

Claiming Space for Square Pegs: Community-Engaged Communication Scholarship and Faculty Assessment Policies

Patricia W. Elliott
University of Regina

ABSTRACT *When communication and media scholars work shoulder-to-shoulder with communities, the research products are necessarily as dynamic, creative, and diverse as the community members involved. Although such active scholarship generates rich, socially impactful knowledge, it often holds scant value within the arcane world of faculty tenure and promotion committees, where single-authored academic journal articles are the bread and butter of academic careers. As a result, members of the public are left to work with university partners who are typically precariously employed, with little institutional backing for community collaborations. Drawing on the Community-Engaged Scholarship Partnership's research into Canadian faculty assessment policies, this article will lay out the case for concrete academic reforms that recognize, respect, and professionally support the "square pegs" of community-engaged media research.*

KEYWORDS *Research methods; Community-engaged scholarship; Media studies; Participatory media; Communications studies; Community-based research; Action research*

RÉSUMÉ *Quand les chercheurs en médias et communication travaillent de pair avec les communautés, leurs recherches sont forcément aussi dynamiques, créatives et diverses que le sont les membres de la communauté eux-mêmes. Bien que de telles recherches actives génèrent un savoir riche et significatif, elles n'ont pas beaucoup de valeur dans le monde égotérique des comités de promotion et de titularisation, où les articles écrits en solo et publiés dans des revues savantes sont le fondement d'une carrière académique réussie. En conséquence, la communauté finit par collaborer avec des universitaires précaires qui n'ont pas l'appui institutionnel nécessaire pour faciliter la réalisation de leurs projets. Cet article a recours à la recherche sur les politiques d'évaluation du corps professoral effectuée par Community-Engaged Scholarship Partnership (« Partenariat pour la recherche engagée dans la communauté ») afin de proposer des réformes académiques concrètes qui reconnaîtraient, respecteraient et appuieraient professionnellement le « cas spécial » de la recherche sur les médias axée sur la communauté.*

MOTS CLÉS *Méthodes de recherche; Recherche engagée dans la communauté; Études des médias; Médias participatifs; Études en communication; Recherche basée sur la communauté; Recherche d'action*

Patricia W. Elliott is Assistant Professor in the School of Journalism at the University of Regina. Email: patricia.elliott@uregina.ca.

Introduction: Community engagement and the neoliberal university

Communication is dialogue, an infinite web of call and response through which even the most oppressive dictate evokes an answering word, however subtle or hidden (Bakhtin, 1981; Scott, 1990). Communication is also action, channeling humanity's course on myriad, ever-changing trajectories (Habermas, 1979). Whether cerebral (composing a poem or scientific article) or physical (banging pots in the streets), the meld of dialogue and action is intrinsic. It stands to reason, therefore, that communication and media scholarship should share some features of the landscape explored: collaborative, fluid, exploratory, and open-ended. Tensions rise, however, when the institutions that house our work place greater value in scholarly output that is more individualized, compartmentalized, static, and delivered in tones of finalizing authority, preferably in elite academic journals.

This is not to say one form of scholarship is better than the other, or that different approaches cannot be combined or act in support of each other. Indeed, anyone engaged in community action understands the value of a purely quantitative study that sheds light on anecdotal evidence, or of a theoretical perspective that challenges our way of doing things. The problem occurs when the assignment of value becomes something of a one-way street. When the timelines, methods, and desired outcomes of the communities we work with are not respected and recognized in the academy, it distorts our scholarship. The conundrum is instantly recognizable to any university-based communication scholar who conducts his or her work in tandem with external communities. When working shoulder-to-shoulder with community actors, the research products are necessarily as dynamic, creative, and diverse as the community members involved. Outcomes might include a participant-directed video, a community action plan, an artistic intervention, a community radio broadcast or, less tangibly, the coming together of a new media-empowered community.

Although such active communication and media scholarship generates rich, socially impactful knowledge, it often holds scant value within the arcane world of faculty tenure and promotion committees, where single-authored academic journal articles are the bread and butter of academic careers. Very quickly, scholars find themselves as square pegs trying desperately to fit the neatly rounded hole of journal impact factors and publishing quotas. "It is very difficult to be tenure track and know that even though my scholarship and commitment depend on my social justice activities and teaching, the tenure decision will be based on everything but that — and may suffer as a result," writes Jessica Gordan Nembhard (2008, p. 290). Thus, members of the public are left to work with university partners who are typically precariously employed, with little institutional backing for community collaborations. Drawing on the Community-Engaged Scholarship (CES) Partnership's recent research into Canadian faculty assessment policies, along with the case of my experience with a community-engaged media project called "This Is Us," this article will lay out the case for concrete academic reforms that recognize, respect, and professionally support the "square pegs" of community-engaged communications and media research. I will further argue that, as our universities become increasingly geared toward individualized competition, it

is critical we transform personal struggles within the academy into collective, collaborative action for social change.

What does engaged communication scholarship look like?

Before moving on to tackle the problem as presented, let us first take a step back to acknowledge the types of scholarship under discussion. In faculty assessment criteria documents, and in university parlance in general, the practice of publishing in peer-reviewed academic journals is commonly referred to as “traditional scholarship” (for an example, see University of Regina, 2014, p. 7). I propose a challenge to this phrase. First, regarding the word “scholarship,” I question if it is reasonable to conflate a very particular form of research validation and dissemination to the entirety of scholarship, defined by Merriam-Webster as “the character, qualities, activity, or attainments of a scholar” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, n.d.). Further, at the risk of sounding facetious, when peering into dictionaries, I cannot help but notice that “scholarship” in this sense is categorized as an uncountable noun—an ironic twist, given that journal articles are, as we are all too aware, both eminently countable and frequently counted.

Similarly, the use of the word “traditional” is worth considering. “Traditional” suggests that today’s primary method for assessing and valuing scholarship has always been so. Yet, academic journals only became proliferate in recent decades (Goel & Faria, 2007). Further, the practice of circulating manuscripts to external reviewers is also relatively recent, spurred on by the inventions of carbon paper and the photocopier (Spier, 2002). Ray Spier (2002) observes that *Science* and *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, to name two examples, did not use outside reviewers until after 1940. I therefore propose that the phrase “current dominant scholarship model” is more appropriate and historically accurate than “traditional scholarship” to describe the process of publishing in academic journals. While peer-reviewed articles undoubtedly offer valuable contributions in many fields, to call this work “traditional” is a misnomer. It contains the conceit that other forms of scholarship have no tradition.

Community-engaged scholarship is nothing new or, for that matter, particularly radical when viewed within a fuller context of knowledge theorizing. As I have noted in previous work (Elliott, 2011), CES has long held a place in the academy, tracing back to Aristotle’s concept of *phrónêsis*: “the design of problem-solving actions through collaborative knowledge construction with the legitimate stakeholders in the problem” (Greenwood 2008, pp. 326-327). Centuries later, Aristotle’s pragmatism was eclipsed by epistemologies of knowledge as an objective, disembodied force that could only be tainted by contact with the human experience. However, among positivist and constructivist theorists alike, the current of *phrónêsis* did not wholly disappear; the idea of problem-solving, human-centred knowledge construction was carried forward through the generations by the likes of Immanuel Kant, Auguste Comte, and Karl Marx (Hammersley, 2004), finding a modern-day foothold in the mid-twentieth century emergence of action research (Lewin, 1946). Foundational thinkers such as Orlando Fals Borda (2001) presented this praxis not as a set of methodological tools but as a framework to break down the ivory tower and build social solidarity between researchers and oppressed communities. Projects emerging from this framework may typically include community-generated research questions, reflexive methodology, di-

alogic research planning, empowerment of participants, a rebalancing of researcher-subject relations, and ultimately, action for social change that is not final but rather tips off a new cycle of questions and explorations (Elliott, 2015). A far from perfected or finalized endeavour, its methods are in a state of constant evolution, exploration, and debate, as exemplified in collections such as Charles Hale's (2008) *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics and Methods of Activist Scholarship*. Despite these reflexive currents, CES is well-established and accompanied by an extensive theoretical and methodological literature, with seminal contributions by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Orlando Fals Borda (2001), Peter Park (1993), and others (for a review of literature, see Elliott, 2011). Beyond mere methodology, it presents a "way of being" that places university researchers in service to community members, often linked to the concepts of radical pedagogy (Friere, 1972) and the public intellectual (Cushman, 1999).

Found in diverse settings inside and outside the academy, this praxis is commonly referred to by today's practitioners as community-based research, "a spectrum of research that actively engages community members or groups to various degrees, ranging from community participation to community initiation and control of research" (University of Victoria, Office for Community-based Research, 2009, p. 10). Within institutional university settings, the spectrum may typically be gathered under labels such as "campus-community collaborations" and "community-engaged scholarship." The Community-Engaged Scholarship (CES) Partnership—a research collaboration involving eight Canadian universities and one national campus-community organization—describe the praxis as: "intellectual and creative activities that generate, validate, synthesize and apply knowledge through partnerships with people and organizations outside of the academy" (Community Engaged Scholarship [CES] Partnership, 2011). In the world of communication and media scholarship, there are myriad examples of CES in action, manifested in forms such as theatre of the oppressed, digital stories, photo-voice projects, and community broadcasting, to name a few (for a sampling of recent Canadian projects see Conrad & Sinner, 2015).

On the surface, CES appears to have gained traction in Canadian universities over the past decade. The neoliberal university has adopted community engagement into institutional language, to the point where it is now regularly featured in mission statements and strategic plans (Barreno, Elliott, Madueke, & Sarny, 2013). Arguably it is not the revolutionary power-rebalancing impetus of CES that drives this trend; it is more likely guided by new tri-council emphasis on community partnerships and knowledge mobilization, leading universities to seek out "partnerships with governmental agencies, private foundations and civil society that channel private and public investment in cost-effective ways to produce results that contribute to social, health, and economic and environmental conditions in Canada and its communities" (University of Victoria, Office of Community Based Research, 2009, p. 5). Further, behind the funding reality is a broader economic framework that highlights "value for public money"—i.e., universities that cultivate community engagement are delivering a tangible, utilitarian product from the public purse to the private sphere.

Within this context, it is easy to spot a fundamental disconnect between broad institutional conceptions of community engagement and how community-engaged

scholarship is practiced on the ground by individual faculty members. Under currently prevalent measures, for example, single-authored work is typically more highly valued than collaborative work. Yet, in the case of CES, authorship is commonly shared among or transferred to community collaborators, and authorship can take many forms, from writing sections to reviewing and commenting orally (Christensen & Atweh, 1998). Further, the word of two anonymous academics would not be considered appropriate validation of research in a community setting. CES projects instead typically contain some form of public or group evaluation process through which the work seeks peer review from the affected communities to determine its accuracy, ethics, and social value. For example, a community-based review might involve people directly impacted by the research, community stakeholder organizations, or groups involved in policy-making (Hobson, Mayne, & Hamilton, 2013).

Another “square peg” is the approach’s inherent interdisciplinary nature, borrowing from whichever discipline or methodology best suits the problem to be solved (Lilja & Dixon, 2008); at times the academic partner’s main role is to analyze what types of studies can best fulfill community questions, and facilitate the involvement of other experts with the skills to conduct needed studies (Pulido, 2008). As well, CES may employ entirely novel methods to gather knowledge, for example, turning participant observation on its head and becoming “observant participation” (Vargas, 2008, p. 172), through which the researcher actively engages in community work. The work may involve fundraising and capacity-building within the community (as opposed to attracting funds and resources to the university), and often follows long timelines of involvement and engagement, extending over years rather than semesters (Barreno, Elliott, Madueke, & Sarny, 2013). Finally, CES typically emphasizes public-oriented, highly accessible research dissemination over academic journal writing. When placed against the framework of today’s main institutional performance measures—external research grants and peer-reviewed journal articles—one can see how involvement in CES is fraught with professional risk. Each one of us who engages with community partners must balance this reality against the excitement of discovering new veins of knowledge through community-embedded research and action praxis.

This Is Us: Voices from the Street

As an example of a CES project outside the current institutional mould, I offer my own experience with a community-directed video *This is Us: Voices from the Street* (Stevenson, 2012) and an accompanying community resource kit (Elliott, 2012). The project’s genesis was in 2005, when I was invited by colleagues in the University of Regina’s Faculty of Social Work and Department of Justice Studies to join an exploration of the experiences of injection drug users. Saskatchewan was facing a blooming HIV/AIDS epidemic, with triple the infection rate of the national average (Saskatchewan, Ministry of Health, 2010). Further, the percentage of cases attributable to needle use had rocketed from 30 percent in 2001 to 79 percent in 2009, bucking a national trend of declining needle-related infection (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2009).

Clearly something was going on in Saskatchewan that remained somewhat opaque to health and social agencies. The initial research team members—Kathleen Donovan, Garson Hunter, and Josephine Savarese—recognized that people engaged

in substance use were in an optimum position to describe the conditions of their lives and where the system was either helping or failing their community. Surmising that someone with a background in journalistic storytelling could bring a fresh perspective by offering a way for street-involved people to convey first-hand experience and knowledge, they approached me as a School of Journalism faculty member. A media-related research activity was proposed as one aspect of a larger project that included empirical social services and health data, research interviews with justice officials, and a component focused on pregnant drug users and the healthcare system. With the goal of gaining access to the affected community's knowledge, the project was titled *Accessing Drug Use Reality in an Inner City Community* (Hunter, 2005).

For my part, the project began with a process of making community connections through 2006, followed by a meeting of drug users in the basement of a local needle exchange. From that meeting, an interest in making a video emerged, however it took nearly two years for a core group of project leaders to emerge and gel the idea into an actual project. In early 2008, three women with street experience came forward with a plan to interview each other, as well as friends, relatives, and acquaintances currently or formerly involved in drug use. They felt that street-experienced people would be more comfortable simply telling their stories in a conversational question-and-answer format, rather than being tasked with shooting and editing their own stories, as I had originally envisioned, in the vein of classic participatory media projects. Indeed, the level of interest and participation blossomed after this recommended change of course.

Once the idea was sketched out, I turned to Robin Lawless, a broadcast lab instructor, who provided the video team with training in capturing and editing video, while I worked with them on the basics of open-ended, active interviewing, as well as how to establish clear ethical parameters with their participants. The research team members—comprised of Charlene Stevenson, Velda Cyr, Jamie Rockthunder, and, later, Tara Lynn Anaquod—contributed a protocol plan of offering tobacco and smudging grass, and information about free counselling services should participation cause emotional distress (Stevenson, 2008). They also contacted counsellors in advance to be on “standby” and devised a question guide. While they ensured the process adhered to street and First Nations protocols, I translated their plan into the language and protocols of our university Research Ethics Board, which approved the research plan and consent forms. I discovered the university's research assistant (RA) hiring templates were written with students in mind, not community actors. However, this problem was easily addressed with a few adjustments to language; our human resources department has since added language that does not presuppose all hired RAs are students, perhaps as a result of working through this problem.

Once underway, the team gathered some 20 hours of stories from four Saskatchewan communities: Regina, Yorkton, Prince Albert, and Estevan. There were the usual interruptions of life issues, as to be expected, but generally the process went smoothly. They then reviewed the tapes in the School of Journalism's edit suites, identified themes, and captured segments; a similar editorial process is described by Falzone (2004) as a means to incorporate intensely personal narratives into “a group conversation being held around shared issues” (p. 340). In addition to the lengthy

process of finding community traction and finally carrying out a video plan, community media projects are typically subject to technical delays, and this project was no exception. Usually the problems are confined to a minor litany of weak batteries and misplaced cables. In our case, there was also a major server crash that wiped out hours of editing work and rendered the school's edit suites inoperable over the summer. The incident delayed the project a full year, as the suites are not available for non-student use during the fall and winter semesters. After such a lengthy interim, the next challenge was to reconnect with a highly mobile street population, so that they would have opportunity to review the video. Most were available, but some had moved to other provinces, at least one was incarcerated, and a few had simply dropped out of sight. Over time, the team was able to track down the majority, and for the remainder we elected to place the rough cut at select street-level community agencies and spread the word that it was there to be viewed. We also provided confidential rough cuts for community agencies that might use the video to review.

Following this came the process of incorporating participant and agency feedback into the final edit, and then sending it to post-production. Meanwhile, my colleagues had finished their focus groups with pregnant drug users (Hunter, Donovan, & Crowe-Salazar, 2008) and interviews with justice officials (Paciga & Savarese, 2012). For the final physical product, I created a community resource kit containing the *This is Us* video (Stevenson, 2012), background on how and why it was made, copies of research papers, and a series of one-page summary fact sheets that community groups could distribute at public meetings (Elliott, 2012). Then, in February 2012, some seven years after the project's genesis, *This is Us* was previewed at Regina's Carmichael Outreach Centre.

The video helped humanize a highly marginalized segment of society and provided new insights into Saskatchewan's high rate of drug use. For example, the role of unresolved grief was highly apparent, suggesting a greater emphasis on grief counselling is needed; almost all participants related the death of a close relative or friend as the beginning of their slide into self-medication and addiction. Another take-away lesson was that drug intervention programs aimed at teenagers may arrive too late in life, as many participants described first dabbling with drugs between ages seven and twelve, and becoming addicted in their pre-teen years. Loss of children to state custody was another commonly described tipping point. Further, it was clear participants were already highly aware of the adverse social and health impacts of their habits, and desired adequate services over educational messages. Many critiqued the province's methadone program, saying it amounted to a substitute addiction that left them equally desperate. Those who had come clean did so via cold turkey, and maintained a daily struggle to stay clean without relying on support services. While the stories illustrated an incredible level of strength and resiliency in the face of near-impossible circumstances, they also revealed how precarious and generally unsupported the participants' lives remained, even among those who had been clean for relatively long periods.

Thus the video fulfilled its intent of shedding new light on an existing issue. It was well-received by the community and health agency workers. A total of 75 kits were distributed on request to community agencies under the following parameters:

This video and its accompanying resource kit are meant to be shared in community meetings and discussion groups. Copies are available on request for community use. It is intended for people looking to share experiences and come together to fight for basic human rights. A non-circulating copy is available at the University of Regina library. (Elliott, 2012).

The video was also screened at discussion meetings and used in classrooms. Due to the sensitive nature of the content, the video has not been uploaded to the Internet or put in general library circulation. Despite the limited distribution, via community meetings and classrooms, the video kit has reached a potentially wider and more appropriate audience than may have been reached through traditional academic publishing.

As for my own research practice, the project expanded my experience and existing knowledge of community-generated media and action research methodology. Nonetheless, when it comes time to make my tenure application, I admit *This is Us* is unlikely to make the cut of scholarly work I provide for review. For one thing, it was not published in a peer-reviewed journal with a sanctioned impact factor measurement. Even if it were, I would not lay claim to authorship of the key piece, the video. I may have edited the kit and written fact sheets, but ultimately it was a highly collaborative work that I would hesitate to harness for my own career advancement. In any case, in faculty performance assessment, authorship/ownership generally trumps exploration/process.

This may seem overly pessimistic. After all, my university collective agreement expressly recognizes “community-engaged scholarship and the particular forms of dissemination that stem from it” (University of Regina & University of Regina Faculty Association, 2014, p. 35). The reality, however, is that the criteria provided to performance review committees clarifies that dissemination aimed at broader external audiences “does not replace more traditional scholarship, but rather supplements and enriches it;” additionally, “Since evaluation by peers, or others as appropriate, is an integral aspect of scholarship, members need to publish or otherwise disseminate their work in ways that allow for a rigorous evaluation of its quality” (p. 7). The criteria document is also sprinkled with suggestions that engagement in community activities detracts from, rather than enhances, one’s scholarship. From this deficit perspective, non-tenured faculty are cautioned not to become overly involved in community work; another section states service work “may also include organizations outside academe, as long as the contributions in question utilize members’ general or specialized academic expertise *and bring good repute to the University*” (p. 3; emphasis added). While the faculty-level criteria document is officially subjugated to the collective agreement, the coded message it contains certainly does not encourage going out on the limb with a participatory video project. Yet, the project consumed much of my research time over several years, significantly advanced my understanding of community-engaged media scholarship, and made a recognizable public contribution. Still, I find myself short on courage and the desire to take on the extra work needed to gain professional recognition for this project. Such moments of doubt are not a time for despair, however. Rather, they stand as an apt illustration that this is not an isolated problem to be solved by individual acts. It is a systemic problem that requires institutional change. Indeed, pres-

sure for collective change is underway through networks such as the slow scholarship movement (Mountz, Bonds, Mansfield, Loyd, Hyndman, Walton-Roberts, Basu, Whitson, Hawkins, Hamilton, & Curran, 2015), Canada's Take Academia Back (TAB) online community, the Public Engagement and the Politics of Evidence international gathering that took place in Regina in 2015, and Janice Newson and Claire Polster's (2010; 2015) insightful critiques of the corporatization of Canadian universities. Research conducted by the CES Partnership's Faculty Assessment Workgroup, outlined in the following section, further illuminates the challenges and provides ideas for action.

CES and faculty assessment

As previously stated, spurred by new funding incentives and a general call for greater public relevance, Canadian university administrators have increasingly adopted the language of community engagement in speeches and mission statements (Randall, 2010). This is a welcome development for scholars who practice community engagement. However, the rubber has not yet hit the road in terms of institutional supports, including faculty assessment practices (Barreno, Elliott, Madueke, & Sarny, 2013). Recognizing this conundrum, in May 2010, the University of Guelph and the Campus-Community Partnership for Health issued a call to form a national partnership dedicated to analyzing the state of CES in Canadian universities, with a view to making recommendations for improvements. Among the respondents, Memorial University of Newfoundland, University of Alberta, University of Calgary, University of Guelph, University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan, University of Victoria, York University, and Community-Campus Partnerships for Health were selected to "work together to change university culture, policies and practices in order to recognize and reward community-engaged scholarship" (Daly, 2010, p. 4).

An article circulated among partnership members laid out the problem from the perspective of community-based co-researchers:

Instead of being promoted for all the hard work, planning, implementation, evaluation, and re-planning, my academic partners have been ignored, except by their community partners, all of which have gladly sent letters to be part of any promotion process or committee. (Freeman, Gust, & Aloschen, 2009, p. 89)

The authors, a group of healthcare workers, pointed out that community engagement is a long-term process, and that a significant community investment is made in familiarizing university-based researchers with the issues; community partners have "neither the time nor resources to begin starting over each time" precariously employed faculty members leave the scene (Freeman, Gust, & Aloschen, 2009, p. 89).

The partnership members decided to undertake studies in the areas of institutional change, scholar development, and faculty assessment. In 2012, a Faculty Assessment Working Group, of which I was an active member, embarked on a review of relevant documents at 19 Canadian post-secondary institutions, employing a range of keywords linked to community engagement. An earlier study of Canadian faculty collective agreements (Randall, 2010) found little support for CES; we were curious to see if anything had changed, and if supportive policies existed outside collective agree-

ment clauses. Perhaps naïvely, we expected this review to unearth useful language that other institutions might adapt. Instead we discovered that, although there existed many lofty mission statements, once we drilled down into actual working policy documents, such as faculty assessment criteria guidelines, there was little in the way of professional support for CES. The language that was uncovered revealed a fractured understanding of core concepts, a tendency to mix community-based research with voluntarism, and highly uneven application of standards and expectations across the country (Barreno, Elliott, Madueke, & Sarny, 2013).

While this seemed a disappointing result, a subsequent qualitative review offered a more hopeful landscape. Although not well-reflected in institutional policy language, the qualitative interviews revealed that Canadian academics have a long and active history of CES, and that the core features of CES practice are relatively consistent across institutions. From this, we concluded there is a strong base and commonly understood protocol related to community engagement as scholarship. We also found that although faculty members struggle for professional recognition, they also enjoy positive experiences within their institutions and the communities they work with, including examples where academic credit was given for community engagement, even if recognition was not officially written into the tenure and promotion guidelines used.

From the interviews and document review, we drafted a list of ten common characteristics of CES qualities for tenure and promotion committees to consider in their assessments. They included

- Problem identification by the community;
- Clear and important academic and community change goals—relevant research question;
- Community involvement in the research process;
- Clear and measurable community outcomes/transformation;
- Significant results: builds community and institutional capacity;
- Effective dissemination to academic and community audiences;
- Reflective critique: lessons learned to improve scholarship and community engagement;
- Leadership and personal contribution (specifically, “demonstrates ability to adapt to changing needs and contexts”);
- Leadership and personal contribution (specifically, “demonstrates ability to adapt to changing contexts”); and
- Consistently ethical behaviour: socially responsible conduct of research and teaching (specifically, “evidence of academic focus on equalizing power imbalances between stakeholders”) (CES Partnership. Faculty Assessment Workgroup, 2013).

These ten items did not arise without considerable debate, and an understanding that our rubric was a rough guide at best. Working group members agreed that every university must devise its own definitions and approaches to suit its own particular context.

More significantly, the very act of drafting a measurement tool, however non-prescriptive, gives rise to theoretical questions and tensions that were evident in our re-

search interviews. Will the act of formalizing and institutionalizing CES serve to undermine its more organic, altruistic qualities? How broadly should CES be interpreted, in terms of types of partnerships invited and its social intent? How can we ensure the action component is understood and accepted, particularly when it raises public debate and challenges power structures? It is important not to lose sight of these questions in a rush to establish community-university partnerships.

I have noted the difficulty of each scholar taking on institutional recognition of CES as an individual project. Without a collective movement in this direction, we are doomed to our own fears and follies. Most of us will end up trying to do solid community engagement while at the same time struggling to meet journal article quotas. This is a recipe for burnout inside the academy and compromised community effectiveness outside the academy. It is worth reminding ourselves that action research was, after all, conceived as a path to liberation (Fals Borda, 2011). We must not lose sight of the premise that this includes liberation not only of oppressed communities, but also the liberation of researchers from oppressive institutional constraints.

The next challenge, then, follows the rhythm of CES: to move research into action. Our report provided some guideposts for the journey, beginning with identifying existing institutional inroads. This includes scanning for committees that work with tenure and promotion documents, or are already engaged in university reform, as well as identifying key individuals who can help champion the effort. A second logical step would be to determine the most effective level for engagement; depending on the structure of one's university, tenure and promotion policies may rest at the departmental level, the faculty level, or be determined university-wide. The establishment of a working group would provide a means to review existing language and policies, to draft novel alternatives to traditional peer review (a question that cannot be avoided), and to set out a concrete course for action. Concurrent with this process should be a campaign to engage, inform, and educate colleagues across the university.

Media action and the engaged university

For media and communications scholars, the point of promoting recognition of CES is to create a hospitable environment for the full range of our work. If I place the *This is Us* project against the partnership's rubric, I can see where it would fair well in some regards (such as adaptability to changing contexts), and less so in others (origin of the central research question). From this faculty assessment exercise, I can imagine ways to improve my practice for the benefit of community members. However, this is but one advantage. Isobel Findlay and Len Findlay (2014) frame solidarity with community-based media practitioners as one of many potential steps toward the decolonization of universities, and toward development of a co-creative class; in so doing, such work helps put knowledge to work for and with communities.

The good news is that, despite considerable barriers, fruitful media-based community collaborations abound in Canadian universities. Examples in recent years include the University of Saskatchewan's Digital Media Project, through which youth worked with digital media tools to identify and press for action on community problems (Custerra, 2014), and the Mapping Memories Project out of Concordia University, which gathered the experiences of refugee youth through film and video with an accompany-

ing analysis of the project as a research method (Miller, Luches, & Dyer Jalea, 2011). Through these and similar projects across the country, university researchers have displayed a level of resilience and creativity that truly does deserve reward or, at the very least, not punishment. Surely this creative power can liberate not only the external communities we work with, but also our own institutions. Our research praxis itself informs us of the way to move forward: in solidarity and, above all, with passion for change.

Websites

Public Engagement and the Politics of Evidence, <http://www.politicsofevidence.ca/full-conference-archive/>

Rewarding Community-Engaged Scholarship (CES Partnership), <http://engagedscholarship.ca/>

Take Academia Back, <http://takeacademiaback.blogspot.ca/>

This is Us: Voices from the Street, <https://thisisus.ca/>

References

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M.M. Bakhtin* (M. Holquist, Ed., C. Emerson, & M. Holquist, Trans.) Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Barreno, Leonzo, Elliott, Patricia.W., Madueke, Ijeoma, & Sarny, Dominique. (2013). *Community-engaged scholarship and faculty assessment: A review of Canadian practices*. Guelph, ON: CES National Partnership. URL: <http://engagedscholarship.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Faculty-Assesment-Paper1.pdf> [Sept. 29, 2016].
- Christensen, Clare, & Atweh, Bill. (1998). Collaborative writing in participatory action research. In B. Atweh, S. Kemmis, & P. Weeks (Eds.), *Action research in practice: Partnerships for social justice in education* (pp. 239–340). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Community-Engaged Scholarship (CES) Partnership. (2011). *Rewarding community-engaged scholarship: Toward the transformation of university policies and practices*. URL: www.cescholarship.ca [Sept. 29, 2016].
- CES Partnership. Faculty Assessment Working Group. (2013). Characteristics of community-engaged scholarship (CES): A rubric for evidencing CES. In Elliott, P.W., *Integrating community-engaged scholarship into faculty assessment practices: A handbook for community leaders*. Guelph, ON: CES Partnership.
- Conrad, Diane, & Sinner, Anita (Eds.). (2015) *Creating together: Participatory, community-based and collaborative arts practices*. Waterloo, ON: Laurier University Press.
- Cushman, Ellen. (1999). The public intellectual, service learning, and activist research. *College English*, 61(3), 328–336. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/379072> [Sept. 29, 2016].
- Custerra, Jeh. (2014). Youth, digital media, and sustainability education: A researcher's reflections. *Of Land and Living Skies*. Summer, 8–9. URL: <http://nebula.wsimg.com/3792e6c08e7fofa47d6017db712e921c> [Sept. 29, 2016].
- Daly, K. (2010). Letter of intent. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council application. Guelph, ON: University of Guelph.
- Elliott, Patricia W. (2011). *Participatory action research: Challenges, complications and opportunities*. University of Saskatchewan: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives and Community-University Institute for Social Research. URL: http://usaskstudies.coop/socialeconomy/wp-content/uploads/Report_CL1_05_SK.pdf [Sept. 29, 2016].
- Elliott, Patricia W. (Ed.). (2012). *This is us: Voices from the street — community resource kit*. Regina, SK: University of Regina Social Policy Research Unit.
- Elliott, Patricia W. (2015). Action research as academic reform: The challenges and opportunities of shared knowledge. In P.W. Elliott & D. Hepting (Eds.), *Free knowledge: Confronting the commodification of human discovery* (pp. 115–133) Regina, SK: University of Regina Press.
- Fals Borda, Orlando. (2001). Participatory (action) research in social theory: Origins and challenges. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Inquiry and practice* (pp. 27–37). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Falzone, Paul. (2004). Transcendent ethnography: Designing an action research approach to ethnographic film within cultures of conflict. *Action Research*, 2(3), 326–344.
- Findlay, Isobel, & Findlay, Len. (2014). Revisionary civics, reciprocal relations: Developing a co-creative class. *Living Knowledge Conference*. Copenhagen.
- Freeman, Elmer, Gust, Susan, & Aloschen, Debra. (2009). Why faculty promotion and tenure matters to community partners. *Metropolitan Universities Journal*, 20(2), 87–103. URL: https://ccph.memberclicks.net/assets/Documents/FocusAreas/muj_20.2_freeman.pdf [September 29, 2016].
- Freire, Paulo. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Myra Bergman Ramos, Trans). New York, NY: Herder and Herder.
- Goel, Rajeev K., & Faria, Jaõa R. (2007). Proliferation of academic journals: Effects on research quantity and quality. *Metroeconomica*, 58(4) 536–549. URL: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/wo/i/doi/10.1111/j.1467-999X.2007.00285.x/full> [September 29, 2016].
- Greenwood, Davydd J. (2008). Theoretical research, applied research and action research: The de-institutionalization of activist research. In C.R. Hale (Ed.), *Engaging contradictions: Theory, politics and methods of activist scholarship* (pp. 319–340). Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen. (1979). *Communication and the evolution of society* (T. McCarthy, Trans.). Toronto, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd.
- Hale, Charles R., (Ed.). (2008), *Engaging contradictions: Theory, politics and methods of activist scholarship*. Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Hammersley, Martyn M. (2004). Action research: A contradiction in terms? *Oxford Review of Education*. 30(2) June, 165–181. URL: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0305498042000215502> [September 29 2016].
- Hobson, Kersty, Mayne, Ruth, & Hamilton, Jo. (2013). *A step by step guide to monitoring and evaluation*. Oxford, UK: Monitoring and Evaluation for Sustainable Communities. URL: <http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/research/technologies/projects/mesc/guide-to-monitoring-and-evaluation-v1-march2014.pdf> [September 29 2016].
- Hunter, Garson. (2005). *Accessing drug use reality in an inner city community*. Application to the Sustainable Communities Fund.
- Hunter, Garson, Donovan, Kathleen, & Crow-Salazar, Noela. (2008). We are not asking them to hate us... We want them to help us: Findings of focus group studies with pregnant drug users in Regina, Saskatchewan. *Poverty Papers* 2. Regina, SK: Social Policy Research Unit (SPR), University of Regina. URL: <http://www2.uregina.ca/spr2/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Poverty-Papers-2-Pregnant-Drug-User-Focus-Group1.pdf> [September 29 2016].
- Lewin, Kurt. (1946). Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2(4), 34–46. URL: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1946.tb02295.x/abstract> [September 29 2016].
- Lilja, Nina, & Dixon, John. (2008). Operationalizing participatory research and gender analysis: New research and assessment approaches. *Development in Practice*, 18(4) August, 467–477. URL: <http://libcatalog.cimmyt.org/download/cis/90520.pdf> [September 29 2016].
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online. (n.d.). *Scholarship*. URL: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/scholarship> [December 20, 2015].
- Miller, Liz, Luchs, Michelle, & Dyer Jalea, Gracia. (2011). *Mapping memories: Participatory media, place-based stories and refugee youth*. Montmagny, PQ: Marquis Book Printing.
- Mountz, Alison, Bonds, Anne, Mansfield, Becky, Loyd, Jenna, Hyndman, Jennifer, Walton-Roberts, Margaret, Basu, Ranu, Whitson, Risa, Hawkins, Roberta, Hamilton, Trina, & Curran, Winifred. (2015) For slow scholarship: A feminist politics of resistance through collective action in the neoliberal university. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14(4), 1235–1259. URL: <http://ojs.ubc.ca/index.php/acme/article/view/1058> [September 29 2016].
- Nembhard, Jessica G. (2008). Theorizing and practicing democratic community economics: Engaged scholarship, economic justice and the academy." In C.R. Hale (Ed.), *Engaging contradictions: Theory, politics and methods of activist scholarship* (pp. 265–298). Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

- Newson, Janice & Polster, Claire, (Eds.). (2010). *Academic callings: The university we have had, now have, and could have*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Newson, Janice, & Polster, Claire. (2015). *A penny for your thoughts: How corporatization devalues teaching, research, and public service in Canada's universities*. Ottawa, ON: Our Schools/Our Selves and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.
- Newson, Janice & Polster, Claire, (Eds.). (2010). *Academic callings: The university we have had, now have, and could have*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Paciga, Allison, & Savarese, Josephine. (2012). Do you want a bunch of addicted, mind dead zombies running around? Interviews with criminal justice professionals on drug-related policies in Regina: A research snapshot. *Accessing Drug Use Reality series*. Regina, SK: University of Regina Social Policy Research Unit.
- Park, Peter. (1993). What is participatory research? A theoretical and methodological perspective. In P. Park, M. Brydon-Miller, B. Hall, & T. Jackson (Eds.), *Voice of change: Participatory research in the United States and Canada* (pp. 1–20). Westport, CT: Bergen and Garvey.
- Public Health Agency of Canada. (2009). *HIV and AIDS in Canada: Surveillance report to December 31, 2009*. Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada
- Pulido, Laura. (2008). Frequently (un)asked questions about being a scholar activist. In C.R. Hale (Ed.), *Engaging contradictions: Theory, politics and methods of activist scholarship*, (pp. 341–366). Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Randall, James E. (2010). Community engagement and collective agreements: Patterns at Canadian universities. In P. Inman & H.G. Schuetze (Eds.) *The community engagement and service mission of universities*, (pp. 261–277). Leicester, UK: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales).
- Saskatchewan. Ministry of Health. (2010). *HIV and AIDS in Saskatchewan Annual Report 2010*. Regina, SK: Saskatchewan Ministry of Health.
- Scott, James C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale.
- Spier, Ray. (2002). The history of the peer review process. *Trends in Biotechnology*, 20(8) 357–358. URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/11252741_The_History_of_the_Peer-Review_Process [September 29, 2016].
- Stevenson, Charleen. (2008). Interview participant handout: This is Us project material.
- Stevenson, Charleen (director). (2012). *This is Us: Voices from The Street* [Video]. Regina, SK: University of Regina.
- Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. London, UK: Zed.
- University of Regina. (2001, December). *Criteria for performance review* (revised November 2014). URL: <http://www.uregina.ca/arts/assets/docs/pdf/2014-criteria-performance-review.pdf> [September 29, 2016].
- University of Regina, & University of Regina Faculty Association (URFA). (2014). *University of Regina 2014–2017 collective agreement: University of Regina Faculty Association representing the University of Regina academic staff members*. URL: <http://www.uregina.ca/hr/assets/docs/pdf/employee-relations/APT-collective-agreement-2014-2017-final.pdf> [September 29, 2016].
- University of Victoria. Office of Community-Based Research. (2009). *The funding and development of community university research partnerships in Canada: Evidence-based investment in knowledge, engaged scholarship, innovation and action for Canada's future*. Victoria, BC: University of Victoria Office of Community-Based Research.
- Vargas, João H. Costa. (2008). Activist scholarship: Limits and possibilities in times of Black genocide. In C.R. Hale (Ed.), *Engaging contradictions: Theory, politics and methods of activist scholarship* (pp. 164–182). Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.