*corresponding author*) is a neurodivergent PhD candidate, dancer, and choreographer. Her SSHRC funded dissertation research investigates access intimacy and timing in an integrated dance rehearsal process. Her choreography has been presented by CRIPSiE, Good Women Dance Collective, Expanse Movement Arts Festival and Flux City. Email: klacton@ualberta.ca

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Reading Experience as Communitist Practice: Indigenous Literatures and Community Service-Learning

JD McDougall, Nancy Van Styvendale

ABSTRACT Our paper analyzes a community service-learning class on Indigenous literatures from the perspectives of graduate student and instructor. Enacting Jace Weaver's theory of communitism (a portmanteau of "community" and "activism"), the class asks students to read Indigenous texts through the lens of their experiences at community-based organizations in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and to consider how these readings shape their interactions with and responsibilities to Indigenous communities. First, the instructor discusses the complexities of community service-learning as an engaged approach to literary study in a settler colonial context. Informed by Tomson Highway's novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, the second author then analyzes their¹ contributions to the social justice club at Oskāyak High School, highlighting Oskāyak's unique academic culture, where music and Indigenous language learning are incorporated into the fabric of everyday life. Ultimately, we argue that a communitist approach to Indigenous literary scholarship creates or furthers relationships with/in and responsibility to Indigenous communities, while encouraging an integrative approach to literary study through critical embodiment.

KEYWORDS Indigenous literatures, community service-learning, Indigenous education, Cree philosophy

In *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (1997), Cherokee scholar Jace Weaver proposes the term "communitism"—a portmanteau of "community" and "activism"—to describe a central tenet of Indigenous literatures. "Literature is communitist," he explains, "to the extent that it has a proactive commitment to Native community" (p. 43). Community is of the "highest value to Indigenous peoples, and fidelity to it is a primary responsibility" (p. 37). Whereas white settler communities are often "defined primary [*sic*] by residence or by agreement with sets of intellectual beliefs" (p. 37), Indigenous communities are more commonly defined by kinship relations and responsibilities. Informed by Weaver's concept, this paper reflects on a graduate class entitled "Connecting Aboriginal² Literatures and Community Service-Learning," which co-author and professor

¹ JD uses they/them pronouns. As this usage may cause confusion in a co-authored paper of this nature, we avoid pronouns where possible.

² "Aboriginal" was used in the 2013 course title, reflecting popular terminology of the time. When nation-specific terms can be used, they are preferred; and for a definition that gestures towards international solidarities, "Indigenous" is now commonly used.

Nancy Van Styvendale developed and taught in 2013 in the Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan. Co-author and PhD student JD McDougall was a member of the class, along with five other graduate students who worked with Indigenous community-based organizations as a way of enacting communitist values, and *read* these experiences alongside textual representations of community, activism, and artistic expression in Indigenous literatures. By situating the study of Indigenous literatures in Indigenous communities, the class aimed to theorize a relational, embodied, and communitist approach to Indigenous literatures that would enact Weaver's (1997) notion of a "proactive commitment" to Indigenous communities (p. 43).

Weaver (1997) suggests that "ultimately, no Native scholarship can be produced in isolation. It must be a communal effort" (p. xiv). Our paper takes this assertion to heart. We have structured our reflection in two main parts, each of which emphasizes our individual perspectives as instructor and student, respectively. In the first section, Nancy discusses the development and theoretical premise of the class. As a case study of sorts, JD then speaks to their experience in the class and presents a reading of Cree language and music in Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998). JD discusses the development of this reading in light of their experience of Cree music, language, and pedagogy at Oskāyak High School, an Indigenous high school in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada where they did their service-learning placement. Ultimately, we suggest that a communitist approach to Indigenous literary scholarship creates or furthers relationships with/in and responsibility to Indigenous communities, while encouraging an integrative approach to learning and thinking about literature through critical embodiment and lived experience.

Community Service-Learning as Communitist Intervention: Nancy's Reflections on Course Development and Implementation

Throughout this paper, we "put[...] ourselves forward," following Absolon and Willett's (2005) article of the same name, which we studied in class and which discusses the ethical imperative of location—both personal and place-based—to Indigenous research methodologies. To begin, then, I (Nancy) am a white settler scholar of Indigenous North American literatures, trained in the discipline of English. My graduate studies took place during the first decade of the 21st century and were not informed by community-based pedagogies or methodologies; like many literary scholars of my generation, I spent most of my time in the classroom or my office, studying texts. I was steeped in literary depictions of Indigenous communities (and the importance of relational responsibilities), but the conventions of the discipline did not invite engagement with or responsibility to Indigenous communities. In resistance to this training and as a way of enacting the obligations I now understand myself to have, as a settler, to building and sustaining ethical relations with Indigenous peoples, specifically in Treaty 6 territory and the Métis homeland where I live, I have since collaborated with Indigenous community partners on a range of community-based initiatives. The CSL class we analyze below was one of my first formative attempts to move my approach to literary study beyond the confines of the academy and the conventions of the discipline.

The separation of literary study from community contexts and political struggles has roots in the development of English as a discipline in the 19th century. Terry Eagleton (2008) discusses how the rise of English Studies at this time was intimately connected to the idea of art as an “isolatable experience,” “alienat[ed] from social life” (p. 18)—an assumption that extends into New Criticism and beyond.³ While there are countless examples of art with political import, the approach to art as an end in itself and an escape from the realities of daily life has had an enduring effect on the discipline. This approach is antithetical to Indigenous epistemologies of art as an *integrated* component of life, in which stories and other creative practices function as history, law, politics, science, and culture. JD’s analysis of integrative Cree philosophies, particularly in relation to language and music at Oskāyak High School below, illustrates this point. In contrast to the idea of “art for art’s sake” (Justice, 2018, p. 20), Cherokee literary critic Daniel Heath Justice (2018) affirms his preference for Cherokee-Appalachian poet Marilou Awiakta’s notion of “‘art for life’s sake’—whereby...art is explicitly, generously engaged with a larger network of relations, influences, and experiences, always with some measure of commitment to articulating Indigenous presence in the world” (p. 21). As in Weaver’s analysis, art in this formulation is relational, experiential, and responsible to Indigenous peoples. In response to concerns about the social function of literary study, post-secondary community service-learning literature (mainly composition) classes began to appear in the mid to late 1990s and continue today (Grobman & Rosenberg, 2015, p. 6), albeit as a relatively minor approach.

In the field of Indigenous literatures, the separation between literary/theoretical content and the ways in which this content is taught and researched can be particularly striking because of the politics of the literature itself. If Indigenous literatures are communitist, then what of Indigenous literary study? That the field has turned increasingly to such questions is evidenced by the theme of the inaugural 2015 ILSA (Indigenous Literary Studies Association) conference—“The Arts of Community”—as well as by ILSA’s commitment to hold alternating conferences in Indigenous communities/reserves, with local hosts, knowledge keepers, and protocols.⁴ In their afterword to the special issue of *Canadian Literature* on Indigenous Literatures and the Arts of Community (2016), a follow-up to the ILSA conference, editors McKegney and Henzi ask “whether ‘community’ means the same thing(s) in creative and critical contexts; if it doesn’t, we wonder if maybe it *should* and whether this might be the direction in which the Indigenous literary arts are, in fact, guiding us” (para. 1). In response to their question, I would suggest that the conventional ways in which literary scholars are trained can seriously limit our engagement with and accountability to Indigenous communities. Noting that it is “nearly unheard of in literary studies” for scholars to be asked to “identify the purpose of their work,” Cree-Métis critic Deanna Reder cites Cree education scholar Margaret Kovach, who calls for research to be “collectively relevant.... Purposeful research [is] inseparable from the value in

³ New Criticism is a mid-20th century approach to literary criticism that looks to the text for meaning, rather than the context of the text’s production or reception. Close reading, its primary method, looks for meaning in language patterns, and has had a profound impact on literary study.

⁴ On alternating years, the ILSA conference is held at the Congress of Social Sciences and Humanities annual meeting.

giving back, that what we do has to assist” (as cited in Reder, 2016, p. 15). This call to purpose and reciprocity, Reder surmises, “is a huge challenge to our field that is only now resonating in our own discussions” (p. 15).

For non-Indigenous students, the limitations of the discipline can mean that we come to engage meaningfully with Indigenous peoples and communitist politics first (or perhaps only) through texts and in the classroom. This was my experience until well into my PhD program. For some Indigenous students (many of whom are actively engaged in communities outside the university), these limitations may produce or reify a divide between university and community commitments. Although it is crucial, building on the work of Kim TallBear (2017), to problematize any easy community/university binary which locates Indigenous communities as always-already *outside* the university,⁵ it remains important to consider how the modes of learning embraced in the academy are often at odds with the extra-university community responsibilities of students. I started thinking about the effects of this disjunction during the rise of Idle No More (2012–2013), when a number of Indigenous students in my classes were involved in community organizing, a commitment that in some cases ended up negatively impacting their grades and health. I began to think about how university classes could support and recognize these kinds of commitments as fundamental to academic learning, rather than something to squeeze in—or, worse, something actively at odds with the institution. How could I create opportunities for myself and my students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to build new or strengthen existing relationships, learn from and with communities, and contribute to these communities through activist or other types of community-driven work? What kinds of structural changes could be implemented within my teaching that could facilitate these interactions? If, as Justice (2018) argues, “*relationship* is the driving impetus behind the vast majority of texts by Indigenous writers,” and if “these literary works offer us insight and sometimes helpful pathways for maintaining, rebuilding, or even simply establishing these meaningful connections” (p. xix), then how might scholars of Indigenous literatures (continue to) apply these insights to our teaching and research—in terms of both content and method—so that they too become pathways for relationship and responsibility to community? In my experience, community service-learning has been one method to establish, rebuild, or maintain the meaningful connections of which Justice speaks.

In 2013, with support from a SSHRC Insight Development Grant, I designed a graduate class entitled “Connecting Aboriginal Literatures and Community Service-Learning,” which I offered again in 2015 under the title of “Writing Communities: The Praxis of Indigenous North American Literatures.” CSL is a mode of experiential learning in which students are partnered with community-based organizations as a component of a course or co-curricular program. CSL courses can be structured in a number of ways, but generally students spend time on-site (usually 20 hours a term), learning about and contributing to the daily operations of the organization, as well as working on a community-driven project (i.e., one defined by the

⁵ TallBear (2017) usefully complicates the binary of community/university as it is mobilized in the context of community-based research, which typically assumes that Indigenous communities are external to the university, and that university researchers are from outside Indigenous communities.

community partner, while also drawing on student strengths). Ideally, both partner and student benefit equally from their relationship. Crucially, CSL asks students to “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” (Van Styvendale, Buhler, & McDonald, 2018). This approach dovetails nicely with the kind of critical analysis expected in literary studies, although with CSL, it is one’s experience that is to be explored, like a *text*, and read alongside literary and theoretical texts.

From an antifoundationalist perspective, CSL disrupts normative thinking and prompts reconsideration of entrenched power structures (Butin, 2010), including the preconceived notion of the university as provider of knowledge and expertise, and the community as beneficiary (Himley, 2004). CSL challenges those of us from a range of privileged positions within the university to prioritize community knowledge and interests, and to work collaboratively in service of community-defined processes and ends. It was important to me, particularly as a settler professor, to ask students to think about what it means to engage ethically in the study of Indigenous literatures, to unsettle dominant modes of literary analysis, and to ground our work in a relational context with Indigenous peoples. For students originally from Saskatoon, this grounding provided an opportunity to fulfill their various (Indigenous or settler) responsibilities to Indigenous communities (or to begin to understand what these responsibilities might be), while for students from other provinces or outside the country, it helped situate their studies in the specifics of the territory in which they had arrived. I wanted students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to have the opportunity to learn not only from Indigenous texts but from and with Indigenous peoples. Disrupting my authority as professor, I wanted students to experience their community partners as co-teachers, which is one way that partners often understand their role in CSL (Hitchings, Johnson, & Tu’Inukuafe, 2018)—albeit an unpaid and often underrecognized role.

In the first iteration of the class, there were six students placed at six different organizations: Oskāyak High School, STR8 UP (an organization for people exiting street gangs), Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre (Adult Education program), Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, People’s Free University (a grassroots initiative to provide free post-secondary education), and Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company (now the Gordon Tootoosis Nīkānīwin Theatre). In the second iteration, a similar array of organizations was involved, with the addition of Idle No More (a grassroots Indigenous movement) and Inspired Minds (a creative writing program for people who are incarcerated).⁶ Co-author JD was placed at Oskāyak High School, where they worked with the school’s social worker, Stan Tu’Inukuafe,⁷ to support the Social Justice Club (SJC), a group of youth who met weekly to discuss current issues in the community and participate in activities around anti-racism and poverty reduction.

⁶ I added these groups, Idle No More in particular, because I wanted to encourage discussions about how communitism is different in different contexts—a non-profit organization is quite different from a school, and different still from a grassroots movement (which is not reliant on state funding and restrictions).

⁷ We thank Stan Tu’Inukuafe for his commitment to working with CSL students and for reading a draft of this article and providing comments. He has given permission for his name to be used.

JD joined in these events, took photos and wrote posts for the school's blog, and created a multimedia presentation about these activities for the Assembly of First Nations' Youth Summit.

In both iterations of the course, students attended a three-hour weekly seminar and spent two hours a week at their community-based organizations, working on (sometimes seemingly mundane) tasks related to daily operations. Although not all CSL courses include such a requirement, my intention was to have students spend time at their host organization without a necessarily pre-determined or instrumentalized end. This requirement was informed by the importance of building relationships and establishing trust with community in engaged scholarship more generally, as well as the core animating commitment to relationality and relational accountability in Indigenous communities specifically. Being asked to complete routine tasks—such as serving lunch (as JD describes below) or even cleaning floors or toilets (as I and students in my other CSL classes have done)—frees up time for staff members to do other, more substantive work; underscores the importance of showing up and pitching in as crucial to community relations; and complicates the usual university/community hierarchy in which faculty and students *help* underserved communities with their academic and professional skills.

In addition to spending time at the organization—what Métis scholar Janice Cindy Gaudet (2019) calls a “visiting methodology” in another context—students were responsible for completing a project designed in collaboration with their CBO supervisor. In an interview about engaged learning from a community partner perspective, Oskāyak High School social worker Stan Tu’Inukuafe explains the “unequal level of power” between university and community that is sometimes amplified in service-learning (Hitchings, Johnson, & Tu’Inukuafe, 2018, p. 276): “[I have often been] approached by the university or university students who need something, like to fulfill a requirement for example.... It often feels like the university will work with us as long as it is on their terms.... It’s not really an equal, level playing field” (p. 276). Because of the university’s colonial history of extracting knowledge and resources from Indigenous communities (Gaudry 2018; Smith, 1999), while simultaneously positioning itself as the source of superior knowledge, it was especially important that both the students and I approached their CSL partners with humility, respect, and a desire to collaborate on whatever literary or arts-based project the partner deemed most appropriate (within the scope of their skills).

Because the class took place in the city of Saskatoon and the students were placed at urban organizations, I selected literary and theoretical texts with a focus on urban Indigenous topics that would correspond with issues relevant to the students’ placements.⁸ Many of the students were partnered with educational organizations or initiatives, and so I chose a number

⁸ As a practical consideration, I would note that setting in motion a conversation between literary text, theory, and experiential knowledge is a *lot* to do in one three hour class, and sometimes, possibly because students had the texts in common but not their community experiences, the latter were left out of the discussion. One solution embraced by other CSL practitioners is group placements and projects, where students collaborate not only with their community partner but with each other; of course, community partner capacity must be considered in this instance, as not all partners are able to take on multiple students (see Hitchings, Johnson, and Tu’Inukuafe, 2018, for more on CSL partner capacity).

of texts that explore both settler colonial and Indigenous forms of education, one of which was Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998), which depicts the residential school experience of two Cree youth, their subsequent alienation at a primarily white high school in Winnipeg, and as JD will discuss, their survivance through Cree language, story, and music. My goal in selecting these texts was not to have students make straightforward comparisons between textual representations and lived experience (one of the potential dangers of literary CSL), but for us collectively to theorize how literary texts construct experience, and how these constructions might influence and deepen not only our understanding of our experiences in the community, but our actions and interactions there as well.

To prepare students for their work, I also incorporated literary and theoretical texts that address relationship-building and ethical collaboration with/in Indigenous communities.⁹ While there is little scholarship that explores CSL as a mode of engagement with Indigenous communities (Taylor et al., 2015), specifically in the settler colonial context of Canada, Margaret Himley (2004) provides a critical caution about the limitations of service-learning. Drawing attention to the roots of *service* in the volunteerism of white middle- and upper-class women in low-income racialized communities, Himley interrogates how CSL can unwittingly duplicate the *civilizing mission* of the colonial project, particularly when the service students provide is framed as charity. As she observes, “[R]egardless of a student’s actual economic status or social identity, the dominant version of the rhetoric of community service may position each and every community service student in a privileged way—as the one who provides the service, as the one who donates time and expertise, as the one who serves down, as the one who writes up” (p. 430). Some of the popular discourses in the field of literary CSL—i.e., literature as a means of teaching (mainly white, middle class students) compassion, empathy, and an appreciation of our “difference and shared humanity” (Grobman & Rosenberg, 2015, p. 17)—strike me as deeply implicated in settler pathologizing and anthropological othering, masquerading as liberal benevolence, which Himley critiques.

There is, of course, a long history of *critical* (Mitchell, 2008) or *justice-oriented* CSL (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) that attempts to problematize what Lori Pompa (2013) calls “charity or the ‘helping’ modality” (p. 24) and to move away from service-learning toward co-learning. Many critics trouble the very idea of *service-learning* for how “it invokes the categories of ‘server’ and ‘served,’” and thus “can be seen to terminologically enshrine unequal power relations between providers and recipients of ‘service’ activities” (Aujila & Hamm, 2018, p. 21). In the first iteration of the class, we discussed the inherent problematics of CSL, making ourselves aware of how it continues to be shaped by the university as a colonial institution and settler colonial structures and relations more broadly. Simultaneously, we considered how CSL, as Dan Butin (2003) explains, should be centered on the four core principles of respect, reciprocity, relevance, and reflection, which resonate with five key principles commonly associated with Indigenous research methodologies: respect, reciprocity, relevance, relational

⁹ In subsequent engaged learning classes, I more explicitly encouraged insight into the dynamics of collaboration within and between Indigenous communities, as well as between settler and Indigenous partners. To this end, I assigned articles by Gaudry (2011), TallBear (2017), Innes (2009), and Henry, Tait, and S’TR8 UP (2016).

accountability, and responsibility (Johnston, McGregor, & Restoule, 2018). Mali Bain (2018) observes that CSL's foundation in principles of respect and reciprocity corresponds with Indigenous worldviews that centre good relations,¹⁰ while Michael McNally (2004) outlines the intersections of Anishinaabe pedagogy and CSL, focusing on four features of the former: the privileging of oral, relational, and situational knowledge transmission (p. 605); the responsibility of teachers and learners to use their knowledge for community well-being (p. 606); the importance of active, experiential learning (p. 607); and the assumption of knowledge and reflection as holistic—that is, as interrelated with its larger context—in contrast to the standard disciplinary approach, which often segments learning (p. 608).¹¹

Given these connections, and recognizing the colonial paternalism that haunts CSL to varying degrees, the second iteration of the class was oriented away from CSL as a specific model of engagement and towards engaged learning and co-learning models. This decision does not elide current settler colonial conditions and their impact on postsecondary learning, but frames engaged learning more specifically in Indigenous epistemologies of kinship and relational accountability. JD's discussion below, which highlights the centrality of Cree ways of knowing to everyday life at Oskāyak High School, is part of what motivates me to continue to learn about and draw more deeply from Indigenous values, pedagogies, and methodologies (particularly those of prairie Indigenous peoples) in my engaged learning classes. Importantly, this does not necessarily mean that the concept of service should be discarded, but instead, that it should be understood on Indigenous terms. In her critique of service and reciprocity as they are commonly conceptualized in CSL, Swapna Padmanabha (2018) explains that “within Indigenous pedagogy, transferring knowledge is often dependent upon service, and service is understood as a form of reciprocity” (p. 150). To illustrate, she tells a story about a woman who peels potatoes for her grandmother, visiting and fulfilling her relational obligations, while learning from the stories her grandmother tells. Padmanabha's anecdote reveals that service is important, but it is obviously not the service of the “elevated do-gooder,” but rather, an integrated component of “learning as being in relationship” (p. 153). It is this type of service-learning that animates JD's discussion below.

As JD describes, relationships were crucial to the learning they experienced at Oskāyak High School. These relationships, forged through their service to the Social Justice Club (SJC), provided the experiential groundwork from which they interpreted Indigenous literary and theoretical texts, which in turn shaped their CSL experience. JD considers the significance of their service to the SJC as an embodiment of relational accountability and reciprocity akin to what Padmanabha details above. They analyze Tomson Highway's novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen* alongside the lived experience of CSL at Oskāyak, using Highway's “Why Cree is the Sexiest

¹⁰ See Padmanabha (2018) and TallBear (2017) for important critiques of the ways in which “reciprocity” is mobilized in the context of CSL and community-based research, respectively. TallBear proposes that “standing with” rather than “giving back” is a more appropriate framework for Indigenous scholars doing work in their own or with other Indigenous communities.

¹¹ While specific to an Anishinaabe context, these approaches can be applied (with caution) to some other Indigenous contexts. What I have learned about Cree pedagogy from living on the prairies, for example, resonates with these principles. See Goulet & Goulet (2014) for more on Cree pedagogies.

of All Languages” as a theoretical framework for considering Cree ways of being, learning, and thinking with regard to language. This framework is extended to Highway’s treatment of music and learning in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, and to JD’s encounters with music and the educational environment at Oskāyak.

JD’s Service and Reading: Grounding Text and Experience

I wish to locate myself, as Nancy outlined earlier, in accordance with Absolon and Willett’s (2005) approach of ethically acknowledging my relation to this work. I am a Métis graduate student who, at the time of this course, was in the early stages of my PhD coursework. I had limited academic experience with Indigenous texts, though as a result of this class and Nancy’s encouragement, came to understand that my own position in academia need not rest on a distancing or negation of my interest in them. Centering Indigenous literatures in my scholarship became ethically necessary to me as an acculturated Métis person who had always been taught to meet mainstream Euro-Canadian society where it lived and to *transcend*, as it were, my background, to prove it irrelevant rather than coming into it on a more radical level. To simplify a complex story, my prior engagements with the issues discussed in the course were primarily non-academic, decolonial thought being more a feature of my politics rather than its central obligation and animation at that time. My background with community involvement was similarly limited, and like Nancy, my academic experience throughout secondary and post-secondary schooling was not community-based.

As part of my work for this course, I was placed at Oskāyak High School, described by Buhler, Settee, and Van Styvendale (2015) as “Saskatoon’s only public Indigenous High School,” which “follows the principles of the Indigenous survival school movement initiated close to forty years ago in Canada to work with Indigenous educational concerns and make educational institutes more accessible to marginalized Indigenous communities” (p. 98–99).¹² As a part of its mandate, Oskāyak provides multiple institutional supports to its students in order to “ensure that they have the best opportunity to pursue educational goals and achieve academic success” (Lessard, 2015, p. 24). Their holistic model of care advances “Indigenous ways of supporting students” as “a strength-based approach to providing services” (Lessard, 2015, p. 26). My role was to assist the school’s Social Justice Club (SJC), which was teacher-led and well-attended at lunch hour. From the outset of the course, Nancy made it clear that our objectives were to carry out whatever tasks and projects the community partners felt were most important. The SJC needed someone to bring meals from the kitchen to the library at the beginning of lunch hour, so that the club could make the most of their short allotted time without having to wait in the lunch line. Through this task, I was able to help fulfill Oskayak’s student-centered mandate, which includes providing “nutrition, breakfast, and lunch” in support of holistic education (which considers the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human experience), as well as participate in the sharing of food, “a central aspect of Indigenous cultural practice” and community building (Buhler, Settee,

¹² See also: Haig-Brown, C., Hodgson-Smith, C. L., Regnier, R., & Archibald, J. (1997).

& Van Styvendale, 2014, p. 197). During meetings, I would take minutes and help the group cover their agenda, before cleaning up afterward. They also requested my help with a blog attached to the school's main site, featuring photos and videos that I would take at events and assemble into posts complete with short write-ups—mobilizing my humanities background with a view toward communicating Oskāyak's vision and student life to the wider community. My contributions, while primarily procedural, helped to further Oskāyak's institutional goals as well as to establish relationships with students and staff—in some small way helping to enact the school's emphasis on “Miyo-wīcēhtowin (Getting Along With Others—Expanding the Circle)” (Lessard, 2015, p. 26).

For my first meeting with Stan and Nancy, I was asked to think of possible ideas for a project, which would ideally align with my skills and interests, and which might be useful to the organization. My initial project plan was a paper zine in which the students would write their thoughts on the social justice activities and lessons they had learned through SJC. Stan, however, felt that the blog and video project was more useful to the students. While I will admit my disappointment, of course their needs were ultimately better served in that way. It was an early reminder to prioritize our community partners' objectives above our own, if indeed we were to make any meaningful contribution within the scope of the course. It was also a much-needed lesson in the kind of humility that students must assume before (or as a result of) taking on CSL work.

Whereas to some degree (and despite our readings intended to ground us in the ethics of CSL) I retained a notion that my function as the university student would be to contribute on an intellectual level in one way or another, it became clear that those running the SJC knew much more about what needed to be done than I ever would in my role as volunteer. In making the adjustment from a classroom-learning setting to a community-engaged setting, I had to unlearn behaviour on which I had previously relied, such as asking numerous clarifying questions, suggesting multiple possibilities for interpreting or acting on a particular problem, offering up unsolicited ideas at the rate of an eager seminar participant, or otherwise academicizing my duties. This process presented a clear challenge to my assumptions about the inherent value of my academic background in community-engaged contexts. In reflecting on my experience, I am reminded of the core principles of ethical scholarship with Indigenous communities—respect, reciprocity, relevance, relational accountability, and responsibility (Johnston, McGregor, & Restoule, 2018)—all of which came to shape my experiences at Oskāyak and my understanding of what communitist service-learning must entail.

While involved with SJC at Oskāyak, I found my previous experiences with institutional structures challenged, and my efforts to be deeply educational beyond whatever preconceptions I might have had about knowledge exchange. That knowledge seemed to flow primarily out of incidental interactions with the staff and students around me, emerging from the nexus of relationships formed over the course of my service. As someone whose role was meant to be a facilitator, observer, participant, and interpreter of events, perhaps I was already receptive to whatever messages could be gleaned; however, such insights would be impossible without the relationality of a CSL model, and indeed the Cree model of inclusivity (Miyo-wīcēhtowin)

underpinning Oskāyak's pedagogy. In her discussion of CSL, Swapna Padmanabha (2018) contends that emphasizing "Indigenous pedagogies that are based on the importance of developing relationships" can help in "foster[ing] students' learning and growth by having them experience daily practices, rather than having them complete projects or service as stand-alone goals" (p. 152). This integrative practice, in which daily relationality is at the center of learning, ultimately held true in my experience at Oskāyak and my attempts to interpret the outcomes of my readings and service (which was itself rooted in the day-to-day relationships and activities of the school). Through the lens of my readings and some pre-existing knowledge of Cree philosophies, I made note of the similarities and contrasts between my own educational experience and the students' experiences at Oskāyak. Whereas I had been raised and educated in a Western secular, Euro-Canadian public school, these students were benefiting from a culturally-specific education whose mandate was to (re)integrate Indigenous philosophy and language into the daily routine. Trying to position myself carefully as an invested participant (though not a cultural insider, as a Métis raised with very little of my culture, yet acknowledging my own personal investment in the practice of revitalization and reclamation), I focused my attention on elements of our weekly readings that I might find resonating in my experiences, and conversely, I would draw upon my ever-growing experience in reading through the texts.

In two assigned readings by Tomson Highway, I found representations of Cree integrative philosophies and practices that resonated with my experience at Oskāyak. The experience, in turn, inflected and grounded my reading of the literary text, Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998), a semi-autobiographical novel about the Okimasis brothers, Champion and Ooneemeetoo (later called Jeremiah and Gabriel), as they struggle with questions of family, identity, and community in the wake of residential school. Music and dance are central to their quandaries and also to their self-discovery through daily integrative experience. In resisting colonial narratives of both "inevitable assimilation" and "inevitable victimhood" as a result of residential schooling (McKegney, 2007, p. 139), *Kiss of the Fur Queen* envisions modes of survivance¹³ that are expressed primarily through the arts, language, and culture. The acts of creation and expression in the novel reflect a "reinvigoration of modes of thought, spirituality, and being with the world that residential schooling sought to extinguish" (McKegney, 2007, p. 144–145), and the connection of language, music, and worldview, as I will argue, is central to this process. Highway repeatedly draws the three elements together in his writing, articulating a distinctly Cree state of being in those interstices. Highway's description of a Cree sense of fluidity between language and worldview in his other writings (2008) finds an extension in *Kiss of the Fur Queen's* treatment of music and its relation to lived experience, which was also reflected in my experiences outside the classroom, in the community. As someone who plays and writes music outside of my academic life, I take a particular interest in how music functions in the novel, and I paid particular attention to the way that music manifested in the school. Grounded in the relational nexus of my service-learning experience, I found connections between the Cree ontology of Highway's work and that of Oskāyak High School, where

¹³ See Vizenor (1998).

language and music enact Cree integrative philosophies in their daily practice, commenting meaningfully upon each other and upon the importance of maintaining the worldview at the heart of the school.

Embodied Language and Music in Highway's Theory and at Oskāyak High School

In "Why Cree is the Sexiest of All Languages" (2008), Highway describes Cree as a profoundly humorous language, mainly because it is grounded in the human body (p. 34). The Cree relationship to the human body, reflected in the language, represents a world which is integrated with the self: nature and spirit, body and intellect are all bound up together, virtually indistinguishable. Rather than a separation or deliberate abstraction away from lived, bodily experience, the Cree language reflects a "laughing" God/Goddess in its highly embodied worldview (Highway, 2008, p. 40). A Cree sense of laughter, physical and unrelenting, is built into the landscape of *Kiss of the Fur Queen*; Highway uses un glossed fictitious Cree place names such as Wuchusk Oochisk, or "muskrat anus," in order to "include his fellow Cree-speaking readers in some intoxicating, silly, and giddy humour" (Van Essen, 2012, para. 9). Highway's interpretation of the Cree language and worldview encourage enjoyment and embodiment; indeed, both elements are so closely interconnected with language that to attempt to approach Cree without them would be impossible.

Reading Highway's work in conjunction with my CSL experiences has provided some material for reflection on how language is treated at Oskāyak High School, which we may usefully position as a Cree school in Highway's extended definition of language-as-worldview. For instance, in addition to academics, Oskāyak is actively invested in cultural and spiritual aspects of student life, such as a daily smudge, semi-monthly sweats, Powwows, and a host of other ceremonies and cultural activities. The inclusion of Cree language and culture into the mandate of the school is an integrated approach, which meshes well with the concept of Cree as a language that is unified with its surroundings and situated existence. For instance, every day shortly after lunch hour, the school's Learning Leader addresses the school via the PA system with a brief "Cree Word of the Day" segment. In addition, many objects and rooms (the library, washrooms, fire extinguishers, light switches) are labeled in English and Cree—a method in which learning the language is naturalized and embedded in day-to-day life. It seemed, during my tenure with them, that many of the youth who attend Oskāyak already speak Cree with some degree of fluency. One young man, who I will refer to as David, enjoyed chatting with me on occasion, and sometimes mixed in Cree phrases, some of which I could understand and some of which I could only guess at, or piece together well after the fact. This put me in an odd position as an English-speaking Indigenous person attempting to have a conversation with someone who clearly wishes to be speaking Cree; I often found myself regretting not having more of a working knowledge of the language. Interestingly, and much to my surprise, when I attended a seminar presentation put on by the school at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Youth Summit in order to film the event and otherwise lend a hand, David made an enthusiastic and forthright mini-presentation about his own desire to learn his language, which he spoke as a child but which was eventually replaced by English. It overturned

my previous impressions of him as a primarily Cree speaker, and gave a new insight into his attempts to insert Cree into our conversations. He spoke about making a conscious effort to work the Cree language into his daily interactions whenever possible rather than limiting his efforts to the classroom, a very similar approach to Oskāyak's as a whole—language built into the fabric of life, rejecting compartmentalized Western approaches to knowledge.

I read a similar epistemology of music in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. Much like Highway's conception of the Cree language, music in the novel's reserve village of Eemanapiteepitat is embodied and grounded in lived experience. The earliest example is the beloved jig *Kimoosoom Chimasoo* played on a "ratty old" accordion by Abraham Okimasis upon his triumphant return to Eemanapiteepitat after claiming victory at the Millington Cup World Championship Dog Derby (Highway, 1998, p. 308, p. 16–7). Music is situated in the day-to-day movements and events of the musician and his neighbours, serving as a binding agent for the community. Abraham's return is an occasion for celebration, it appears only natural for him to perform a victory rendition of *Kimoosoom Chimasoo*—which he plays "like it had never been played"—and for the entire reserve to mount an impromptu "aboriginal jamboree" in response to the good news (Highway, 1998, p. 17). Even in its more solitary contexts, music on the reserve is interwoven tightly with the processes of living. A few pages following Abraham's celebratory jig, his son Champion is shown to have inherited the Okimasis musical talent, standing with Abraham's accordion on top of a rock, "singing a concert to his father and the caribou" (Highway, 1998, p. 23). Sarah Wylie Krotz (2009) notes that Champion's caribou songs, "[p] layed and sung outdoors with a spontaneity and vigour that echo his family's movements across their northern landscape, [...] rise out of the same energies that invigorate his everyday life" (p. 195). Three years after his first attempt at the caribou song, Champion joins with this little brother Gabriel to turn his new arrangement into a song-and-dance piece (Highway, 1998, p. 42). The combined force of their art appears to summon, out of nowhere, a massive herd of caribou (Highway, 1998, p. 41–7). The lines between art and life are constantly shifting and blurring; Highway presents a uniquely Cree merging of language, music and worldview in the early sections of *Kiss of the Fur Queen*.

I had a similar impression of the musical life of Oskāyak: it is integrated into the ebb and flow of the school-day, and is nearly omnipresent. Rare was the day when I would show up at the school to set up for the SJC meeting or to attend to other SJC-related business and not hear the sound of an acoustic guitar somewhere in my wanderings through the school. Most often it would be a particular young man sitting on the front steps or in a spacious upstairs hallway corner, practising with a studied yet informal sort of concentration—he would run through impeccable fingering patterns, but not to the service of any song he might be rehearsing, instead trailing in and out of different melodies as the mood suited him. His playing stood in contrast to the regimented forms of musical instruction, "stripped of the very methods by which the music has always been created, and therefore bearing little resemblance to its existence in the world outside," which tend to dominate much of music education (Green, 2003, p. 269), including its representation in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. The novel's childhood scenes in northern Manitoba—and their synthesis of the material and immaterial, with language, nature,

life, and music existing as a part of the same continuum—give way to the traumatic rupture between these elements during Jeremiah’s adolescence and early adulthood. By contrast, this young man I encountered at Oskāyak displayed great skill, and though he may have appeared undisciplined in his method of practice, he was actively cultivating his abilities in the interstitial spaces of the school, becoming a part of the students’ movements throughout the day.

Ideologies of Music Represented in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and in CSL Experience

In a passage from *Kiss of the Fur Queen* representing Champion’s earliest encounter with the piano as an instrument at Birch Lake residential school, the young boy finds the piano’s music beautiful, though quite different in character from any music he had previously heard; the notes are “intelligent and orderly” rather than “giddy and frothy and of a nervous, clownish nature” like the accordion (Highway, 1998, p. 56). This description of the piano’s sound versus the accordion’s sound closely mirrors Highway’s description of English versus Cree: English “may live most magnificently inside the head, in the intellect, but it stops at the neck,” whereas Cree readily prompts listeners to laugh “fiercely, giddily, insanely, hysterically, from the gut” (Highway, 2008, p. 38, p. 34). The transition from accordion to piano thus signals a move toward the similarly “orderly” discipline of classical music. European theorists and critics, particularly beginning in the late eighteenth century, positioned music’s primary aesthetic value as abstraction, or “separation of the musical materials involved from their human creative matrices—a manner, that is, of *decontextualization*” (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 37, emphasis in original). Taken to its furthest reaches, perfect music is perfect abstraction, “divorced from its contexts of production, performance, and reception” (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 39). Such lines of thinking predictably turn music into a hierarchy with Western classical music at the pinnacle. Valorized “transcendent qualities” such as “universality, complexity, originality, or autonomy” (Green, 2003, p. 264) contrast with the “communal voice” central to much traditional creative expression in Indigenous communities (Weaver, 1997, p. 41). As Gary Tomlinson (2003) notes, “It was a very short step, soon taken, [...] to the assertion of Europe as the privileged endpoint of music history” (p. 35). Fitting with this ideology, Jeremiah’s later, post-residential school disdain for Indigenous musical practices “echoes some of the worst strains of colonialist rhetoric” (Krotz, 2009, p. 191) and alienates Jeremiah from his community. Jeremiah takes the position of a non-comprehending outsider, incapable of divorcing his evaluation from culturally-contingent value systems, rigidly convinced of his own cultural superiority (despite being a young Cree man himself). We may read such processes in music’s wider colonial contexts. It has historically been employed, for instance, in the Jesuit missionary practice of recomposing local music as an aid to conversion; Philip Bohlman (2003) notes that these acts of “inscription and transcription” were “crucial to the acts of possession that transformed colonial encounter into forms of domination” (p. 47). By enforcing hierarchies of culture, music in these contexts can signify alienation and rigidity as much as it has the potential to inspire connection and resilience.

In the public high school I attended in my own adolescence, the hallways were silent except for the corridor where the band classrooms were located. Music had its place, designated spaces

in which the art could be practised, and public singing or guitar-playing, particularly during class time, would most likely have been treated as a nuisance. Social judgment may also have been a discouragement to a more widespread practice of music. Practice, in a Euro-Canadian culture where the “heightened public experience” of a concert is the norm (Said, 1991, p. 10), is something to be done in private or in secret. Only the performance is acceptable—anything else is viewed as imperfection or incompleteness. In contrast, at Oskāyak it seems that music is not contained. Along with guitar music, quiet singing from some of the young women in the school can be heard on most days. The kitchen helpers who lend a hand to the school’s main cook would often break into small snippets of songs here and there. On one or two occasions, the helpers had nothing to do for a few minutes and gathered around a laptop computer which was playing music in the cafeteria, trying to sing a song all together. Their singing caught me off guard the first time it happened, being in a public place and in the presence of a stranger (myself). On another occasion, the school’s Media Lab was deserted but for a young woman I had not met. We exchanged brief pleasantries as she settled into her workstation, and before long she started playing her choice of music (as opposed to the radio station which was also playing in the background), half-singing along to the same song several times in a row as she did other things on the computer. The marvel for me was that this young woman seemed to feel comfortable enough, in the presence of someone she had never met, to idly practice singing along to song—not uncommon behaviour of itself, but in my experience much less common in the presence of others.

Such experiences throw the practices of music in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* into sharp relief. The music into which Jeremiah immerses himself in Winnipeg is highly formalized classical training, relying upon solitude, strict coaching and ritualized practice. In much the same way that the split between language and nature, body and intellect, reflects a split worldview, music in the specialized classical European tradition distances itself from the more natural processes of musicality as shown in Champion’s caribou songs. The process of grappling with Bach’s D-major Toccata and its “rollicking, reel-like beat” evokes the dances from home – music placed in its rightful communal context – as visions of his neighbours and relations “tugged at his heart – ‘Come home, Jeremiah, come home [...]’” (Highway, 1998, p. 101). This passage, though illustrative of alienating educational practices, also emphasizes the persistence of the worldly in the face of enforced abstraction, and the inevitable tug of home. Ultimately, Jeremiah and Gabriel do decide to collaborate through the medium of theatre after years of estrangement, and their reconnection signals the creation of an integrated form of music, to take both of them back to the sense of magic they experienced as children growing up in a fundamentally musical world. The very landscape in which the Okimasis brothers go through childhood provides “a rich universe of sound” in which music “seems to rise, independent of human agency, out of the natural rhythms of the world itself” (Krotz, 2009, p. 185). The fluidity with which the brothers approach their creative process is the antithesis of the forced separation, abstraction, and “regimentation” (McKegney, 2007, p. 165) of the educational and artistic structures which caused their personal and spiritual alienation to occur.

Integrative Practices of Relationality at Oskāyak

Looking toward my experiences at Oskāyak, and recognizing that the school is still firmly entrenched within the Canadian educational system, I also posit that the integrative nature of their knowledge practices, relationality models, and creative supports (manifested in the students' experiences as well as my own) gestures toward the same kind of praxis that Highway affirms in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. The unique environment at Oskāyak contributes to this praxis; it is a small school, with approximately two hundred to three hundred students in total, most of whom share a similar cultural background. The student/teacher structures at Oskāyak also differ significantly from the standard Western model; teachers are referred to by first name, and their relationship with the students is of a markedly different dynamic than at most public high schools. One student at the Youth Summit described his relationship with the teachers as more of a friendship than a matter of authority, and at times the students teased the teachers mercilessly. The hierarchical academic relationship has here been collapsed down to a more egalitarian model, making strides toward dismantling the power dynamics which have been so harmful to Indigenous students in past and present generations. This type of relationality is in line with Oskāyak's mandate of decolonizing teacher-student relationships and pursuing a learning atmosphere in which Indigenous values of kinship and mutual respect are at the center of the educational process (Lessard, 2015, p. 16-18). In an institution which supports students' creative pursuits in the hallways and corners, computer labs and kitchens, which goes so far as to host informal jam sessions as a popular means of building community and encouraging creative growth, I read deliberate refusal of Western hierarchies and regulation. There are many community-binding agents at play here, and Oskāyak's approach to language and music, supported by an informal overall authority structure, mirrors Highway's use of Cree as a worldview, suggests that such an approach is beneficial to the specific needs of its students, and decenters the classroom model to which I had become accustomed over the course of my own education, thus forcing me to reconsider my position as a graduate student offering service to a community I had come to view as *outside* my purview at the university.

As resonances between the texts and my experience built upon one another over the course of the term, I found some clarity of focus for considering the Cree philosophies and relationality practices that underpin them both, though the deeper implications of those resonances are still making themselves known to me. Foremost among future CSL considerations is the kind of radical repositioning made possible by Oskāyak's Miyo-wīcēhtowin kinship model and Highway's emphasis on the integrative connections between daily community life, art, and language. I've come to view my ability to interpret the experience and text as so closely intertwined to be the result of the overarching structure of my engagement itself. Had my community partner not upheld their inclusive and non-hierarchical institutional structure and philosophy, and had my involvement not focused upon the daily movements and relationships of the student body, those connections may have remained opaque to me.

Conclusion: Communitist Scholarship as Integrative Practice

"Why Cree is the Sexiest of All Languages," Tomson Highway's comparative essay on the

Cree and English languages and their respective implications for worldview, indicates a Cree that is, in contrast to English, very much a part of the world around it: integrated with nature, body, and community. In *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, similar use is made of music as an extension of worldview, with Cree music situated in its natural surroundings and community. Along similar lines, JD has considered their experiences working with the students at Oskāyak High School in light of Highway's essay, and has found that in many ways it is very much a Cree high school, integrating language and music in a way that resists Eurocentric compartmentalization. JD's analysis prompts reflection on the possibilities inherent in bridging lived experience, relationships, and learning; at Oskāyak, these elements all flow into one another and into the lives of the students, and they must be treated as part of the same continuum. This integrative praxis spurs our collective reflection upon the limitations of previous academic experience and highlights the necessity of adopting similar principles for scholarship and activism. We find numerous resonances between readings of experience and text, and these resonances suggest future approaches to responsible engaged scholarship and community involvement. Through the case study of communitist literary scholarship we have presented in this essay, we aim to provoke a critical re-examination of scholarly convention, highlighting the inseparability of artistic and intellectual work from lived experience, as well as the necessity and centrality of community to knowledge production, in particular the relationality and responsibility central to CSL practice.

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Reports from the Field

Truthful Engagement: Making the Witness Blanket, an Ongoing Process of Reconciliation

Carey Newman - Hayalthkin'game with Catherine Etmanski

ABSTRACT This report from the field summarizes a conversation between Carey Newman and guest editor, Catherine Etmanski, which took place on January 12, 2018. The conversation focused on Carey's work engaging people across Canada in a project titled The Witness Blanket. The Witness Blanket is a national monument of the Indian Residential School Era made of items collected from residential schools, from churches, government buildings, and traditional structures from across Canada. In this report, Carey provides insight into the process of collecting artefacts from communities across Canada. Although not all pieces he received were aesthetically pleasing—and neither were the stories associated with them—through this process, he learned the importance of including all voices and stories. With time and reflection, he learned the power of collective truth. While making the Witness Blanket, some items challenged his creativity and tested his commitment to include something from every contributor, but he felt a responsibility to find a place for them all. He also brings focus to traditional perspectives or ways of being that helped guide him through the process of building and leading a team through the expansive community engagement process and the eventual creation of a monument, national tour, and documentary film.

KEYWORDS The Witness Blanket, Truth and Reconciliation, collective truth, national engagement

This report from the field summarizes a conversation between Carey Newman and guest editor, Catherine Etmanski, which took place on January 12, 2018. The conversation focused on Carey's work engaging people across Canada in a project called The Witness Blanket. The Witness Blanket is a national monument of the Indian Residential School Era made of items collected from residential schools, from churches, government buildings, and traditional structures across Canada. Through these tangible objects, it weaves together a comprehensive narrative of both survivor experience and history of residential schools in Canada. Each of the items included in the Witness Blanket has a multitude of stories attached to it. Carey not only designed the 40' multimedia installation, he was also the project manager. He attained the commission through a national call for proposals by the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Commission. Here is his story.



Figure 1. Composite image of the complete Witness Blanket. Photo Credit: Media One Inc.

The Naming Process

It was a blanket before it was a Witness Blanket. My original concept was to string objects together like a big beaded bracelet and make a blanket of solid objects. I wanted it to be a blanket for multiple reasons, especially because blankets have particular significance in both of my Indigenous cultures: Kwakwaka'wakw and Salish.

We have different ways that we use blankets across cultures and traditions. In Kwakwaka'wakw culture, blankets represent who we are. We stitch our symbols onto them—our totems and family crests. We wear them in ceremony; they are part of our identity and, like a name tag, they identify our lineage. In my Salish tradition, we use blankets to honour, uplift, and protect people. If somebody has achieved something wonderful for the community, we acknowledge that through putting a blanket around them as a gesture of gratitude. If someone has gone through trauma, we do the same thing as a gesture of protection.

Expanding that out to the rest of the world, I think about how we wrap our babies in blankets when they are born, or how we often wrap our loved ones in blankets when they pass on. The blanket carries symbolic importance in almost every culture. So, I chose a blanket because it is a good universal symbol.

As for the name of the project: it came from my wife Elaine listening to CBC Radio. They were covering the Truth Reconciliation Commission gathering in my home territory on the northern part of Vancouver Island. The reporter was interviewing people and when he asked a priest why he was there, he said simply, "I'm here to bear witness." After hearing that, my wife called me immediately and she said, "Bear witness; bear witness—it's about bearing witness." I looked up the definition and found something along the line of "to show by your existence that something is true," and realised it was perfect, because it *is* about bearing witness. My role as an artist is to bear witness. The pieces themselves are witnesses. The people giving us the pieces are witnesses, and at some level, we are all, or we should all be, witnesses.

There is also a cultural connection because in both Kwakwaka'wakw and Salish oral traditions, we have witnesses. That is how we preserve history or important moments. In Kwakwaka'wakw ways we hold potlatches to tell our stories, then we give gifts to our guests and ask them to remember what they saw. In the Salish tradition, we ask people to stand and speak about what they have witnessed. Then we acknowledge them by giving tokens or paying them to carry our history.

Following that tradition, we created our own little Witness Blanket coins to acknowledge those who made contributions or helped us along the way. Everywhere we went we gave out these coins that said, “Thank you,” in many different languages. That is how the traditions of “Witness” and “Blanket” came together.

Project Conception

The call from the TRC was for commemoration initiatives. They outlined that you could do an individual project, a regional project, a provincial project—or you could do a national project.

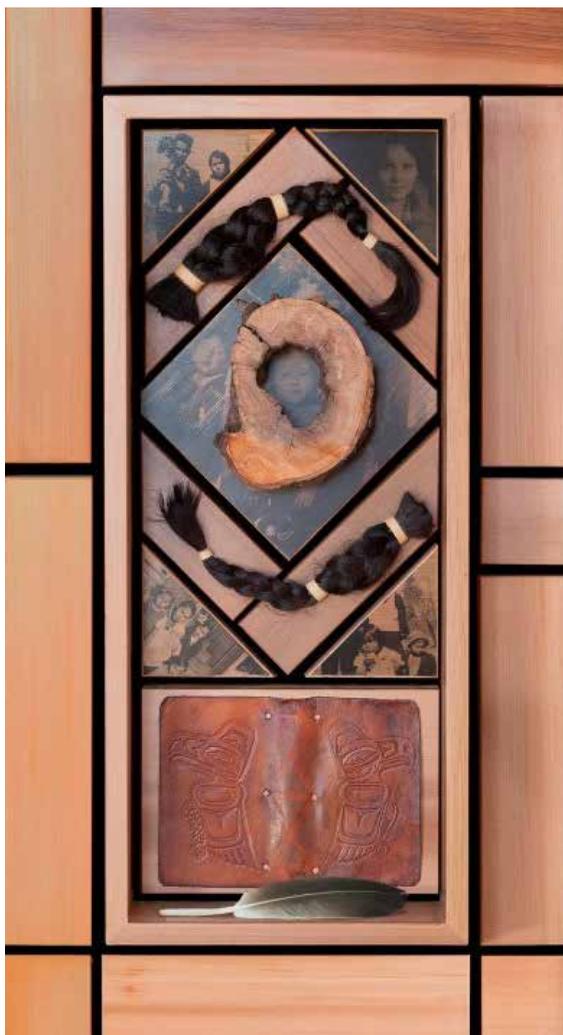


Figure 2. Detail of panel from Witness Blanket: Braids and photos of Newman family.
Photo Credit: Media One Inc.

I wanted to do a national project because I wanted to tell the *whole* story of residential schools in Canada.

I began by thinking about everything I do as an artist—carving totems and sculptures—and one by one I dismissed each medium I’ve worked with in the past. Every idea I had felt too small. The perspective was always too regional, or too individual to tell a national story. I quickly realised that to tell a comprehensive story about the experience of residential schools, I needed to step outside anything I’d done before.

That was when I came up with the idea of gathering objects. I was sitting in my living room and I had my feet on this little folding stool made from bits of wood that strung together. I thought to myself, I’ll do this, but bigger. I’ll create a blanket made of solid objects. That way I can gather pieces from all the schools, and collectively, like a huge patchwork quilt, they will tell the whole story. That was my eureka moment where I really felt like I was finally on the right track.

The original idea was to include only pieces from residential schools. As I thought more about it, I realised I should include churches and government buildings because they’re part of the same story. Government buildings are where the decisions and policies that led to the

schools were made. Churches operated the schools.

The final thing I realised was that the story didn't end when the last residential school was closed in 1996. The impacts persist in our communities. The people and cultures that were targeted have survived. So, to give voice to that resilience and reflect that the work of healing continues, I decided to include traditional structures, healing centres, and other contemporary Indigenous buildings. That is how I came up with the idea. It was based on a desire to find a way to tell the whole story.

Defining Reconciliation and Collective Truth

As I was planning the engagement process, I made a document examining the words "truth" and "reconciliation." I knew that some people didn't agree with the phrase "Truth and Reconciliation," and were unlikely to participate in TRC events or projects. In an effort to be as inclusive as possible, I wrote definitions that, in a way, addressed those concerns.

This document outlined various meanings reconciliation might have to different people participating in the project; it also acknowledged that some people would reject the word completely. One of the dictionary definitions of reconciliation is, "to be brought back into the church." Considering the problematic relationship many survivors have with organised religion, I explicitly said, "That's not our definition." Another definition was "to re-establish good relations." Many people feel that there were never good relations in the first place, so we weren't *re*-establishing good relations either. Reconciliation can be personal or public; individual or institutional. For the most part, we were talking about reconciliation on a personal level. For the Witness Blanket, we accepted reconciliation to be whatever stage somebody was at in their process of healing. By this, we were saying that reconciliation meant different things for different people, and it is whatever anybody wants it to be for themselves.

Early on, we had people saying that they didn't believe in reconciliation and asking whether they could even take part in this project. My response was, "What do you believe in?" And if they were angry, or sad, or ready to forgive but not forget, then I'd say, "Then that is where you are. That's your truth. So absolutely you can participate." At that stage, I wasn't presenting a particular position. I was trying to create a space where stories can exist, and truth can emerge. Removing my own opinion was an important part of gathering the most accurate narrative possible.

In defining truth, this document was the beginning of my idea around *collective truth*. To me this meant taking all the stories and objects as they come in, and not holding any individual story up against a test of veracity. Rather, accepting them all at face value and knowing that within that collective, is the truth. Truth exists differently for different people. Two people can tell the story of the same interaction and hold vastly different interpretations of what happened. Even though, if you were to observe it from the outside, there is baseline fact, truth is kind of fluid; the unique truth felt by two different people, about the same event, is equally true for both. They are part of the collective truth.

I didn't really come up with the phrase "collective truth" until recently, but I think it was seeded during the thought process of defining truth. I went into the project thinking that

truth is absolute. Truth is one thing. There is one truth. But as I started to think about what the definition was going to look like, I began to realise that there were going to be various truths for various people. This meant that the more fragments I gathered, the more accurate the collective truth would become.

In this project, I also set a hierarchy of truth that started with survivors and then moved forward through generations. If there was a conflict of interpretations, then we had a starting point to find a resolution. Centering the survivors' truth in a structural way early on, helped us to centre survivors in our approach. I was mindful of survivors because their courage, grace, and generosity made the project possible. Beyond their willingness to share their stories and keepsakes, the funding for commemoration projects came directly from the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). That means that every single survivor paid out of their own pocket to create a twenty million dollar fund to enable commemoration projects.

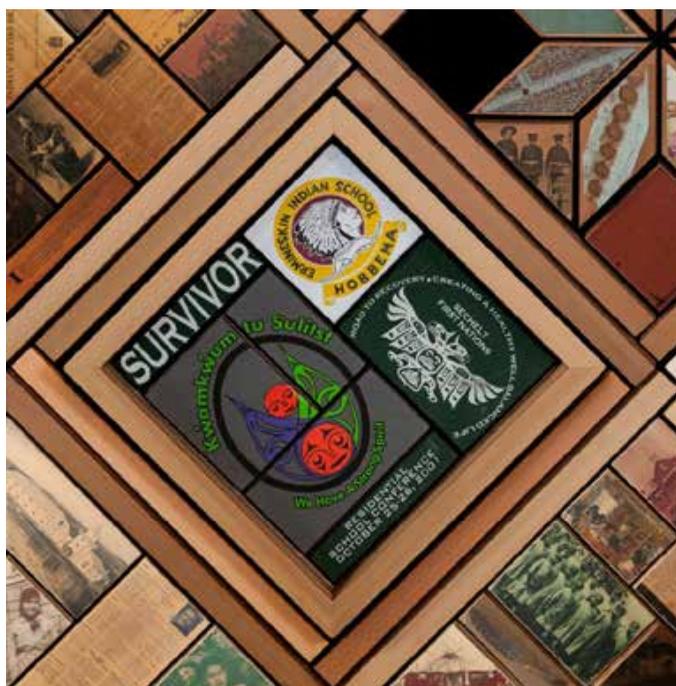


Figure 3. Detail of the Witness Blanket with survivor T-shirts.

Photo Credit: Media One Inc.

The Process of Engagement

Probably the biggest thing I had going for me in the beginning was recognising that I didn't know very much, and that part of the process of engagement was to listen and learn. I wanted the result to reflect the process and for the process to model reconciliation. Knowing this, I couldn't go in with a concrete idea I was unwilling to change. I had to start with a concept and keep it fluid, letting it grow and morph based on what was learned through engagement.

When it came to explaining the project, I designed a logo and built an information package

that detailed the concept. This included paper pamphlets, a website, smaller postcards, buttons, witness coins, and thank you blankets. To connect with survivors, we started attending TRC events. We also went to various Indigenous health forums and conferences and we talked to as many people as possible. Through that, we were introduced to the TRC's health support workers' network, which became a really important relationship for us. Health support workers had experience within the communities we visited, and a good sense of which survivors were ready to participate in this kind of project. That is how we got most items from residential schools. For accessing traditional and contemporary Indigenous structures, we used largely the same process. By connecting through communities, we received objects from sweat lodges, Indigenous Friendship Centres, and other commemoration projects.

By connecting with the health support network in each community, we were also building the supports they offered into our engagement process. This was particularly important because we were dealing with sensitive issues, and just asking someone to remember can



Figure 4. Detail—Figurine collected from Crowfoot Indian Residential School in Cluny, AB. Photo Credit: Media One Inc.

trigger harmful or traumatic memories. No one on our team was a professional in confronting or dealing with trauma so part of our strategy was to engage those support services locally. For engaging churches, representatives were often at the TRC events, so we were able to talk to them there. Sometimes, individual churches were eager to participate saying, “We’re committed to reconciliation. We’ll send you (for example) a piece of a pew.” Other times, particularly at the national level, it was much more onerous, and was similar to engaging government.

When it came to collecting artifacts from government buildings, the process was about letter writing and calling people we knew. For some of them, we sent a letter with our request, and they sent us back a piece with an explanation. Others had a lot of questions and concerns. They wanted to make sure they weren’t admitting any liability or participating in something that would put them at risk, so we had to be measured about our requests. We made sure to say that this was not going to be used to shame or to call out people or organizations. This was representational. Having a piece of parliament or legislative buildings, for instance, was important to this project because decisions were made in those halls that affected the history of this country, particularly residential school history. Once they understood what the project was, most were willing to participate in some way. With government engagement, either you need to know somebody, or you just have to keep banging on the door until they finally answer, so persistence is the key.

Preparing for the Emotional Labour of Engagement

Throughout this project, we took on a lot of people's emotions and stories. Going in I knew this would be the case, and made sure that, as a team, we were properly prepared. We did this through acknowledgement and by making sure we were open with one another regarding our feelings and emotional states. We also employed a few different traditional practices along the way. One of them was smudging with traditional medicines like sage, sweetgrass, or tobacco. Another was "Shokwams" or spiritual baths in freezing water at dawn. The most common was having cedar boughs present to "brush" ourselves off, so that we didn't transfer the emotional weight of our work onto others, or carry it with us into our personal lives.

I was prepared for the weight of the stories. I was prepared to be gentle with myself and those who participated. What I didn't anticipate and prepare for was the power I was going to feel from individual items. I got an important lesson early on that came from Rosy, a member of the team. She was in Carcross where she collected a child's shoe from the site of a burned-down residential school.

The day after she returned, I got a knock at my door at 8:30 in the morning, which was unusual. It was Rosy. She said, "I'm sorry that I have to do this, but..." and she had this little box with the shoe inside and told me this story. The evening of the day she collected the shoe, she woke up in the middle of the night feeling terribly afraid, running from something in her sleep. It really shook her. That day, she travelled home and, forgetting about her experience, dropped her bags and spent some down-time with her husband. Then *he* woke up in the middle of the night having the exact same nightmare, running from something in his sleep. She thought, "It has to be the shoe," and brought it straight over.

When I received the shoe and the story, I wasn't sure what to do, but recognised that I needed to address it in some way. That evening I took out the box, removed the shoe, and just held it. I still get emotional when I talk about it, because I don't often feel that kind of emotion from an object. I held it and tried to identify the feeling it carried. The closest I could understand was that it wasn't anger; it was fear. Not knowing what else to do, I started to talk about the project. There I was,

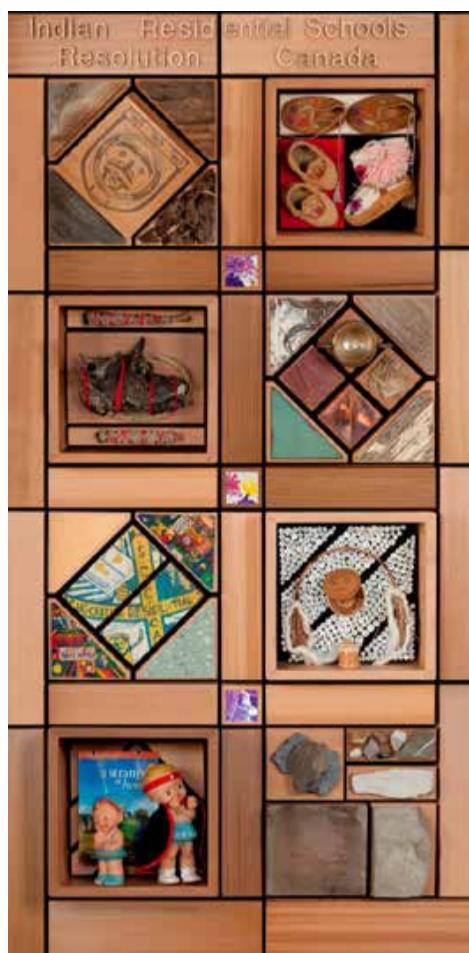


Figure 5. Panel from Witness Blanket with child's shoe.

Photo Credit: Media One Inc.

trying to appease my own fears, while also trying to calm the unsettled spirit or power that came with this little shoe. So, I talked about what I was doing, about my intentions, about what the blanket was. In a way I was asking for consent or approval, but saying those things out loud also helped me solidify and clarify the project in my own mind.

I repeated this process each night for the first week. Each time the shoe felt a little bit different. I went from sensing fear and frenetic energy, slowly to sadness, and then acceptance, but still sadness. I didn't ever have the experience of waking up in the night, but having the shoe arrive early in the process taught me that I needed to respect the objects, stories, and people equally.

This shifted my thought process, and likely the final work itself. Rather than just being disparate "things" I was sticking onto this blanket, I recognised them as sacred. From that point on, it became part of my practice to take a moment to connect with each piece as it came in. I had to engage them with care. I had to curate with some sense of understanding and fairness, so that I wasn't picking the things that I liked because they were pretty or because they created a nice texture; there had to be equity in the way that I was organising the items.

I'm not an overly spiritual person, but sometimes moments come along in your life and you can't deny their impact. Having that shoe come when it did, with the realisations it brought, was a big part of helping me to understand the magnitude of what it was going to mean to bring all of those objects together in the blanket.

Moving Forward with the Responsibility to Support Other Artists

I have come to realise that taking on this project includes a responsibility to continue this work. With the tour winding down, I'm in the process of deciding where the Witness Blanket will live. This is a challenging transaction because, although I don't feel any ownership over the blanket, I feel responsible for its stewardship. Instead of a traditional sale, I want to find a way to reinvest the trust and capital that enabled me to complete this project, to provide similar opportunities for other artists and other projects. I don't yet know what form that will take, but I know that artists rarely have a large budget and complete creative autonomy to move their artistic vision forward. For me, the process was transformative, so I am interested to see what that would turn into for others.

Through the power of everyday objects and the collective truths they represent, the Witness Blanket reaches into the hearts of many. The result is truly a reflection of the process that created it. Now, in bringing one part to a conclusion, I find myself advocating to provide the same opportunity for others. This is because I started down the pathway of truthful engagement; it comes from what I learned along the way and it will continue as long as I listen enough to learn the things I still don't know.

Postscript

At the time of publication, Carey has entered into a collaborative stewardship agreement with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. This unique contract between an artist and a Crown Corporation recognizes the *rights* of the Witness Blanket itself and the stories it holds, while

responsibility for the care and best interests of the Witness Blanket rest with both Carey and the museum. In addition to a signed contract, this agreement will also be enacted through a Kwakwaka'wakw ceremony that will include the calling of witnesses so that it will exist in both oral and written forms. As a legacy, enabled partially by the terms of this agreement, Carey is in the process of establishing a Centre of Excellence for the Study of Art and Reconciliation. It is his intention that this Centre will be a space where artists and scholars can examine the many ways that art, reconciliation, and decolonization intersect, and where students of all backgrounds can come together to explore, through the arts, our responsibilities to this earth and to one another. In this way, the spirit of the Witness Blanket will live on through the work of others.

Acknowledgements

The Witness Blanket described in this article was a Commemoration Initiative selected by the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Commission, funded through the Indian Residential Schools Settlement (IRSSA) Agreement and administered by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. Carey gratefully acknowledges all survivors and intergenerational survivors of Residential Schools and honours those who are no longer with us or did not survive. He acknowledges his sisters and his mother for their help, his wife Elaine for her infinite support and steady guidance, and his father Victor and daughter Adelyn for their inspirations for this project.

About the Authors

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Carey Newman or **Hayalthkin'geme** is a multi-disciplinary artist and master carver. Through his father he is Kwagiulth from the Kukwekum, Giiksam, and WaWalaby'ie clans of Fort Rupert, and Sto:Lo from Cheam along the upper Fraser Valley. Through his mother he is English, Irish, and Scottish. Carey is the 6th Audain Professor of Contemporary Art Practice of the Pacific Northwest at the University of Victoria in the Department of Visual Arts. Email: carey@witnessblanket.ca

Woolly Stories: An Art-Based Narrative Approach to Place Attachment

Kendra D. Stiwich, Lindsay J. McCunn, Chantey Dayal

ABSTRACT When people join an institution, no assurance of positive social connection exists. The mechanisms of psychological attachment to institutions are not well understood. However, place attachment is a predictor of individual well-being and, when correlated with life satisfaction and neighborhood ties, can enhance civic engagement and social trust. Research suggests that narratives can be a symbolic mechanism of place attachment. Thus, to increase place attachment in the parent population at a small elementary school, various art-based narrative activities were carried out as part of the OurSchoolOurStories project. Creating a storied blanket was one activity. Seven women needle-felted nine squares with the theme of representing some aspect of what the school meant to them. In a circle, they shared many stories including where they came from, how they came to be at the school, and their experiences at the school. Through these artistic narratives, participants were able to share much about their place identities, which allowed for social connection, and a sense of integration within the group.

KEYWORDS Place attachment, social bonding, place identity, narrative, textile art

I realize the power of art that does not hang on the walls of galleries.

- Marina Abramovic

The following is written primarily in K. Stiwich's voice. However, the research involved many perspectives, both from the research team and from the community. A sample of these voices is presented herein to shed light on how the community approached, responded to, and reflected on the research process. These voices are noted accordingly.

A year ago I did not understand Abramovic's quote. Or, perhaps it would be better to say that I did not know this quote. I had heard it but could not find within myself a true example of what it describes. This study is the story of how I came to know. The experience unfolded in a small group of mothers whose words and art inspired and made possible my research. I am grateful for their contributions to my research, but more significantly I am indebted to the sharing and community building inherent in their actions and being.

Place attachment is a complex and intriguing psychological construct that contains the emotional and cognitive bonds we form toward certain places (Scannell & Gifford,

2017). A growing body of interdisciplinary literature demonstrates the benefits of place attachment, including its prediction of individual well-being (Theodori, 2001), correlation with life satisfaction, neighborhood ties, and trust of people (Lewicka, 2011), enhancing civic engagement and social trust (Stefaniak, Bilewicz, & Lewicka, 2017), and its association with human memories, belonging, positive emotions, and activity support (Scannell & Gifford, 2017). It is this breadth of influence and outcome that piqued my interest in identifying potential mechanisms that lead to place attachment. After all, if community groups can better understand the activities or circumstances that preclude place attachment, it follows that they may encourage place attachment to develop and flourish.

Place

I conduct research at Sunrise Waldorf School in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. The school is located on a beautiful seven-acre rural property and enjoys mountain, forest, and farmland scenery. Sunrise is an independent school with students from pre-school to grade eight. I have been a member of the school for almost a decade and understand some of the ways in which place attachment may form toward the school setting, such as social, service, and requisite activities parents and guardians regularly partake in. I am sincerely interested in investigating the potential role that art and story play in the development and experience of place attachment. To test how these new aspects associated with place attachment toward the school, I decided to organize two groups (needle-felters and painters) to participate in creative activities that resulted in place-based artistic products. This paper describes the process and insights of creating a ‘storied blanket’ using the needle-felting technique. I also edited an unpublished book available to the Sunrise community to document artistic works (Stiwich, 2017a) whereby each participant was given the opportunity to include a narrative about their contribution. Portions of these stories are included below (with permission from participants).

Purpose

We coined the study the “OurSchoolOurStories (OSOS) Project.” One of its main aims was to investigate the effects of exposure to place-based narratives on place identity and social bonding for the school’s parent and guardian population. I adapted a model that incorporates personal, social, and environmental factors concerning how people attach to place (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010). An initial survey revealed that a portion of the sample was not attaching to the school through social and personal mechanisms as strongly as other segments of the population (Stiwich, 2017b). This observation led me to consider how people attach to an environment in the first place, particularly in personal and social ways. The following quotation offers C. Dayal’s perspective on how she perceived the research as both an administrator and parent at Sunrise:

Kendra’s impulse to create a community piece of art work through the reflection of our school was both inspiring and necessary. With our busy schedules, and sometimes

isolated Western culture, we forget the importance of gathering in a circle for the sake of sharing stories, time, and ourselves with one another. As the Director of Admissions at Sunrise Waldorf School, I have the pleasure of meeting and knowing all of our families through the intake process, but nothing compares to really getting to know one another. Speaking for myself, I can say that the opportunity to share our stories in a creative and meaningful way builds my compassion for others, my ability to listen, and meets my need to be known. (C. Dayal, personal communication, February 10, 2018)

Methods

The creation of the storied blanket involved seven women needle-felting nine squares with the theme of representing some aspect of what the school meant to them. The process began with a 12 inch square of white melton (a wool fabric) that served as a canvas. Then, multiple layers and strands of colored wool roving were felted onto the melton using special barbed needles. Scenes can quickly be created with robust color and texture (see Figure 1).

From personal experience, the art of needle-felting can be quite therapeutic and satisfying. It also allows for conversation—an integral part of our circles at the school.

Reflections

I found myself in the roles of both researcher and participant in this project. The study's intention was simple: bring people together to tell stories of the school while creating a place-based piece of art. We shared many tales that revolved around where we came from,



Figure 1. 'Gather', K. Lampson

how we came to the school, and our experiences once there. There were moments of loss and pain, and others of laughter and mirth. We noted the beauty of the place, the peace we are able to find in this small nook of the world, and the nurturing environment we had found for our children. The following excerpt from a mother's story exemplifies some of these themes. It has a particular power in the school's community because of the imagery of the spiral which is a central theme during the winter festivals at the school.

This evokes memories of my daughter's first Advent spiral. She was in preschool; the classroom was dimly lit with candle light there was harp music playing in the

background. It was so magical and peaceful. The children started to walk the cedar spiral that was dotted with all the elements of advent. Each carefully holding their red apple candle holder with a sense of awe and reverence, it felt as if time had stopped and this moment was going to last forever. Once all the children had carefully placed their lit candles on the cedar boughs the room was all a glow in warm soft light. We sat and held the feeling of peacefulness all looking toward the spiral filled with red apples, green boughs and a soft yellow glow. The warm tranquil calmness felt all-encompassing and it has left me with this magical memory for life. (S. Thomas describing 'Advent' in Stiwich, 2017a)

Through these artistic narratives, participants shared their individual place identities and, in many cases, their stories overlapped in context or theme which allowed for social connection and a sense of integration within the group. We came to know each other, and the place, in such a rich and integrated way. By way of creating the blanket, we were able to record and store our social and place-based knowledge in a storied artistic expression. The following narrative provided by another participant sums up the integrative nature of our art:

The two birds in this felting represent the individual and the partnership. The Yin and the Yang. The up and the down so to say. The journey of Waldorf Education for each of us as educators, parents, and student has many sides and a multitude of expressions. It is a journey that has helped me to accept the many layers and perspectives that exists in everything. (C. Dayal, describing 'Together' in Stiwich, 2017a)

Place attachment can be made possible “through psychologically and socio-culturally symbolic mechanisms such as art and language” (Scannell & Gifford, 2017, p. 265). I hoped that by creating an artistic product, and sharing the stories embedded in the works, we would be able to tap into the social empathy within the community and increase attachment to the place itself. At the start of the project, my focus on creating a blanket was derived from needing an independent variable in my scholarly research to fulfill my degree. I needed the blanket to measure how others reacted to a stimulus. Now, in reflection, the impact of the physical creation process, and the interactions within the group, helped me most in realizing the potential power of this methodology. My own place identity and social bonding were strongly mediated by the artistic experience, and my observations of others suggest that I am not the only one. Others also observed these interactions as indicated in the following:

Each of the parents who were in the workshop with me, showed a side of themselves that I had not yet known. From that creative time together, we now pass each other in the halls, or in town, having had a deeper connection with one another. We have a little more patience, a little less shyness, and a piece of art in the world that reflects our diversity as well as our common ground. (C. Dayal, personal communication, February 10, 2018)

Kellman (1998) describes the relationship between narratives, places, and individuals as “especially important for it serves as a grounding for a great deal of artmaking in many cultures and diverse circumstances” (p. 37). She uses a handful of examples to describe how aesthetic, narrative, and imaginative responses allow for people to remember and memorialize important places at an individual level. She concludes with an observation that “it is the particularity of each place and the remembered richness of each story that precipitates meaning for both individual and community.” (Kellman, 1998, p. 40)

When I began the OSOS project, I wondered whether our woolly stories would precipitate our collective place-based experience and, ultimately, communicate those experiences to others. Today, on the other side of the creative process, I understand the naivety of my contemplation. It was entirely a matter of communication; a type of collective expression that simultaneously incorporated our storied words along with the weaving of texture, color, emotion, history, and self. One panel is, in and of itself, a rich record of place experience and attachment. Taken together, the piece is a powerful, aesthetic, tactile representation of our communal attachment. Another narrative shared in the book explores one aspect of place experience:

One of my favorite festivals is the lantern walk -- how we come together to shine our lights in the darkness. Sunrise is for me like a bright light in the community, and in the world where the forces of darkness can seem close at hand. I love all the symbolism of these fragile yet beautiful lights in a dark night, in a dark time of year. (M. Smith describing ‘Light in the Darkness’ in Stiwich, 2017a)

The study’s small sample of women were certainly not the first to experience the communal benefits of group textile art. For millennia, people have been working with a variety of fibrous materials from local plants and animals. Research into the reasons people, and in particular women, are drawn to the fiber arts in group contexts exists. One investigation notes how handcrafting afforded women a sense of place and connected them to their local histories (Johnson & Wilson, 2005). Another examination describes other benefits of the craft, such as an enhanced sense of self, greater collective identity, and a deeply spiritual experience (Riley, 2008). Garlock (2016) notes that “fabric has been used, and continues to be used, for expression of identity, social status, secrets, and stories” (p. 59). By creating these story cloths, memory cloths, narrative textiles, story blankets, and arpilleras, individuals are able to express a deep personal knowledge of themselves and their worlds. This is a powerful act of agency and seems to be utilized globally. Within the pieces, symbols of origin, village, family, and ultimately self, emerge. During our felting, a particularly poignant piece was shared from one mother who was transitioning to the school after having recently moved to the area. This is a sentiment many of the school’s parents and guardians respond to because a large proportion are not originally from the area:

When I started this piece I was in a place of nostalgia and sadness, thinking about the home that our family left behind to be here on Vancouver Island and at Sunrise

Waldorf School. I grew up in a little town in Ontario that was well known for its beautiful sunsets over Lake Huron. I find it interesting that my first instinct when asked to create an art piece was to create a picture reminiscent of my home town, this indeed was a true reflection of the “holding on” feeling I was experiencing at the time. When I returned to the piece a couple weeks later to complete it, I was feeling more hopeful and connected to this new corner of the Earth I occupy. It no longer was just a picture of a Sunset from my little hometown in Ontario but now a bridge between an old life and the potential that lay before me, a new life. I finished the piece depicting a Sunset over the Ocean instead of my home town Lake. This was my way of expressing my love of where I come from and the hope, excitement and trepidation I sometimes feel stepping into this new life, in a new place with new people. Sunrise it is. (M. White describing ‘Sunrise’ in Stiwich, 2017a)

There is more to these textile groups and circles than just the physical materialization of the created works. There is also the art of storytelling that layers over, and weaves within, the people and the place. Low’s 1992 typology of cultural place attachment outlines six kinds of symbolic links between people and land including narratives via storytelling and place naming. She states that “narrative creates place attachment through talking about place, either through storytelling or naming; the linguistic act of narrating is the process by which attachment occurs” (p. 167) and that “people’s linkage to the land is through the vehicle of the story and identified through place naming and language” (pp. 173–4). This resonates with Tuan’s (1975) statement that “to know a place is also to know the past” (p. 164), as well as Backlund and Williams’s (2003) ideas that attachment to place can occur with no experience with the place simply through hearing stories and memories from others. One of my own contributions affords an example of a memory I shared of Sunrise. During the sharing, many people were engaged evidenced through head nods, laughter and further commentary.

I remember one of my first Winter Fairs and we had a DUMP of snow - heaps of it everywhere and all these people had to come and shovel the roof, the walkways, the driveway - it was crazy. We were running the barbeque as a class event and watching [my husband] negotiate the Honda Fit and a barbeque through all that still makes me smile. It was one of the best fairs. Not just because we actually pulled it off, but also that we had to give over to the mirth and hilarity of the situation. I laughed so much and so hard. What a winter celebration! I learned that I could count on people to haul my barbeque out and over a snow drift while they are cold, soaking wet, and mildly exhausted. All the while sporting a face splitting grin. It is a fair we still talk about. (K. Stiwich describing ‘Friends’ in Stiwich, 2017a)

Arguably, story-telling is one way for humans to share our internal experiences and offer descriptions of ourselves to others. People can appreciate the intimacy of hearing another’s story, especially when it is presented as raw narrative art, steeped in folk vernacular. During my experience with the OSOS project, most of the participants shared many stories of the school.

We could not help but retell the first time we came to the school and how we were struck by its beauty and magic. We shared thoughts of social uncertainty within the confines of a new group. In the end, if I were to choose a most affecting memory, it would be watching two particular mothers. One of whom had never needle-felted in her life was new to Waldorf education, and the community as a whole (see Figure 2). In the circle, she sat next to a woman who was raised in an anthroposophical community who had taught needle-felting to others many times before. Anthroposophy is the guiding philosophy behind the Waldorf school movement, it has also influenced other social, economic, and creative sectors such as agriculture, architecture and community development. Throughout my research with Sunrise a popular quote by the founder of anthroposophy Rudolf Steiner has guided me: “A healthy social life is found when in the mirror of each human soul, the whole community is shaped, and when in the community, lives the strength of each human soul” (1927/1993). Listening to the two participants share and mirror their experiences, and mutual appreciation, was one of the simple, yet complex, social bonding mechanisms that the project was intended to facilitate, capture, and hold dear.



Figure 2. T. Vogelaar



Figure 3. Needle-felted community blanket

Concluding Remarks

When I look at the final piece, it warms my heart to see that my part is just one part. That together we can make something much more beautiful. It is a demonstration of the many layers and aspects of Waldorf Education and is also reflective of the voice of the parent, without whom the school, would and could not exist. (C. Dayal, personal communication, February 10, 2018)

The words above beautifully summarize the intent and potential result of my research both in its power for community bonding and self-identity within the community. When we each walked away from the circle, we returned to our own lives. Undoubtedly, what we left behind, and what we take forward from the experience, speaks to identity and social bonding with the school. I have materialized a part of who I am

in that place for others to experience. I have given a part of myself, a texturizing for public display. If nothing else, I have made my place attachment a social reality while witnessing others go through this same process. Our blanket (see Figure 3) may not hang in a gallery, but its power has become lovingly apparent for this humbled researcher.

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Confronting Sexual Violence Through Dance and Theatre Pedagogy

Doris Rajan, Roshanak Jaber, and Shahrzad Mojab

ABSTRACT The historically-shaped violence embedded in ongoing relations of colonization and imperialism for both refugee and Indigenous women across the globe are stories mostly told in reports and statistics. The performance-based art forms of theatre and dance can enhance knowledge sharing, build relationships and assist women in a deeper understanding of their realities. In pursuit of an effective use of these art forms; however, scripted stories need to ensure that women who experience oppression, formulate the storytelling. In addition, the enactment and representation should share women's material histories in order to contextualize experiences in terms of specific relations to land, war, violence, displacement and dispossession. Using the two case studies of Doris Rajan's play, *A Tender Path* and Roshanak Jaber's multidisciplinary dance project, *No Woman's Land*, this article examines how community-engaged research and performance arts-based approaches can be used to challenge and provoke our ways of understanding and thinking about how to disrupt and alter oppressive relat

KEYWORDS Refugees, Indigenous peoples, violence against women, art-based research, community-engaged scholarship

The three of us are engaged in a unique collaboration: Doris Rajan is a community organizer/educator as well as a theatre and film artist, Roshanak Jaber a multidisciplinary dance artist, and Shahrzad Mojab, an academic, activist and educator. What has brought us together is our desire to address structural violence against women as well as our belief in the power of performance art in building awareness and challenging our ways of understanding. This article examines two case studies of performance art presentations that were inspired by real stories recounted through a community-based research process. Rajan's *A Tender Path*, a theatrical play and Jaber's *No Woman's Land*, a multidisciplinary dance production. Both cases attempt to engage audiences with the issues of oppression and violence that refugee and Indigenous women experience in their lives as they go through displacement, dispossession, and arrive at 'resettlement' or confront settler colonialism. This article provides some reflections on the research and creation process for both art pieces, as they relate to performance art pedagogy in pursuit of learning about structural violence against refugee and Indigenous women.

We seek the root of structural violence in the disarticulation of the relationship between patriarchy, race, class and capitalism. The prevalent conceptualization of violence against

women focuses on the individual's experience, paying less attention to how power operates and the ways in which violence is embedded in institutions and structures of society—particularly for refugee and Indigenous women. Without challenging the complex matrix of forces that (re)produce inequalities or the ways in which “penalty and privilege” (Collins, 1990) operate, anti-violence strategies will have minimal impact on restructuring institutions or reforming social policy. This limitation is related to the dynamic of interventions which often fail to get to the core of violence production in ways that can transform broader social relations and systems that reproduce and maintain violence.

Our conceptualization of violence and its perpetual reproduction of power has implications on how we have approached the research process and how each performance piece developed its own artistic narrative. For example, Rajan's research on solidarity learning as reflected in her play *A Tender Path*, recognizes that each marginalized group has a different relationship with the colonial Canadian state. Further, to engage in a decolonized pedagogy, it is necessary to spend the time listening and learning about our different histories, experiences, and dreams. The play *A Tender Path* set out to provide the setting to learn about these different histories and current day manifestations of oppression and violence. Jaber's *No Woman's Land* aims to share the experiences of women who live in refugee camps through movement and the use of some spoken text in ways that present women not as victims, but as survivors who face their violent and forced circumstances with strength and resilience.

We know that theatre and dance do not offer intricate strategies to dismantle complex, historically entrenched systems of oppression; however, we believe they can serve the purpose of *initiating* a process of learning about history, process of displacement, dispossession, and forms of resistance and learning. We have realized that storytelling is a powerful method for revealing the detail and nuances of often concealed experiences. This is what both Rajan and Jaber have been attempting to do with their art forms, supported by the research expertise facilitated by Mojab. Rajan was specifically commissioned to write *A Tender Path* with the explicit purpose of sharing the experiences of refugee and Indigenous women in ways that would draw us into the issues beyond abstract engagement, towards a more visceral, emotive experience. In 2014 Rajan was approached by the *Community Inclusivity Equity Council*, a coalition of community workers and activists in York Region, Ontario organizing a national and international event entitled the *Truth, Reconciliation, and Engagement Symposium*, to develop a theatrical piece for their three-day initiative that occurred in April 2015. The Symposium focused on service provision to diverse individuals, families and communities who have experienced traumatic events. The purpose of the theatre initiative was to provide a different technique at the Symposium to explore the issues experienced by communities/individuals impacted by trauma, specifically the Chippewa First Nation of Georgina Island, the Transgender communities, and refugee communities in Canada. The play offered a new vantage point for provoking a dialogue between Indigenous, racialized, and refugee or migrant people—mostly women—and other populations who have experienced acute oppression. The developmental process for the play involved research and consultation with the target communities and the engagement of theatre

professionals to bring it to the stage, i.e., a director, a dramaturge, and professional actors.¹ During the writing process, Rajan was simultaneously reading *Out of the Depths* (Knockwood & Thomas, 1992) in Mojab's Memoir Pedagogy Reading Circle. The character Isabelle of this autobiographical account, steadfastly walks us through pages of detailed horror experienced by Mi'kmaw children in the residential school system. The character of Isabelle became key to the framing of the play as she spoke to and supported the pain of others, i.e., two refugee women, a woman with an intellectual disability, and a Trans woman throughout the course of the storyline.

After the performance we opened it up to questions and comments from the audience composed of disability, Indigenous, Trans, anti-racist and immigrant and refugee community members and activists. The result was that people were surprised and shocked about how little they knew about the 'others' experience. For example, a long-time Tamil refugee rights activist, a refugee herself having lived in Canada for over 30 years, never knew about the violence and pain of the residential school experience for Indigenous peoples. After the show she said to the audience, "I want this play to be translated into Tamil so our people can learn and understand" (P. Kanthasamy, personal communication, April 28, 2015). This was a sign of success and a crucial first step in solidarity building with these populations. We learned that: (a) by centering the work on real stories and translating those stories to live performance, previously unknown stories became known; (b) by using theatre professionals the play was successful in communicating the authenticity and realness of the diverse experiences, enhanced by the immediacy of gaining access to private moments and thoughts; (c) marginalized people were put side by side for one hour and the audience, not only saw themselves, but witnessed solidarity in action as characters supported one another in the recollection of painful memories; and (d) the stories were not individualized—that is, they were contextualized in histories of colonization and contemporary capitalist wars.

Jaberi's interest in socially charged dance work is rooted in her 2010 project *Behind the Stained Walls*, which is based on the real stories of Iranian political prisoners. In 2009, she was introduced to Mojab at the University of Toronto who helped guide her research through interviews with former political prisoners who are settled in Canada, as well as prison memoirs and the testimonies of survivors. *Behind the Stained Walls* helped deepen Jaberi's artistic practice and was the impetus behind her commitment to creating political art. The project also helped steer her research and formed the foundation of her creative process for *No Woman's Land*, her most recent project, which explores the issue of violence against women in refugee camps. This three-year initiative looks at the lived experiences of refugee women and addresses the impact of displacement by looking at the pre-migration and post migration experiences. Jaberi uses dance as a point of entry into the creation of the work and augments the narrative with verbatim theatre, poetry and multi-media. She also draws on her personal experiences

¹ To learn more about the cast and crew please see Dinner and Theatre Event - A Tender Path - Presented by Community Inclusivity Equity Council of York Region (CIECYR). Retrieved from: <http://parkbench.com/event/dinner-and-theatre-event-a-tender-path-presented-by-community-inclusivity-equity-council-of-york-region-ciecyr>

as a former refugee and survivor of war to look at the long-term impacts of trauma to both inform those who have no connection to these experiences and enable those who do.

Theatre and dance can serve to encourage those who feel powerless and instill a sense of control over one's own world by provoking understandings of the "root causes of problems and oppression" and to "give voice and expression" to these understandings (Boon & Plastow, 2004, p. 7). Performance art can support oppressed communities to reclaim their identities by the presentation of their "ignored histories" (Boon & Plastow, 2004, p. 11). Therefore, while theatre and dance may not offer intricate strategies to dismantle systems of oppression, they can serve the purpose of initiating a process of deeper understanding of self within the social and historical realities:

Empowerment is to do not with the amelioration of oppression and poverty *per se*, but with the liberation of the human mind and spirit, and the transformation of participants who see themselves—and are often seen by others—as subhuman, operating only at the level of seeking merely to exist, into conscious beings aware of and claiming voices and choices in how their lives will be lived. (Boon & Plastow, 2004, p. 7)

It is evident through our own practice that dance and theatre can have an impact in building relationships towards inspiring social change; however, we are trying to understand *how* or *why* these art forms have the impact that they do. These art mediums allow us to learn through metaphors, transmitting knowledge visually and through text, which offers a more immediate connection to our emotional centres (Sealey, 2008, p. 3). Theatre and dance can also assist us to visualize "situations in concrete terms" which also brings an immediacy to the happenings which we witness as spectators (Sealey, 2008, p. 119). The tangible and immediate nature of a live performance offers the viewer alternative ways of thinking that "transcends an abstract intellectual approach" (Sealey, 2008 p. 120). The physicality of being present in a theatre where live performances occur, asserts our "physical taking of space" and "inscribes the body as a powerful site of empowerment" (Boon & Plastow, 2004, p. 11). When pedagogy seeks to actuate critical thinking, it aims to assist individuals and groups to problematize their reality towards the development of capacities that pursue "both their own and society's liberation" (Kellner & Kim, 2010, p. 3). Dance and theatre can trigger both emotions and new ways of thinking to facilitate understanding in both an embodied and intellectual manner. Dance and theatre does this by offering "visual literacy" that can draw the viewer into "discussion and debate" using "the clarity of a visual image as the catalyst" (Sealey, 2008, p. 7). Our job therefore as researchers, activists, theatre and dance creators is to attempt to summon and move "feeling to thinking" which can result in "changed relation to the self and others" (Tarc, 2011, p. 365). More specifically, emotions activated by dance and theatre can "sharpen" our "critical thinking skills" in ways that expand our choices and help us examine and question our "normalized assumptions" (Sealey, 2008, p. 63).

Therefore, the content development process is very important in a dance or theatre

pedagogy for social change. The process needs to leverage the power of the crafts, i.e., in terms of how we tell a story, the visual vocabulary, use of movement, text and dialogue, character development and music, in a manner which is aligned to our social change and justice goals. We contend that in this process the first step is to attain a solid understanding of the social problem, for example the distinct manifestations of violence experienced by each women's group and their ideas around how to confront it.

Next, the material histories of people, their lived realities, should be shared to ensure that issues are contextualized and/or are understood in terms of specific relations, political influences and broader socio-economic issues. Therefore, we have found that the pedagogic use of dance and theatre needs to go beyond assumptions and be grounded in sound research about the target audience if it is to be successful in influencing activism. Thus, a clear understanding of the history and present-day conflict facing Indigenous and refugee women is essential before translating these experiences to individual stories using movement or text narratives.

For example, Jaberri draws on individual stories to highlight larger and more complex issues of systemic violence and oppression, which carry a sense of urgency and necessity. She believes that both artists and audiences have a responsibility in their relationship to the creation and viewership of the work. In this sense art can be viewed as a privilege and one that requires truthfulness on stage, which at times requires the evoking of uncomfortable images. As such, the audience's responsibility is closely related to the artist's contextual framing of the story in the developmental process. Gratuitous violence on stage, for instance, does not serve a pedagogical purpose yet art work that denies the truth of survivors to make the experience more palatable for audiences of a dominant culture demonstrates how power has disrupted the authentic narrative.

The developmental process for *A Tender Path* involved the engagement of Tamil, Somali, Iranian, Trans, Indigenous, and disability rights community-based researchers who organized and facilitated focus groups.² Recorders were asked to document as much in verbatim as possible. This helped Rajan, as the playwright, to become familiar with specific types of words that were used to describe a situation, to express difficult issues, or to present ideas that excited them and/or the different types of body language that would emerge.

Jaberri approached Mojab and Rajan to learn more about the issue of violence against marginalized women, particularly refugee women. Rajan was tasked with leading the primary research process, which was comprised of focus group sessions conducted with women from Tamil, Syrian, and Somali communities in Toronto. These three groups were selected based on their history of conflict and resulting refugee and migrant experiences prior to settlement in Canada. Similar to the research process for *A Tender Path*, community-based researchers were engaged to lead in the facilitation process in their own languages. The process involved the development of discussion guides which were vetted at a train-the-trainer session with the community facilitators prior to conducting the focus groups. The purpose of this session

² Some of these focus groups were held in the women's own languages, and therefore the materials were translated to English.

was to ensure that the stories were collected and recorded in an ethical manner. In addition, at this session facilitators learned about the type of information sought—how women *feel* about difficult situations they were in, getting a sense of movement and setting, etc.—any information that could be easily translated to dance. The train-the-trainer session also provided the opportunity to seek the input of the community facilitators regarding the most culturally appropriate and sensitive ways to carry out the focus group sessions. For some of the communities of women it was more appropriate to gather the information while doing something, e.g., a cooking session or over tea at a community centre that they visit regularly.

The stories for *No Woman's Land* were based on an extensive literature review of the experiences of sexual violence of Somali, Tamil, Syrian, and Palestinian women who lived in refugee camps. This process included the development of a final report, which detailed the findings of the research as it pertained to the issue of sexual violence for each of these women's groups as they transited through refugee camps. Transcripts from the focus groups as well as the report on the literature served to inform the artistic direction of production. The challenging task of translating these stories through movement, required a cast of open and generous performers who were willing to be vulnerable and were committed to delving into the research that was shared in the studio. Jaber's process included extracting images and stories that resonated with her, and this was used as the starting point to develop the overarching narrative and choreography.

It is important to note that the participants of the focus groups for both of the art pieces, were viewed as collaborators and not merely as subjects of the project. Therefore, engaging the participants through the entire process is an essential component of the work. It has also been vital to take the time to pause, reflect and consult at various junctions in the development of the work to ensure that the stories that were so generously shared had not been compromised by taking too much artistic liberty. On the other hand, creating some distance from the research has been necessary to allow for creative freedom. The ultimate goal of social-justice motivated performance art is to create work that is emotive, evocative, and thought provoking and not a literal representation of the content that is being explored. The production is intended to serve as a springboard to further the discussion around the refugee experience and gender-based violence in racialized communities, as well as to bring the focus back to the women at the heart of this complex systemic issue.

To sum up, a well-constructed performance art pedagogy develops stories that avoid didactic simplifications and leaves room for what the theatre or dance maker does not know, i.e., to present stories where many interpretations of the truth can emerge. In fact, critical discourse translated to these art forms can change how we understand and see social circumstances by offering alternative narratives. The pedagogical use of dance and theatre to assist in social change strategies will need to contain information that is based on critical theory and understandings grounded in real experiences. We can see that dance and theatre tools should be carefully and strategically constructed in order to effectively support the individual's and group's capacity to understand their oppression.

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Learning, Doing and Teaching Together: Reflecting on our Arts Based Approach to Research, Education and Activism with and for Women Living with HIV

Saara Greene, Marvelous Muchenje, Jasmine Cotnam, Kristin Dunn, Peggy Frank, Valerie Nicholson, Apondi J. Odhiambo, Krista Shore, Angela Kaida

ABSTRACT Body Mapping has been used for thousands of years by people who want to achieve a better understanding of themselves, their bodies and the world they live in. Artist Jane Solomon and psychologist Jonathan Morgan transformed Body Mapping for the “Long Life Project”, during the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) roll-out of antiretrovirals in Khayelitsha township, South Africa in 2001. Body mapping enables participants to tell their stories in the face of intense HIV/AIDS stigma. We adapted Body Mapping for the Women, Art and Criminalization of HIV Non-Disclosure (WATCH) study, a community arts based research (CBR) approach to better understand the impact that Canadian laws criminalizing HIV non-disclosure have on women living with HIV. Our national team includes women living with HIV, service providers, and researchers. This reflection illustrates our collective and iterative process of learning, teaching and doing body mapping workshops with women living with HIV in Canada. We share our experiences of coming to Body Mapping as an arts-based approach to CBR, how our roles as researchers stretched to include community-based education, advocacy, and group facilitation, and how we embodied the artist-researcher identity as we disseminate our research in ways that actively engage the general public on laws criminalizing HIV non-disclosure laws vis-à-vis Body Mapping galleries.

KEYWORDS Body Mapping, HIV, Women, Criminalization, Arts-based research

The Criminalization of HIV Non-Disclosure in Canada

Canada has one of the more aggressive approaches to criminalizing perceived HIV exposure in the world and is one of the only jurisdictions that classifies HIV non-disclosure as aggravated sexual assault. According to the most recent Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) ruling, people living with HIV are legally required to disclose their HIV-positive status to sexual partners before engaging in sexual activities that pose what the Court calls a “realistic possibility of transmission (*R. v. Cuerrier*, 1998).” Under the 2012 SCC law, avoiding the duty to disclose requires people living with HIV to have condom-protected vaginal sex with a low (i.e. <1500copies/mL) HIV viral load. This overly broad criminalization of HIV non-disclosure is at odds with growing scientific consensus that people living with HIV and maintaining an

undetectable viral load have effectively no risk of transmitting HIV to a sexual partner (Cohen et al., 2011; Rodger et al., 2016; Prevention Access Campaign, 2017).

Although the criminalization of HIV non-disclosure is often perceived as a tool to protect heterosexual women from HIV infection, a gendered analysis of the current law in Canada suggests that the law does little to protect women from HIV infection (Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 2017). HIV-related stigma and discrimination, and the complexity and risk surrounding HIV disclosure to family, friends, and sexual partners have particularly negative consequences for women living with HIV, including trans women and those facing poverty, racism, sexual violence, homophobia, ableism, the impact of colonization, and insecure immigration status (Allard, Kazatchkine, & Symington, 2013). Under the most recent legal test articulated by the SCC, condom use (which is seldom controlled by women) and viral suppression have become critical factors in a defense to an allegation of HIV non-disclosure.

Women, ART, and the Criminalization of HIV Non-Disclosure: WATCH

Given the extremely harsh treatment of HIV non-disclosure by the Canadian Justice System (CJS), HIV-related criminalization is simultaneously embedded in and fueling HIV-related stigma and discrimination experienced by women living with HIV. The current socio-legal climate in Canada, where HIV non-disclosure prior to sex is aggressively criminalized raises important questions about stigma, discrimination and the surveillance of women living with HIV. Women who are African, Caribbean, Black and newcomers to Canada, experience the harsh blow of the criminal law as yet another form of racial oppression and sexism (Tharao, Muchenje, & Mehes, 2013). Indigenous women are particularly affected by HIV non-disclosure requirements as approximately a third of the women who have been prosecuted for alleged non-disclosure are of Indigenous ancestry (Canadian HIV Legal Network, 2017). In response to these social and legal injustices, we engaged in a community arts-based research study exploring how the treatment of alleged non-disclosure of HIV under the CJS is understood and experienced by women and trans women living with HIV.

Coming to Body Mapping

“In Indigenous culture, when we put something down on paper we are giving it back to the paper and the paper now owns it. We don’t have to carry it ourselves anymore —the paper carries it for us.” (Val)

Body Mapping has been used for thousands of years by people who want to get a better understanding of themselves, their bodies and the world they live in. It was South African artist Jane Solomon and psychologist Jonathan Morgan who transformed the methodology for the “Long Life Project”, during the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) roll-out of antiretrovirals in Khayelitsha township in 2002 (Solomon, 2007). Through the body maps, participants were able to tell their stories in the face of intense HIV/AIDS stigma and fear. Using symbols and painting, exercises, visualizations, talking in groups, sharing and reflecting, Body Mapping is a way of using art to tell life stories, while at the same time facilitating self-healing. Body Mapping can be used for research and advocacy whereby the drawings and paintings are used

as data in themselves, supplemented by recorded reflections, or writing. Body Maps communicate feelings and experiences to raise awareness about political, personal, social, legal, and public health issues (Solomon, 2007). Ideas and issues can be explored which may be more difficult to access through verbal discussion alone and can free interviews from being intrusive (Rothe, Ozegovic, & Carroll, 2009). Body Mapping can trigger emotional memories, yet it is also an opportunity to celebrate courage and strength (Cornwall, 1992). For the women who participated in our Body Mapping workshops, emotional memories and current day concerns as well as experiences of resilience and resistance, were represented on the body maps and through sharing circles that the women participated in at the end of each day of art making. On the last day, women also shared their reflections on their experiences of engaging in the body mapping workshops stating that it was both an emotionally challenging and healing experience, and that they would want other women in their communities to experience the body mapping process. As Judith shared:

The Body Mapping approach provided a unique opportunity for the participants to connect with their inner being, reflect and introspect their lives as they engaged in art...Although the process made participants face their past and current reality in the most vulnerable way, in the end, they acknowledged how therapeutic and healing the experience was.

In the very early stages of conceptualizing how we would want to conduct our community based research study, it was unanimously agreed that an arts based approach to research would not only provide compelling data, but an opportunity for connection, support and healing for the participants. Each of us has brought a unique lens to the process. Saara, in her experience

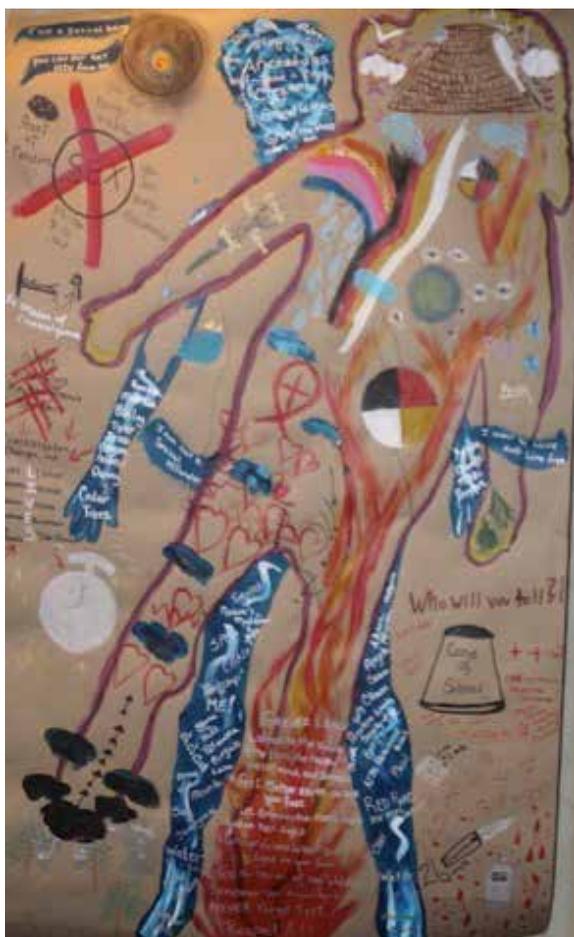


Figure 1. Valerie Nicholson's Body Map (WATCH Study, 2015)

of conducting arts based research, witnessed the value of using arts based methods in terms of the richness of the data collected, opportunities to share stories with others in supported and supportive environments, and the potential for addressing social injustices vis-a-vis the mobilization of knowledge through art. As our team came together, Saara, Marvelous, Krista, Val and Angela brainstormed different arts based approaches to research, but it was Val who first suggested Body Mapping. Both Val and Marvelous had experienced doing their own body maps and thought that this experience would meet a core principle of our research process: to engage in research that has immediate socially just outcomes for women living with HIV *during* the research process itself. Early conversations with Doris Peltier, who at the time was the Aboriginal Women Leadership Coordinator at the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, helped us to conceptualize our Body Mapping approach, ensuring that it was grounded in women's strengths and resilience. This approach benefited all the women who participated in the workshops including women who identified as Indigenous, Trans, African, and Caribbean, and women living with physical and visual impairments. It also benefitted us in our multiple roles as researchers and advocates as we planned and co-facilitated the workshops and, under the artistic direction of Peggy, curated our Body Mapping Gallery, which premiered in Montreal at the Canadian Association of HIV/AIDS Research (CAHR) in May, 2017.

Experiencing and Facilitating Body Mapping

I was a little apprehensive at first, because if you don't define yourself as a creative person, it is stressful. But the training brought it all together. Everyone's art work at the training was phenomenal, including mine...it created a lot of buy in for me; it actually made me a better facilitator so as to keep encouraging participants when they were passing judgment on themselves as artists. but the Body Mapping process became more important than the art itself. (Jasmine)

It is not surprising that given our diverse social positionings, particularly as it relates to HIV as a lived experience and/or as women practicing allyship to women living with HIV, that our individual and collective journey toward facilitating Body Mapping workshops have followed diverse paths. The journey to Body Mapping followed the more immediate necessity to engage in research with and for women living with HIV about their experiences of living in a socio-legal context in Canada where HIV is criminalized. This included the palpable fear surrounding reports of people living with HIV being charged for not disclosing their HIV status, what this meant for women in the context of engaging in sexual relationships, and how this fear seeps into other areas of their lives. The desire to approach this research through Body Mapping followed. As Angela shared:

The richness of Body Mapping seemed like a necessary counterpoint to the crudeness and inhumanity of the law, which wants to view women living with HIV as suddenly

unaffected by gender and power inequities, violence, lower legal status, and other social injustices...As a researcher practicing allyship to women living with HIV, the experience of facilitating Body Mapping was deeply humbling and a privilege.

Importantly, we recognized the potential that Body Mapping offered for knowledge generation, community connection, safety, and healing, yet we collectively agreed that we had an ethical responsibility to know, through experience, what we were asking of women before we endeavored to use Body Mapping as a research method. As Kristin reflected:

We were brought to understand ourselves in entirely unexpected ways, in a setting which engendered the building of trust, intimacy, and bonding. In this way, we came to understand the scope of the methodology's impact, so that we were in turn equipped not only with a skillset but with an embedded knowledge of and respect for its power. It's clear to me why we had first to experience the Body Mapping as participants before we could be qualified to co-facilitate these workshops.

A critical learning for many of us, was the importance of grounding ourselves culturally and spiritually before, during and after the workshops. Out of respect for the Indigenous territories where our research was to take place and of our Indigenous team members and participants, we chose to ground our Body Mapping training in Indigenous teachings and ceremony. Our training was supported by an Elder who connected her local teachings to our collective and individual experiences. This process was powerful for all of us, regardless of our own traditions. As Judith remarked:

Personally, I became more aware of the role of culture and beliefs in our lives. It was interesting to note how deeply embedded culture is in our histories and how culture transcends geographies. As a black African woman, I did not realize how similar my culture and beliefs were to those of the indigenous community. Through the sharing circles, I immersed myself in the healing process that was facilitated by an Indigenous elder. This was a grounding process that helped me as a facilitator to connect with the process as well as with the participants who embodied different identities and cultures.

Of critical importance to our reflecting on the facilitator experience, was the recognition that some of us also held multiple identities and roles in the community. As Marvelous shared, this was both a challenging and gratifying experience that shaped her entire experience:

As a woman living with HIV, service provider and researcher it was hard to balance my roles, and maintain the boundaries...I had to constantly remind myself that whatever they were sharing that day, I did not have to compare it with what I knew about them already. I respected their experiences, and got to learn more about their struggles and resilience. This experience brought us closer together. Their thoughts resonated



Figure 2. Marvelous Muchenje Body Map (WATCH Study, 2015)

with my thoughts—I felt their pain, I cried when they cried, and laughed to the jokes we shared.

“United We Stand, Divided We Fall”: Doing Research as Advocacy

And those days we spent together—it created a safe space, but also gave us the connection to others, and to reinforce that message: that you aren’t alone in this. The ultimate goal is to take this research and educate those who need to be taught...(Val)

Embodying the researcher/educator/advocate role was powerful and necessary. As Marvelous stated, “Racism, gender based violence, discrimination and human rights. Being together ignited our passion, confirmed our resilience, and made us realize that united we stand, divided we fall.”

We therefore recognized the potential that moving through the Body Mapping process had for using art as a way to document strategies of resilience, resistance and social change. As Judith explained, “The body maps helped women connect their bodies to the social relations of HIV criminalization... furthermore, using the body maps, the women outlined their coping and resistance strategies.”

At the same time, the Body Maps illuminated the confusion and unanswered questions the women had about the law. As facilitators, we were regarded as experts by the women and this triggered our collective moral and ethical compass and commitment to social change; consequently, this propelled us to include a criminalization of HIV non-disclosure education session as part of the workshop. The sessions ensured that the participants had the correct knowledge of the law and their legal rights, and answers to their questions in ‘real time’. This work has continued long after the workshops have ended. Kristin reflected:

Once we were conducting the research, it became clear that our roles were multifaceted. As fears and misinformation emerged we were in an excellent position to dispel myths, clarify points of law, and offer reassurances... In the weeks and months following our workshop, participants reached out frequently to access support, guidance, and to network with other participants, having found a place in a community where they could speak openly and be heard.

Embodying the Researcher Artist Identity in Action

The community of women living with HIV was traumatized when charges were laid

against their peers. I wanted to advocate for change, but didn't know how. Body Mapping has been the best tool for a woman who has a passion for public art. (Peggy)

Most of us would not have called ourselves 'artists' before engaging in our Body Mapping workshops. Most of us would not claim to be artists even now. However, as Peggy voiced above, we have all experienced and witnessed the power of art, even the comfort of art, in asking and responding to difficult questions. We have learned together that doing art helps us and the women we care about to convey the whole range of complicated, painful, and empowering experiences that women living with HIV have as they bump up against criminalizing and stigmatizing environments. Our hope was that through creating a gallery of the women's body maps at the end of each workshop, we could create an alternative environment. An environment where truths were told in ways that that illuminate resilience, resistance, and action.



Figure 3. Peggy Frank's Body Map (WATCH Study, 2015)

As we have endeavored to share our research in ways that enable us to embody our researcher, educator and advocate identities, we have participated in dissemination and knowledge mobilization activities that engage the general public on issues of criminalization vis-à-vis public Body Mapping galleries. Many participants in the research were willing and excited to use their maps for public awareness. Peggy, had the initial idea for the CAHR Gallery. Her artistic vision came from imagining how close she was to being imprisoned by a vindictive partner. We agreed with her that the women's Body Maps needed to be hung in a safe place, but also one that reflected entering another world: prison. By hanging strings from the ceiling, spaced like prison bars, the women were encased in a thoughtful venue for conference participants to reflect on the impact of the law.



Figure 4. WATCH Study Body Map Gallery, IAS, Amsterdam, 2018

This was a powerful experience for us all:

It was an honour to witness the attendees at CAHR move through the Art Gallery. It comes back to my Indigenous cultural background. If I am tasked with being a witness to someone's story, it is my duty to lead others through the story and hold it. To have that honour of being able to be a guide at the Gallery when people ask questions of 'What does it mean?'; we carry the words of the women. (Val)

And, as Kristin added:

It was moving and encouraging to hear compassionate responses, to witness moments when people were brought to tears, or to outrage. Equally, it was encouraging to hear people remark on the resilience and beauty they found in the Body Maps and in the lives of the women.

What is perhaps more striking, is the way the women embodied the artists in themselves. As Jasmine witnessed, “I know women who have them up in their homes. It says that the experience was way more than the research; that they connected it to their lives – there is pain and there is beauty and they want to share it...”

To date, the Body Maps, accompanied by participant narratives, have been displayed at regional, provincial, and national conferences. At the time of writing, we have just submitted an application to host our Body Mapping Gallery at the International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam as a way to engage people living with HIV, activists, researchers, legal advocates and others in a global effort for Canadian legal reform.

Not Quite the Conclusion

Our work together is not complete. We have a long way to go in our commitments to end HIV stigma and to advocate for legal reform on behalf of women living with HIV in Canada and around the world. However, we conclude our ‘report from the field’ in a way that honours our voices and experiences as arts based researchers who are committed to learning, doing and teaching together. With that, we end with Jasmine who so beautifully stated:

Personally, I feel like I’m actually part of something huge and important. I got to show my body map to my daughter and we got to talk about what it was, and what it meant. There are so many ways to unpack something and some are more painful than others. Body Mapping is a gentle way to look at uncomfortable topics.

About the Authors

Jasmine Cotnam resides in Northwestern Ontario and holds the positions of National APHA Liaison and Research Coordinator at the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network. Jasmine is an Indigenous woman and mother who has been publicly open about her HIV status since her diagnosis less than a decade ago.

Kristin Dunn has moved from in-hospital advocacy to work as a Peer Educator with the Elizabeth Fry Society of SK, offering prison in-reach and a support group for women living with HIV. She's on the Patient and Family Advisory Council for HIV (Waniska PFAC) and works with the Northern Intertribal Health Authority

Peggy Frank is a trained biologist, but worked in the arts, policy, and sciences. She co-founded the Southern Gulf Islands (HIV) Support Society and positively AFRICA. With a brush, pen or a meditation in hand, she has taught Body-Mapping and Therapeutic Touch extensively throughout Canada and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Saara Greene (*corresponding author*) is an Associate Professor, School of Social Work, McMaster University and mother of two. She is passionate about engaging in community arts based research and arts driven knowledge mobilization activities with women living with HIV. She cares deeply about doing and using research for advocacy, education and social change. Email: greenes@mcmaster.ca

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Valerie Nicholson is A Spirited Indigenous Warrior Woman, and became active in HIV/AIDS advocacy in 2008. She was the first Indigenous women to Chair the Board of Positive Living B.C, and is currently an Indigenous Peer Navigator, and Chair of the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network.

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Krista Shore is a mother of four from Peepeekisis First Nation. Involved in the HIV movement since diagnosis in 2007, she founded Circle of Courage, a holistic approach to health and well being for women with HIV. Krista received 'Igniting the way Forward Women's Award' for courage and leadership in Saskatchewan, 2017.

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Audience Engagement in Theatre for Social Change

Jessica Litwak

ABSTRACT This report from the field describes some of the author's methods of audience engagement as a means of social engagement, discussing the implications for practice. The report invites dialogue with the reader about the usefulness of audience engagement and ways it can be manifested before, during and after performance. Theatre is a vibrant and valuable tool for sparking dialogue and inspiring action around challenging social topics. Audiences who are engaged in the process of the performance beyond the standard role of passive spectator are more likely to be motivated to deliverable endeavors post performance. This report from the field offers four brief case studies as examples of audience engagement and includes pragmatic techniques for using theatre as a vehicle for personal and social change through audience engagement. It explores how artists can galvanize and empower audiences by creating experiential communities pre, during, and post-show. Drawing upon examples from high-quality international theatre projects written and directed by the author, the essay investigates and describes the work of The H.E.A.T. Collective including *My Heart is in the East* (U.S., U.K. and Europe), *The FEAR Project* (produced in the US, India and Czech Republic), *Emma Goldman Day* (U.S.).

KEYWORDS Theatre, creative leadership, audience engagement, social change, participatory art, expressive arts, therapeutic theatre, experiential learning, drama therapy, dramatic arts

Don't expect the theatre to satisfy the habits of its audience, but to change them.

- Bertolt Brecht (Willet, 1957)

It started with a curtain call. I must have been seven. My mother took me to a play at the high school where she taught. I witnessed these cool teenagers rock the stage with violent and romantic conflict. Then afterward they all held hands and smiled at each other. They bowed. I wanted to be part of that unified field.

Out of artistic necessity, I go to the theatre frequently. Sometimes the play leaps off the stage and grabs me in the gut or the heart or the brain. Sometimes I am moved to tears or belly laughs. Sometimes the experience changes how I see a situation, what I think about it, and what actions I will take when I leave the theatre. But more often I feel sequestered far away from the action, the **fourth wall**, which is a theatrical term describing the invisible barrier between the action onstage and the audience, is thick and impenetrable before me. I am amazed, impressed, disappointed or furious but have no way of engaging directly with



Figure 1. Post show audience—Brno, CZ

Photo: Barbara Herucová. Used with permission.

the experience. I remain mostly unchanged, and therefore have no impulse to make moves to change my life or the society around me. When I am engaged in a play before, during and/or after a show, I feel more connected to the experience. When I am engaged with the play, the performance itself becomes more meaningful to me artistically, intellectually, and personally. Because I thrive on interaction with artists as an audience member, I make audience engagement a priority in my own theatre work.

My effort to engage audiences has extended beyond the play into pre and post show events. I now always include a post-show discussion in any production I build. When the audience intermingles with the artists and each other there is a greater potential for long lasting impact.

In addition to the inspiration gained from the compelling action of a performance, the influence of theatre can also be a healing one. As a practitioner and a scholar, I have often asked myself: can theatre be a therapeutic experience for audiences? As a result of practising audience engagement my answer is a resounding Yes. I have become more acutely aware of the power of theatre to effect psychological well-being. There is an innate healing function in theatre that goes all the way back to its origins in human culture. (Snow, 2003). Audience engagement is one way of enhancing the healing experience.

The practice of audience engagement is the central thrust of the H.E.A.T. Collective's custom. The H.E.A.T. Collective is my theatre company that uses a bricolage of methods: Healing, Education, Activism and Theatre in workshops, events and performances to lead and inspire both personal and social change. The H.E.A.T. Paradigm is a way of seeing theatre as a creative process that includes healing, education and activism through the lens of high-quality theatre. I incorporate the practice of paradoxical curiosity (Lederach, 2005) respecting

complexity, seeking something beyond what is visible, and discovering what holds apparently opposed social energies together. By engaging audiences, we can explore how the creative process helps to bring about social change and transform human relationships. I also use performative ethnography. By merging performance and scholarship, the personal becomes political. Language is both transformative and embodied. Aesthetic craft is balanced with heuristic knowledge and truth (Sprey, 2011). To truly find “power with” instead of “power over” we can use audience engagement to demystify the chasm between on stage and off.

Audience engagement requires a focus on community building as we experience in Forum Theatre. This work involves the audience to change their world by engaging in social action on stage. Boal called the technique simultaneous dramaturgy (Boal, 1995). All of these methods help to build Socially Engaged Theatre that carries impact for audiences while insisting on meticulous beauty.

My first awareness of audience engagement happened when I was 18 years old and attended a Theatre in Education conference at UC Santa Cruz; they presented programs that were changing people’s lives by using art to enhance education and- there were dancers working with drummers getting deaf children to dance to the vibration of the drums. There was a theatre company teaching history to high school students with improvisation and character development, there was a company bringing ritual to audiences by educating them about Native American practices. In each case the audience was entering into the performance.

Theatre is a sacred and ancient art form, which has served to empower and galvanize communities since pre-history. However, in modern society with the onset of the industrial cinematic and now digital age, audiences often go to theatre to relax, and forget their lives and their bodies, taking a passive role in the entertainment experience. Instead of embracing and embodying the action of the play as something personal and necessary to their own lives, they remain removed from it and judge it from a distance. When a good theatre production is generous and brave and offers itself to the audience, there is a probability for emotional and intellectual engagement. Shakespeare’s theatre had a profound impact on its audiences. Reaching the crowd (both groundlings and nobles) was at the heart of its purpose. Theatrical creations can potentially heal, inform, comfort, provoke, activate, open minds and hearts. But when the audience is invited to engage physically, emotionally, and intellectually through planned and/or improvised involvement, the power of theatre expands to include both, a deeper awareness of and empathy for humanity, and a real potential for positive change.

Three Case Studies

My work has been called collage and magical realism, paradoxical, and multilayered. I like contradiction. I like when people and places and things that shouldn’t be together crash into each other and a kind of unity is born out of the wreckage. One day I was in high school taking my daily ride to school on the 22 Fillmore bus. I was bouncing along squished up next to two people: A Tall Black Drag Queen bedazzled and decked out in a hot pink jumpsuit and a Tiny Elderly White Woman with blue hair covered by a thin hairnet. I thought to myself how far away these two people are from each other from such different worlds. Just as a thought

occurred to me, the bus swerved and jostled the Drag Queen and one of her giant rings got caught in the hairnet of the Little Old Lady, and for the next few minutes their worlds were one as the Drag Queen gingerly picked her rhinestone ring out of the hairnet. I think I have been writing some version of that story ever since. Audience engagement allows me to embrace the paradox and invite people to talk about it. As an example, I will briefly outline the use of audience engagement in three of my ongoing projects, namely:

My Heart is in the East—My Heart is in the East a play about Muslim and Jewish relations across the centuries.

The FEAR Project—The FEAR Project is an ensemble piece recreated for every performance based on interviews with community members and audiences.

Emma Goldman Day—Emma Goldman Day is a community event that consists of three plays, three discussions and three meals.

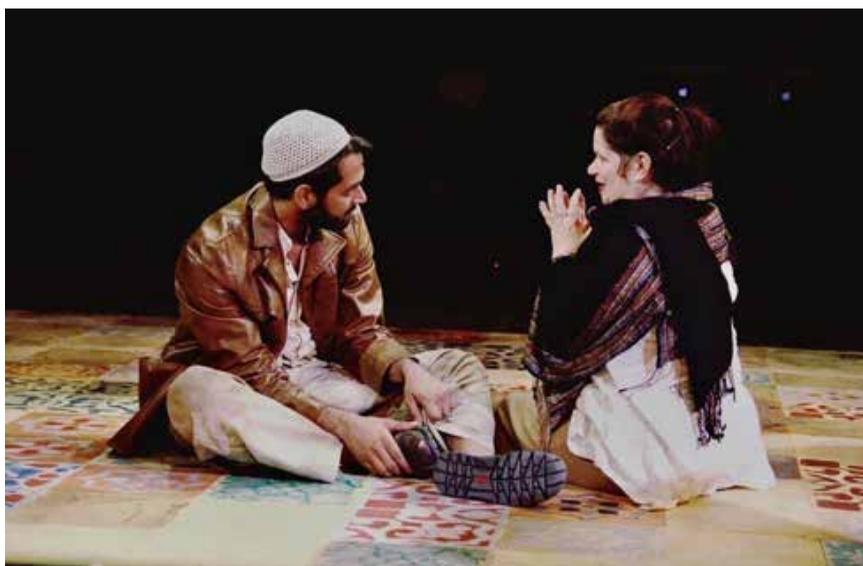
My Heart is in the East

The process of writing *My Heart is in the East* changed my life. Combining my own experiences of working in Iraq with an Arab street poet, and my deep research about a period known as La Convivencia (the Co-existence) when Jews, Muslims, and Christians lived in relative peace due in part to poetry contests. The story from present day Iraq merges with the story from Medieval Andalucía. Both are about unity slowly growing out of violent paradox. My intention for the post show experience is to bridge the world of the play and lead the audience and artists into the current times, right where we are now.

My Heart is in the East is a play about Muslim-Jewish relations taking place in modern day Iraq and 11th Century Cordoba. The post show experience is unique and just as important as the play itself. As they enter the theatre the audience is randomly given one of four different index cards with different prompts (For example: A. Yellow: Homonym; B. Pink: Contradiction; C. Blue: Rhyme; D. Green: Two Languages) After the play (which runs about 90 minutes) the Poetry Ushers come on stage and instruct the audience to get into groups according to their card color. They are told that actors will be out in 10–15 minutes and that's how long this group has to come up with one line of poetry about the issues in the play using their card's specific prompt. While they are writing trays of olives, grapes, almonds, and dates are passed around. The Poetry Shepherds circulate among the groups to encourage the short poems. The Contest happens when the actors emerge and ask each group to read and then everyone judges the one-line poems and chooses the prize that each group receives: The Olive Prize, The Grape Prize, The Almond Prize, or The Grand Date Prize.

After this jovial (and sometimes very beautiful) icebreaker, we announce that night's guest (each performance will have a speaker from the community – experts on peacebuilding, history, Jewish and Muslim relations, poetry etc.) who speaks for a few minutes about their work and then leads a short discussion about the issues in the play. One audience member stated:

I entered the theatre, crossed my arms and sat back, thinking OK show me! The raw emotion, and the depth of the subject matter made me sit forward. After the play



Figures 2 (top) and 3 (bottom). *My Heart is in the East*, La MaMa, New York, June 2017
Photos: Edward Morris. Used with permission.

I had to talk with other audience members to write a line of a poem- we laughed, I came out of myself even more. Finally, we had a group discussion with a Muslim scholar to talk about the issues of the play, and then I really felt like a part of a community. I couldn't believe how closed I had been only two hours earlier and how connected I felt now. (personal communication)

The FEAR Project



Figure 4. The FEAR Project, Prague, CZ, February 2016

Photo: Thomas P Krakora. Used with permission.



Figure 5. The FEAR Project, Kolkata, India, December 2015

Photo: G.D Birla Sabhagar. Used with permission.

The FEAR Project is an experiment in performative ethnography and community service. The artists involved serve the communities with whom we are collaborating and for whom we are performing. We gather research and stage it. The result is not verbatim theatre, but it is sourced in testimony and truth. Doing this project, I learned how to make an audience into a community and a community into a play. This is not “community theatre” it is theatre of

the community, a high quality professional theatrical experiment that aims to move, provoke, inspire, excite, and heal.

The FEAR Project is a play based on interviews about fear. It contains choral poetry made from verbatim interviews, as well as direct address monologues, and realistic scenes. The FEAR Project aspires to create an atmosphere of restoration by giving people a chance to communicate about fear in a safe space.

The interviews consist of 13 questions that are asked by the participating artists to a broad and diverse population in the community in the following order:

1. What are you afraid of?
2. Who are you afraid of?
3. Where are you afraid?
4. How do you react to fear?
5. How do you conquer fear?
6. What is the enemy?
7. Who is the enemy?
8. Where is the enemy?
9. How do you react to the enemy?
10. What do you do to conquer hate?
11. Who is the stranger?
12. What is home?
13. How do you feel about your country right now?

Each FEAR Project process evolves in the following way, once the interviews are collected I construct a Choral Poem out of the verbatim interviews. We (the company of artists) have a reading of the poem and an in-depth discussion. I then write the rough draft of the play with the choral poem as well as scenes and monologues. We then move into a period of rehearsal: character development, staging etc.

Each performance includes pre-show interviews and a post-show discussion with the audience. At the beginning of each show the actors spend about 15 minutes interviewing the audience with the 13 questions. The interviews from the audience are recorded on yellow paper and embedded into that performance. When the yellow paper appears, the audience tend to lean forward knowing they are now hearing their own answers.

The FEAR Project inspires collaborative action for the artists, the interviewees and the audiences. We find our way through fear in the radical intimacy of socially engaged performance. We as theatre practitioners can encourage an imaginative exploration of even the darkest truth to facilitate transformation. We are not afraid, even of fear. The project has so far been successfully developed and produced in three countries: India, The Czech Republic and the U.S. An artist commented:

What was most interesting about the piece was the response it created afterwards in the discussion period. When we heard there would be a discussion after, we almost

didn't attend it out of fear of such things. What a paradox! I'm really glad we overcame this fear and went there, cause the play just got another dimension for me. After hearing all these different feelings and views from the play it really got me thinking. I was a bit shocked, a bit shaken. it made me realize this will never be a closed topic and it shouldn't be for anyone. (M. Cizkova, personal communication, February 2017)



Figures 6 (top) and 7 (bottom). Emma Goldman Day 2016, TheatreLab, New York. Photos: Theo Cote. Used with permission.

Emma Goldman came into my life at an early age when I was cast as her in a play. She has been my spirit guide and inspiration ever since. I named my first child after her. I spent years and years researching her work and life And I wrote three plays about her. I channeled her voice through my voice and her body through my body.

Emma Goldman Day is a dream come true for me. We have produced it every March for three years for Women's History Month. Through the experience of seeing three plays,

participating in three guided discussions and sharing three meals with food that reflect the play they've just seen, the audience becomes completely engaged in Emma's story, eventually shouting praise at her and booing the villains that thwart her.

The three plays explore the life and work of the infamous anarchist Emma. The plays cover four decades beginning with *Love, Anarchy and Other Affairs*—one actor, one night in 1901 in an apartment in Chicago (in the first play) to *The Snake and the Falcon*—in which four actors tell the story of Emma's deportation in 1919 at the hands of J. Edgar Hoover, and finally *Nobody Is Sleeping* performed by six actors and several puppets, which depicts Emma's last four years on the front of The Spanish Civil War.

H.E.A.T first produced the plays together in staged reading form at The Emma Goldman Trilogy Happening in March of 2016 in honor of Women's History Month. The plays and the discussions were vibrant, fascinating and enhanced by the wonderful actors, panel members, audiences, and helpers who helped build an amazing community experience. We served food, hot tea, shots of vodka, and Spanish wine to compliment the conversations about serious issues: revolution, immigration, American history, free love, and economic justice. People who stayed for all three plays and discussions got special gift bags "Emmasary Prizes". An audience member said:

If you want to understand how theatre builds community, look no further than the Emma Goldman Trilogy Happening: An incredible day that provoked thoughtful conversations and connected people through the inspiring life of Emma Goldman and the vibrant storytelling of Jessica Litwak." (J. Rasmussen, personal communication, March 2016)

Summary

One of the reasons audience engagement works is that it increases an audience's experience of being seen and acknowledged by the artists. A. G. Johnson (2006) stated, "Of all human needs, few are as powerful as the need to be seen, included, and accepted by other people" (p. 58). People want to be seen and they crave human connection. Many of us, especially in the West are becoming more divided and cocooned as humans as the result of our excessive use of devices such as cell phones. When I travel on the New York subways I often observe that people are plugged in and are tuned out to those around them. With the advent of mobile entertainment centers, people can have the solo experience of watching movies or television shows through ear buds and virtual headgear. The Western society within which I live seems to encourage less physical interaction and eye contact than was typical when I was young. It is my opinion that before personal technology was so advanced, people seemed to interact with each other more than they do today. Live theatre compels us into human contact, but we can still avoid exchange as much as possible, ignoring the fact that we are IN community when sitting in the middle of one. We can lean away from the people sitting on either side of us, move away from ourselves and reach away from the play, into our seats, OUT of community. We might judge the show, worry about our lives, daydream about dinner, check the digital devices in our

laps, become annoyed at the smells and sounds of the humans around around us. If we are truly involved in the art and story of the play we may become emotionally and intellectually attached to the material. We may regard our fellow theatregoers with a sense of fellowship at the knowledge we are sharing this special experience. On the rare occasion that we speak to a stranger in the interval or have a vibrant conversation on the way home, the experience becomes even more memorable. But still we may not have not fully entered the experience. Audience engagement provides us with an opportunity to dive in.

Why can audience engagement scare people? To be egged into authentic intimate acquaintance with strangers may be intimidating, and if one has come to the theater for a sense of escape through entertainment, a challenging topic or direct address from actors can even be somewhat aggravating. When the subject matter of a play is intense and has stirred up feelings we often want to run to the local pub and or curl up in bed away from the theatrical environment where we were triggered. With audience engagement we are coaxed into the act of sharing our experience with others and listening to their experiences which may be similar or very different to our own.

For humanity to survive we must find a way to understand, listen, and empathize with each other. Audience engagement is useful to the process of empathy; with this form of work the audience may become a community . It may be a temporary community. There may be longer lasting connection, depending on the nature of the engagement. But no matter the length and depth of the feeling audience members often experiences change from their entrance to the theatre to their exit.

Theatre is a bright enigma, for when the lights go out on the stage the visceral effects exist only in memory. Like sexuality, or the smell and taste of food, the theatre lives in us somatically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually only while it is happening. Theatre, at its best and most useful is immediate and urgent, the immediacy of the form often matched by the necessity of content. It is a communal experience. It can wake us up to ourselves. This may be the key to the transformative power of art. Audience engagement increase the potential for transformation.

I welcome further conversation. Please be in touch with me to share your experiences and ideas about the ways audience interaction can manifest and your thoughts about the impact (artistic and political) of audience engagement.

About the Author

Jessica Litwak (*corresponding author*) is a theatre artist focused specifically on theatre for social change and community engagement. She is an award-winning playwright and actress, as well as an educator, drama therapist and puppet builder. Her plays have been produced all over

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Book Reviews

Uncommitted Crimes: The Defiance of the Artistic Imagi/nation by Tara Atluri. Toronto, ON: Inanna Publications and Education, 2018.

Imagination is the capacity to form an image of something not currently present to the senses. Tara Atluri's book, *Uncommitted Crimes: The Defiance of the Artistic Imagi/nation*, is a celebration of those who are reimagining Canadian narratives of multiculturalism, diversity, and equity. Colonial, cisgendered, heteronormative, and racist narratives that may yet be invisible to the inhabitants of Turtle Island are revealed through Atluri's depiction of a diverse selection of artists and art. In the following review I provide a brief background of the author, a review of one of the central themes of the book, and a discussion of the book's application in practice.

A quick library search suggests Atluri has written extensively on the topics addressed in this book, including but not limited to subjects such as racism, colonialism, gender politics, sexuality, transgenderism, and white supremacy. In 2016, she published *Azadi: Sexual Politics and Post Colonial Worlds*, in which she discussed the political and legal results of the 2012 Delhi gang rape case, and how it affected the lives and rights of queer people in India. Since then, Atluri has published multiple works on the topics of queer politics, transgenderism, and Canada's colonial legacy and is well-positioned to speak as an expert not only on these complex social issues, but also on the role art can play in demystifying and destigmatizing these issues.

The themes of *Uncommitted Crimes* are many and include art as a political act, art as a creative intervention, and art as a social critique. The theme of art as an intervention weaves throughout the entire book and the focus of this review is on how this theme develops and emerges in the works of the artists presented by Atluri.

In the first chapter, Atluri presents a trio of queer and transgendered artists challenging dominant heteronormative, cisgender narratives and intervening by showcasing transcendent love through the written word. The artists' works may also be considered acts of defiance against gender binaries, highlighting the difficulty and risk of disidentifying with normalized sexual narratives.

Similarly, in chapter eight, Atluri describes Brendan Fernandes's work, *Encomium*. This piece presents the failure of love as defined by straight heteronormative culture, while also disidentifying with historical and iconic ballet imagery. Fernandes's work is described as giving "vitality to the timeless spirit of rebellion" (p. 262), as it invites a reconsideration of romantic love, dance, and desire. Although all the artistic oeuvres described here are staged in Canada, each artist hails from a background of Otherness—challenging not only heteronormative assumptions, but also calling for reconsideration of Canada's multicultural and inclusive identities.

In chapter three, Atluri presents Shirin Fathi's photographic challenges of gender and cultural forms. In exploring Fathi's work, Atluri puts forward a compelling argument about the role of photography in establishing the Other in the colonial context. She suggests that "the representation of the 'typical' within colonial history was often made possible through mediums such as photography" (p. 85), with photographs used to justify violent colonial agendas of domination. Fathi, Atluri submits, provides compelling challenges to this colonial

narrative and to the gender politics around representations of the Orient.

Rajni Perer's work reveals truths about the construction or destruction of racism. Perera uses mixed media on paper to counter racist and sexist colonial traditions, representing Brown and Black women's bodies as figures of power and sexuality. She also reclaims yogic cultural appropriation, depicting posed figures that are an "affront to the Lululemon-branding of contemporary yoga culture" (p. 155). Atluri's perspective on Perera's work is that this newer interpretation of yoga is evidence of the perpetuation of a colonial racist agenda, cultural misappropriation, and the ongoing promotion of colonial Orientalism.

Artmaking as a defiance of racism is also clearly portrayed in Joshua Vettivelu's work, *Washing Hands/Whiten Up*. In this performance piece, the artist washes his hands in white glitter, in so doing transforms his colored skin to a sparkling white and metaphorically washes away the Otherness. In another work by Vettivelu, the artist paints his face with wax that goes on clear but hardens to a dull white. These performances are powerful metaphors for the ongoing struggles of non-white people living in Canada: struggling to maintain their identity, while also working to become part of the Canadian landscape.

Mass Arrival—a public intervention and installation by Farrah Miranda, Graciela Flores, Tings Chak, Vino Shanmuganathan, and Nadia Saad—is described by Atluri as "a breathtaking spectacle of ironic and artistic revelry" (p. 178). This work confronts the Canadian identities of multicultural peacemaker and safe harbour, pointing out the xenophobic ironies of the federal government's panicked response when the refugee MV *Sun Sea* landed on Canadian shores in 2010. Comparably, the filmwork of Kerry Potts and Rebecca Belmore challenges the dominant white Canadian constructs of home, family, sexuality, and love. Atluri suggests that film offers artists an opportunity to invert the lens, showing observers how whiteness connects to power, property, and love.

Uncommitted Crimes is an excellent resource for anyone considering the power of art in creating social change and uncovering important, and perhaps hidden or stigmatized, narratives. As Atluri herself says, "these remarkable transnational artists create emotionally charged creative interventions" (p. 306), allowing people to experience their own identities and social worlds through a new reimagined lens.

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Creative Social Change: Leadership for a Healthy World by Kathryn Goldman Schuyler, E.B. Baugher, and K. Jironet (Eds.). Bingley, U.K.: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2016.

This volume, in a series of edited books called *Building Leadership Bridges*, offers a path to bettering the world. The editors begin by interviewing distinguished thought leaders, systems thinkers, and social scientists around seven open-ended questions, creating a primer for what leadership can or should be. This is followed by a review of the literature, building on theoretical constructs for a healthy society and finishing with case examples. In the introduction the editors aptly demonstrate their positionality through story, developing a hopeful yet practical view of “humans” and the possibilities for a healthy world. With an expression of shared values, they hope to plant “seeds” (p. 7) of action within the text. They offer an ideal, one in which people manage equilibrium between humanity and nature for the benefit of society by being internally reflective and externally practical. The authors have expertise in relevant areas of focus in this book, including organizational development, leadership, psychology, and sociology. Focusing on systems thinking, the content relates to organizational development, organizational psychology, and sociology. The book’s strengths are in its design, quality, and selection of sources.

The authors did not explicitly recognize limits to human capacity in collective action for the good of the whole, yet contributors appropriately mention such common limits in their own ways. For example, Peter Senge refers to “systems leaders” and the problem of people trying to balance their own needs with acting collectively (p. 71), while Quinn recalls a story about students of differing religions, each perceiving their unique beliefs as resonating with the commonality of his leadership class (p. 64). The focus of this text is to generate leadership thinking about healthy systems, which Senge sums up nicely with his favourite notion of leadership: “Leadership is the capacity of a human community to shape its future” (p. 67). *Creative Social Change* achieves its main objective in part because it highlights the possibilities for the future and a path towards it.

The editors open the book with “The Ground: Foundations from Thought Leaders”, which interviews five “weighty” (p. 19) scholars—R. Quinn, O. Scharmer, E. Schein, P. Senge, and M. Wheatley—giving the book an undeniable richness and direction. The authors start by defining the term health, not from the lens of “effectiveness” for society, but from “heart and consciousness” (p. 15). This idea of world health is then reduced to a more cognitively accessible and practical frame of diverse organizations and communities—holons within a greater system—giving the text a tangible balance between idealism and pragmatism for community practitioners.

The fundamental questions asked here include probing what the state, direction(s), and components of a healthy organization are, and what best practices can be modelled and investigated (pp. 25-6). In part one, the interviewed thought leaders generate knowledge around themes. Part two addresses “fundamental conditions necessary for individual, organizational, societal, and ecological health and what it means to be a cultivator of such health as a leader” (p. 100). Part three explores six case studies set in local contexts where a community’s vitality

is improved through groups and organizations. These diverse cases offer lessons on leadership and deal with topics including the arts as intervention, stories of leaders and leadership in service to community, and examples of policy creation through grassroots organizations. One such illustration of the latter is the “Ecuadorian legislation [that] favors the indigenous notion of *sumak kawsay* (‘good living’) and grants rights to Mother Earth” (p. 243).

I find the editors’ and authors’ appreciative and hopeful approaches reassuring, making this a pleasant yet knowledge-packed read. As a student of scholarship, I do not find this hopeful approach too idealistic, given the book’s well-considered design, skilled contributors, methodological descriptors, and superb flow of content. The development of thinking in the first part of the book is complemented with more structured approaches in its second part and by relevant and diverse examples in its final third, lending itself as a useful reference for supporting action.

The writing generally avoids recognizing cognitive or myopic limitations of the human brain in understanding diversity and the social messiness that to-date has eluded the whole of human society. Challenges to the book’s focus on groups and organizations could come from the Olsonian hypothesis, understood by *The Tragedy of the Commons* or *Prisoner’s Dilemma*, in which individuals are selfishly motivated, small groups are self-serving, and societies cannot effectively collaborate. My own cynical concern regarding the totalitarian idealism of a “healthy world” (as articulated by Joshua Greene’s *Moral Tribes* and Mancur Olson’s *The Logic of Collective Action*) were tempered early. This was particularly the case when the authors referenced Schein (2000), whom they paraphrase by saying, “Health is not an end state...but instead an ongoing capacity to remove toxins from a living system” (p. 17). Further removing a *silver bullet* solution, when Margaret Wheatley was asked if leaders should “retreat” (pp. 35-6) to gain greater perspective on human health, she noted that a healthy world is “one that never existed” (p. 38).

Creative Social Change is intended for leaders, specifically those motivated to exercise change and development within their organizations and networks impacting the greater community. Scholars, government agents, and those interested in community economic development and sustainability will find support because of the approach to micro-level action, specifically at the organizational and municipal levels. The editors note a specific intention for leaders of “companies, consultancies, and university programs” (p. 40) to help create new leaders.

The implications for practice one can take from this book include the underlying values of systems thinking, as well as the theoretical constructs of healthy organizations, and the roles of collaborative leadership, shared values, and sustainable activities in helping support a healthier society and world. Policy implications would favour an impact on local community health.

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Working the Margins of Community-Based Adult Learning: The Power of Arts-Making in Finding Voice and Creating Conditions for Seeing/Listening by S. Butterwick and C. Roy (Eds.). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishing, 2016.

Working the Margins of Community-Based Adult Learning is a well-rounded example of how art and creative forms of expression can influence, aid, and elevate transformative learning in community-based adult education. Specifically, the authors Shauna Butterwick and Carole Roy use an edited book format in a cohesive way to “gather stories from the margins and explore how various art and creative forms of expression can enable the voices of underrepresented individuals and communities to take shape and form” (p. ix). By inviting 18 contributors to share their varying perspectives on creative expression in community-based adult learning, this book introduces new ways of learning and practising artistic expression to the reader, regardless of research focus, profession or experience.

Butterwick and Roy have extensive theoretical and experiential knowledge within the field of community-based adult learning. Butterwick brings over 25 years of adult education experience and academic research in community-based, participatory, and arts-based approaches to adult education. Butterwick recently retired from the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia and is a research associate of the Canadian Centre for Policy Studies. Similarly, Roy has extensive experience in adult education, working internationally in community-based adult education. Roy’s research and experience are squarely rooted in arts-based approaches to community learning and social justice. Currently an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Education at St. Francis Xavier University, Roy brings extensive knowledge and insight into the intersection of art, adult education, community-based learning, and social justice.

Butterwick and Roy effectively bring together a book with diverse chapters, creative expression, and different marginalized communities in varying geographic locations. To aid in the synthesis of the material, the book is divided into three major sections, one for each of the major themes addressed throughout the book: Storytelling through the visual arts (Chapters 1–4), increasing understanding between communities using creative expression (Chapters 5–9), and creative forms of expression that enact and embody social justice issues (Chapters 10–14). Although the different chapters and sections of the book vary considerably, consistent themes and insights are offered by a host of experienced adult educators.

What I find particularly delightful about this book is the ability to be exposed to different perspectives, not simply with the authors who contributed a chapter, but for the participants within the chapters themselves. It is an unfortunate reality that some voices/communities/ways of knowing are marginalized within our society, and yet through art and the process of creative forms of expression, marginalized voices are heard and acknowledged within the chapters of this book. Utilizing artistic forms of expression including zines, murals, political fashion shows, photovoice, film festivals, dance, and puppet shows, the editors and contributors of this book allow the “stories from the margins” (p. ix) to unfold in powerful, relatable, and transformational ways.

In poring over the pages, it is clear that this book is intended for adult educators interested in community-based approaches. That being said, the chapters in this book are so diverse that many individuals in other areas could benefit from the work, including community-based workers, social justice advocates, individuals working in the non-profit sector, those working with marginalized or underrepresented individuals and communities, and people who are interested in creative forms of expression. Ultimately, the book demonstrates “how the arts can make a difference, particularly in marginalized communities” (p. 181). In that context, those who are interested in the themes the book addresses—including self-awareness, collaboration, collective action, embodiment, and transformation—would find something in the chapters that is relevant to them.

Working the Margins of Community-Based Adult Learning is of clear benefit to readers. As a reader, my experience could have been enhanced with a concise but thorough summary of each chapter by the editors. There are chapters that are clearly summarized by the authors, and others that were vaguer. Providing a reader with a summary from the editors would have been beneficial to support me in picking out theoretical concepts, identifying transferable knowledge, and providing context regarding the relevance of the chapter to the overarching sections and themes of the book. The concluding section of the book, likening the chapters and themes to the strands of a braid, is incredibly effective, and I would have appreciated similar synthesis throughout the book.

Regardless of readers’ personal interests, there is an advantage to reading every chapter. The take away from this book is that utilizing art and creative expression as a conduit to express marginalized voices and perspectives shouldn’t be a ‘one size fits all’ approach, and therefore requires some bravery in the attempt by all involved. Challenges faced within many projects were significant and often unexpected due to their unconventional nature. A perspective shared by many of the contributors and poignantly expressed by Brian Nichols is: “I give myself permission to try new things...It is often through jumping into something that I learn how to do it in a matter that is more suited to the unique situation” (p. 46). Undoubtedly, this is a fundamental book for anyone interested in adult education, because it teaches us new ways of being, learning, and doing from a vast array of voices and perspectives.

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Grassroots Leadership and the Arts for Social Change by S.J. Erenrich and J.F. Wergin (Eds.). Bingley, U.K.: Emerald Publishing, 2017.

Erenrich and Wergin's edited book, *Grassroots Leadership and the Arts for Social Change*, explores the tandem roles of the arts in facilitating grassroots movements and the leaders who have inspired them. Founded in Erenrich's expertise as a scholar and practitioner of leadership, social change, and the arts, and in Wergin's distinguished academic background as a professor and author in the fields of higher education and leadership, this book presents sixteen unique narratives clearly articulating the importance of the arts as a vehicle for creating change from the ground-up.

Introduced by Erenrich's reflective account of her journey with the Peoples' Voice Café, a voluntary collective in New York City that creates space for musicians to express humanitarian concerns, each chapter shifts between geographic landscapes and social contexts to reveal how the vast discipline of the arts can democratically provoke dialogue, collaboration, and reconciliation within and between individuals and communities who have faced injustices. From dance, music, theatre, photography, graffiti, museums, film, literature, digital media, illustration, to textiles, this timely publication demonstrates the power of creative endeavours in building a more just future—a theme that is bound to resonate across academic and applied fields.

Contextualized through the lenses of horizontal leadership, transformative learning, and popular education, a key theme found throughout this collection is an examination of the types of leaders, or leadership styles, that have assisted to bring about arts-based social change over the past century. Positioned as collaborative, grassroots, adaptive, values-based, transformational, authentic, subversive, or cultural, each chapter offers insights into how non-hierarchical approaches to leadership can open space for those directly affected by social injustices to share their voices or experiences in effecting change.

Chapter 1, authored by Randal Joy Thompson and Edin Ibrahimfendic, outlines the ripple effect that Vedran Smailović's spontaneous 1992 cello performance in the rubble of a grenade site in Sarajevo had in facilitating a global resistance to war. Chapter 11, by David Edelman, accounts the struggle and success of the arts, including theatre and literature, in galvanizing public support and funds for AIDS research and education in New York City during the 1980s. Chapter 12, by Mecca Antoina Burns, Bonface Njeresu Beti, and Maxwell Eliakim Okuto, describes how three branches of Theatre of the Oppressed—including Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, and Rainbow of Desire—were employed in East Africa to start processes of conflict transformation amongst youth and trauma survivors. Chapter 17, by Nicholas Rowe, Noora Baker, and Ata Khatab, challenges the notion that art is apolitical through a personal account of the authors' intercultural choreographic exchanges in Palestine. Individually, each chapter speaks to a leadership style that is distinctive to the social circumstances, artistic medium, and leader(s) under review. Yet, collectively, they consider the significance of inclusive, collaborative, and empowering leadership methods that, whether unintentional or by design, inspire the co-creation of stronger, more open, and equitable societies.

To this, perhaps one of the most notable aspects of this book is the attention paid to the challenges leaders have faced in mobilizing arts-based social movements. From their individual failings that stand to counter the success or legitimacy of a movement, to the personal impacts that leaders bear in creating change, a number of chapters within this book appropriately address the responsibility leaders have to their art, their cause, their community, and to themselves as change-makers. Chapter 2, by Greg Chidi Obi, examines how the live performances of Fela Anikulapo Ransome-Kuti, the Nigerian founder of Afrobeat and of a 1970s pro-democratic movement, objectified women and thus stood in conflict with the emancipatory messaging of his music. Chapter 5, by Nita Hungu and Marta D. Bennett, details how Boniface Mwangi was left with depression and post-traumatic stress after photo-documenting the post-election violence that had erupted in Kenya between 2007 and 2008. Chapter 15, a personal account written by Garth A. Ross, details his own apprehension and self-doubt in bringing *Finding a Line*, a multidisciplinary skateboard culture initiative, to the John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. Although, not all chapters engage overtly with this tension—a topic which could have added more depth to the discussion of leadership in relation to the theoretical lenses through which this book was crafted—the decisions of several authors to speak to these challenges adds to an important conversation about power and accountability, amongst all stakeholders, in evoking social change.

Overall, Erenrich and Wergin have drawn together an inspirational collection of accounts and personal testimonies affirming the diverse means in which social change, through horizontal leadership, can take shape. By highlighting how singular performances to grand exhibits can speak to the broader human needs to have a voice, to belong, and to find peace, each chapter documents how artists democratically mobilize those needs into actionable goals. These pursuits, although framed by the authors within the contexts of art and leadership, offer insights that are accessible and, arguably, relatable to an interdisciplinary audience. Just as social movements in contemporary history, as in the past, stand to transcend academic disciplines, geographic boundaries, and social landscapes, so to do the lessons offered in this text for current and future leaders, whether arts-based or otherwise.

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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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Cover Image: Panel from "The Witness Blanket," a national monument of the Indian Residential School Era made of items collected from residential schools, churches, government buildings, and traditional structures from across Canada. Artist: Carey Newman. Photo credit: Media One Inc.

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