2015

Creating Teaching Champions: Taking the Graduate Teaching Experience Outside the Classroom

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Atlantic Universities' Teaching Showcase

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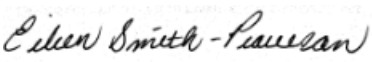
INTRODUCTION

In October 2014, Cape Breton University welcomed an enthusiastic group of faculty, students, administrators and educational developers to the Atlantic Universities' Teaching Showcase. The conference theme, "Teaching Outside the Box: Innovation and Its Constraints," encouraged those submitting proposals to consider the following questions:

- What is "teaching outside the box?"
- What does innovative teaching look like?
- Does the use of innovative strategies bring unexpected consequences?
- Do we need to reinvent the wheel?
- How can I be innovative when I am teaching hundreds of students in a class?

The call for proposals elicited many wonderful submissions, from which thirty were selected for inclusion in the conference schedule. Many colleagues and students gave freely of their time to make this a successful conference and I would like to thank each and every one of them. In particular, I would like to thank those on the organizing committee who helped to vet submissions, set the conference schedule, and host sessions. Special thanks to Jason Loxton for the time and effort he put forth to edit these proceedings. Lastly, I would like to thank Teaching and Learning Canada/Enseignement et Apprentissage, a charitable agency associated with the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE), for providing funding for the 2014 Teaching Showcase. We appreciate their support.



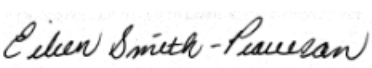
Eileen Smith-Piovesan
Manager, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Cape Breton University
Chair, 2014 Teaching Showcase Conference

INTRODUCTION

En octobre 2014, Cape Breton University a accueilli un groupe de professeurs, d'étudiants, d'administrateurs ainsi que les développeurs d'enseignement pour l'Expo-Enseignement de l'Association des universités de l'Atlantique. Le thème de la conférence, « Sortir des sentiers battus : Les innovations et les contraintes » a fait en sorte que nous avons reçu des propositions qui tentent de répondre aux questions suivantes :

- C'est quoi « l'enseignement qui sort des sentiers battus » ?
- À quoi ressemble l'enseignant innovateur ?
- Est-ce qu'il y a des conséquences inattendues à l'utilisation de stratégies innovatrices ?
- Avons-nous besoin de réinventer la roue ?
- Comment puis-je être innovateur lorsque je suis professeur d'une centaine d'étudiants dans une même classe ?

L'appel pour les propositions a suscité de nombreuses soumissions intéressantes, dont trente qui ont été sélectionnées pour faire partie du programme de l'Expo. Plusieurs collègues et étudiants ont donné de leur temps pour faire de cette conférence un succès et je tiens à remercier chacune et chacun d'entre eux. En particulier, je tiens à remercier les membres du comité organisateur qui ont aidé à évaluer les soumissions, à créer le programme et à animer des sessions. Merci à Jason Loxton pour le temps et les efforts afin de réviser les procédures. Enfin, je tiens à remercier nos bailleurs de fonds Teaching and Learning Canada/Enseignement et Apprentissage Canada, un organisme à but non lucratif associé à la Société pour l'avancement de la pédagogie dans l'enseignement supérieur (SAPES). Nous apprécions grandement leur soutien.



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Acknowledgements

The 2014 Teaching Showcase would not have been possible without the efforts of our colleagues and students who volunteered in the following ways:

The Showcase Organizing Committee: Dr. Peter MacIntyre, Dr. Matthias Bierenstiel, Dr. Geoff Lee-Dadswell, Dr. Joanne Pyke, Emma Russell, and Eileen Smith-Piovesan (Chair)

Volunteers: Reviewers for Showcase Proposals and Proceedings Submissions, Session Hosts, and Registration/Information Desk Attendants

Translation (Introduction)
Éric R. Thériault

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2014 AAU AWARD WINNERS PLENARY SESSION

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Peter MacIntyre, Cape Breton University

Introduction

The winners of the 2014 Atlantic Association of Universities teaching awards were asked to address the delegates to the teaching showcase, in a plenary session, on any topic they chose. The following text reflects their thoughts on university teaching and the importance of the relationships on which university teaching thrives. The plenary session at the teaching showcase, and the following text, is based on speeches given by the award winners at the fall meeting of Atlantic Association of Universities Council held in St. John's, NL in September, 2014.

We all work at a time when universities—or university administrations—seem increasingly captivated with the idea, and the supposed necessity, of "change." There is always something, we are told, that will change the university, and what we faculty do in it, for the better. Sometimes that's a new technology: online courses, MOOCs, clickers. Sometimes it's a new academic focus or arrangement: increased internationalization, new strategic plans, program prioritization and other kinds of academic plans. Sometimes it's a range of new services that will attract and retain more students: more expanded student affairs, more athletics and recreation resources, etc.

Although perhaps ironic, given what we've received our awards for, we want to argue against change, or at least, against many of these kinds of changes. But let us be clear. We are certainly not against change per se—this is not a conservative plea for the status quo, for never asking questions or rethinking how we do what we do. But it is a strong claim that universities are always intrinsically about change—even without these kinds of new plans or gimmicks.

Indeed, change is central to the university—it always has been. Change is at the heart of what we do with students—and what happens to and with them; it describes what happens to us throughout our careers in this profession; it is the whole reason we pursue new knowledge and ideas. Change is built into what a university is, because universities are not buildings and policies. At their core, they are about human interactions—they always have been. The university is a place of relationships, a place where what we do is connect—in every sense of that word. And any new initiatives we want to imagine in the university or to the university must, we think, always start from this recognition. And so, for us, there is no mystery to what we do. It is, it must be, about being there (physically, mentally, emotionally), being open to and nurturing those connections and relationships, and always recognizing them as central to what we do—and that we actually can't do what we do without them.

Each of our comments below, then, focus on some aspect of this idea of relationships and connections, using our reflections about them and their importance to challenge the university to remember—and to re-center—its core mission and purpose, and to start from the important acknowledgement that change has always been here, in what we do. And it is this idea that must inform where we as an institution go.

Martin Kutnowski: It Takes a Village to Raise a Teacher

I am honoured by this award, and cherish the recognition of my peers. But, as Spiderman's Uncle Ben says, "With great power comes great responsibility," and in this space I am therefore obliged to acknowledge the sustained support I received from so many people. In the first place, I must mention St. Thomas University and most specially Dr. James Whitehead, Director of Teaching and Learning. Without his encouragement and guidance, the nomination simply would not have happened. Alongside James, I must mention Roger Moore, Brad Cross, and Doug Vipond, longtime mentors who have supported me in more ways that I could list in the reduced space I have.

Inquiring deeper into whose help I need to acknowledge, I realize that the list is actually very, very long. "It takes a village to raise a child," the old adage goes, and it takes a village to make a teacher. All my colleagues and staff at STU have helped getting me where I am, one way or another, because it's hard to trace where I learned this or that, where a thought started and developed, be it during a formal teacher training exercise, or informally. Being part of a community of practice, even an off-the-cuff comment in the elevator may turn into a revealing notion that helps one have a better teaching day.

And then, what about my colleagues at schools where I taught before, such as The Graduate Center of City University of New York or the Music Conservatory Manuel de Falla in Argentina? For sure, I also learned so much there. And what about my high school teachers, and my private teachers? Yes, of course, them, too. And what about my wife, who is also a piano teacher and with whom I've discussed the problems of teaching music about a million times? And what about my children (my most challenging students), or my brother and sisters (my most helpful classmates), or my parents (my most challenging teachers)? Yes, all of them are part of who I am and what I have been able to do in life, and so they deserve this recognition.

And then, my students: those who kindly nominated me for the Excellence Award at STU earlier this year, but also those who supported me in the past; those who wrote a kind comment during a course evaluation, or the ones who honestly and constructively pointed out problems in a course, helping me correct it; or those who were not nice, and angrily complained because they hated the class or how I taught it.

Or . . . even a wider circle than that. I must thank all the students (I guess in the thousands now) who ever chose me as their teacher. These students entrusted me with their dreams, following the

roadmap I proposed, embarking with me on the adventure, patiently putting up with my mistakes, hoping for the best, step-by-step holding my hand and giving me cues about how to get the job done.

I'll share just one example about that. More than fifteen years ago, when I was teaching part-time in New York while doing my doctorate, I ran into one of my students in the subway, just after the lecture ended. It was my first course in that school, very early in the semester. This was a course which I had not taught before and I was using a mandatory textbook that I did not know very well. Looking over my shoulder, the student saw me assigning grades in the papers that I had just collected: A, A-, A, A+, B+ . . . With a soft voice and an enigmatic smile, she casually observed that I was marking too high. During the rest of the train ride, I kept thinking about it and realized that she was right: In my inexperience with the letter-grade system, I had come close to shooting myself in the foot by setting wrong grade expectations for the class. Right then and there in the subway car, there was no question in my mind that this student had saved me from some future pain, perhaps even an uncomfortable visit to the Dean's office.

Why has this episode stuck in my memory? Remarkably, this student's only reason to help me calibrate my grades was her honest commitment to the sacred ritual of teaching and learning, even if it meant that she would get a lower grade. I'll never forget it. Students help us become better teachers.

So, my acknowledgments are not the introduction to this essay, a necessary formality before I get to the core of what I really wanted to say. No, my acknowledgements are its centrepiece: students help us become better teachers; colleagues help us become better teachers; family and friends help us become better teachers.

And if we dare to reflect about our past, we may realize that our own teachers, good or bad, alive or dead, also keep teaching us by example from the depths of our memories, forever reminding us what to do or what not to do:

- Reflecting what we liked about our favorite elementary school teacher.
- Thinking back about why we did well—or didn't do well—in a given course.
- Recalling the excitement of a collaborative assignment or the anxiety of a final exam.
- Remembering anecdotes—like the one about the student in the subway—and only then, many years later, realizing their importance. This is to say, establishing a constant dialogue among our many lives as students, as teachers, as parents.

So much energy invested by so many people over such a long period of time that it would be staggering to measure. So much learning. We can look at all of these real experiences, past and present, all of this lived knowledge, as a formidable data bank, a gigantic bag of tricks to help us in the here-and-now of the classroom. Who knows, perhaps one day, when we are very old, this accumulated knowledge could become some sort of wisdom?

What is it, then, the secret? How can we harness this data bank, understand our strengths and weaknesses, and become gradually better? Perhaps the only condition is to also assume ourselves as

learners, and lifetime learners at that; to admit that, as teachers, we have been shaped by a large number of experiences, that we owe who we are to a large number of people, and that we are constantly adding to this outstanding debt, because we are still constantly learning from everybody around us.

Perhaps all it takes to slowly become a wiser teacher is to humbly admit that, no matter how prestigious and shiny our diplomas, how many years we have been teaching, how much we may have mastered our discipline, still, the new group of students before us today represent a new challenge. These new students staring at us with big round eyes the very first day of classes bring with them a new set of minds and desires and fears, a new set of perspectives on how they see themselves and how they want to reshape the world. And, in all honesty, at that point we teachers become beginners all over again. Some days, we may have to mumble the scariest confession of all: "I don't know." And that's when we get to choose how we feel about it: Shall we choose to see the glass as tiringly half empty or as excitedly half full?

The bar raised by our training and experience can also be a problem: We worked so hard for that doctorate! And yes, we have been teaching for a while and, at this point, aren't we supposed to know what we're doing? Indeed, now and then there are glorious days when I know exactly what I am doing in the classroom and everything goes according to plan. But, just the same, there are also tough days when I don't know what's going on and must work very hard to catch up. Most days are in-between. Sometimes my students surprise me; sometimes I surprise myself. What's for sure is that I need help, I am still learning, and I hope that I always continue learning.

"It takes a village to raise a child" and it takes a village to raise a teacher. The good news is that, provided we ask for it, help in becoming gradually better at our craft will be available, from students (new and old), from colleagues, from the institutions where we teach, from our friends and families, even from strangers whom we have never met, and whose thoughts we get to read on a computer screen. I got that kind of help in the past, as soon as I started teaching, and I have been so fortunate to continue getting it, every day. With so many opportunities to learn from one another and so much room for growth, teaching really is not just an honourable profession—and hard work—but also a most exhilarating ride.

I could not have arrived at this point in my journey without the village that has generously nurtured and raised me up to the present day, and without which my work—who I am, or what I am—would have no meaning. Thank you, my beautiful village: family, teachers, colleagues, students.

Peter MacIntyre: Teaching Relationships

It was something like 17 years ago when a then Vice President (now a University President) made a comment that has stayed with me. He was discussing the need for change and transition during a difficult budget process and he said that universities have not changed much in 350 years. His message was that change is overdue. Being both a faculty member and ethnically Scottish, my first reaction was

to take a contrary position. If something lasts for 350 years, it most certainly is doing something right; there is a truly impressive legacy.

But as I thought about the dialectic between constancy and change at the university, the reasons for its longevity began to come into focus. I am old enough to remember that television was going to replace teachers in general, and professors in particular. And I am young enough to have heard that MOOCs will do the same. But neither has come to pass and I see no need to worry that either will—television has had its shot and some commentators on MOOCs are already declaring them to be "over." I must admit to having signed up for a MOOC—I enjoyed the video lectures and I genuinely learned something. But statistically speaking, I am normal. By that I mean I stopped participating after a few weeks. I never did finish that course; likely I never will.

In contrast, thinking back on my days as a university student, I can say that barring illness, I attended every class of every course I took throughout university. So I started thinking about the difference between the two experiences and I keep coming back to the same conclusion. The difference between the television or MOOC delivery model, as compared to in-class learning, is not the information content, or the video demonstrations. It's not the expertness of the teacher and it's not because of the advances or limits of technology. The key difference is the way that the relationship between teacher and student develops.

Universities are places of constant change; both the research and teaching sides of the house guarantee as much. Research is inherently change-oriented. Teaching itself changes as faculty adapt to new generations of students, new course management systems, new technology for learning, advances in knowledge and new ideas. But at its core, the heart of the whole endeavour is the relationship between teacher and student. That is what has not changed in the past 350 years or more. Once you are somebody's student, you always are that person's student. That special relationship reflects the constancy that will keep universities at the foreground of teaching and learning at the highest levels. Human beings are born to learn, we do it voraciously until testing and grading and credentialing and tuition fees and rigid curricula get in the way. Through it all, if we can keep the relationship between teacher and student in focus such that the changes happening around that core serve the development of a teacher-student connection, then universities should be fine for another 350 years or more.

Every student is a unique individual, no matter where we as faculty meet them. If one considers the on campus and the virtual environments, faculty now interact with their students in more places than ever—in class, on the web, on Facebook, with Twitter, and with whatever else will replace these tools. The best teaching practices are the ones that serve to connect us with students, the ones that genuinely facilitate the development of a relationship between persons, and respect the unique trajectory of the learners.

This is not simply a nice thing to say, it is a course design issue. I would like to offer some practical suggestions for how to foster interpersonal connections, with a focus on the potentially difficult case of online learning. The ideas to follow are drawn from an online course in Positive Psychology. In the first week students pay tribute to someone who has passed on, a relative or even a

celebrity who has affected them. They consider the person's life and how they lived their values, describing celebrities, leaders, and ordinary people (grandparents and war veterans, fathers and mothers) with extraordinary strength. Then the students write their own legacy statement, how they want to be remembered. They also introduce themselves to the class; they are not asked to name their year and program but they are asked to describe "you at your best"—an example of something they were proud to do, something that reflects their core values and character strengths. With these three techniques, I learn a lot about them as people: I know that Talia lives her Christian faith in everyday decisions; I know that Jennifer loves her dad more than anything and that she almost lost him three years ago when he had cancer; I learned that Sandra made a quilt for a blind woman with an inscription from the bible written in Braille—a gesture that brought them both to tears at the time and the rest of us as well when we watched the recording of the tribute posted to the web.

So it is quite possible to learn a lot about students online, to develop a relationship with each one that is personal and meaningful. The rest of the course continues to ask students to identify their core values, their "signature strengths" and their sources of happiness in life. They conduct an experiment that pits fun against philanthropy and they write about it (philanthropy wins almost every time). Even as I speak to you today, this week their assignment will be to do a truly altruistic act for a friend, neighbour or even a stranger. Then they come online to describe whether true altruism can exist in the human psyche and whether or not they experienced it during the assignment. I offer them my view that the psychological term "pro-social" behaviour is an impoverished concept unsuitable to the selfless acts of everyday men and women.

So with 350 years behind us and more ahead, I hope that all of us, students, faculty, and university leaders, will see ourselves as the caretakers of a valuable legacy. As we work to support and strengthen the ways in which faculty and students can learn from each other, in unique and individual ways, we will bring out the very best in the next generation and in ourselves as well. If we can facilitate those relationships then our various roles at the university will have a lasting legacy of our own.

Ann Braithwaite: Being the Change I Want to See in the World

More than a feel-good bumper sticker (not actually said by Ghandi), and as clichéd as it can sound, "be the change you want to see in the world" captures my philosophy of educational leadership, as well as my sense of myself and my professional identity in the university. (It's also of course a poster on the door of my office.) It's the short and pithy articulation of how I think educational leadership is about both modeling a way of being, a way of living a life, and working towards making desired and needed change happen in academia. It's an articulation of how I think about my role as a professor for students, and my role as a faculty colleague for other professors around me. It's a saying that guides how I think about my position in relation to education more broadly, and to the university specifically. In short, it's a powerful shorthand for what motivates me in this profession, and for how I want to motivate others.

When I think about educational leadership, I think about both how much I love, and how important I think, good conversation is—in the teaching we do, in the ways we talk about that teaching,

and in the opportunities we create to enable that teaching. Reflecting on teaching obviously involves discussing what we do in the classroom—content, method, delivery, outcome—all the elements that make up our pedagogy and our pedagogical contemplations. Good conversation, though, also demands intellectual community: a space within which to have these conversations; other people—eager and enthusiastic—with whom to engage in this talk; an intellectual and political engagement with the world of ideas; a deep caring about the lives of those with whom we share the university, especially our students—who are the core reason we are here; and a shared commitment to ongoing self-reflection about "who we are and what we do" in this institution. None of these comes easily, amidst the day to day busyness of our academic lives, and yet, I believe passionately, they are/they must be what ultimately drives and sustains us in this profession. When I think about educational leadership, then, I think also of how important it is—to me—to devote the time and energy needed to create the possibilities for those conversations, to build the intellectual communities of which I want to be a part.

Intellectual community connotes a wide-ranging and varied set of possibilities. It is what happens (or what I want to happen) when we talk in hallways and over coffee and in each other's offices about what we're doing and what we could do, about student "ah-ha" moments in our classrooms, about ideas for new courses and curricular offerings; it is what happens (or what I want to happen) at conferences and symposia, on and off campus, when we put together panels and roundtables and workshops because we're excited to work with others and excited about the process of coming together to do that work; it is what happens (or what I want to happen) when we write (often with others) and edit and review and assess our own and each other's work and programs and curricula. In short, it is what happens when we understand ourselves as engaged in that constant and limitless conversation, and understand ourselves as part of a process of producing both knowledge and opportunities for that knowledge production together. A passion for, and commitment to, intellectual community insists on an ongoing and interactive process of producing and exchanging ideas, ideas that can make a difference in ways that we don't and cannot know beforehand, but that must be allowed to be articulated and debated and talked about—and that must remain clear to us all as the reason why we are a university in the first place. In the midst of my passion and enthusiasm, I increasingly worry that we are losing sight of this core understanding of the university—in the growing emphasis on instrumentalizing ideas and the knowledges they can produce.

Intellectual community, though, does not happen by itself. It needs to be fostered and nurtured in a variety of ways; it takes ongoing work to get it going and keep it going. It needs recognition and valorization as a process worth doing. It needs structures that enable it to occur and continue—i.e., changed policies, different institutional focuses, an academic context dedicated to ensuring that it can exist, and the shared belief that students will thrive in it. It needs an openness and willingness to take seriously its risks (perceived and real), and to be able to work with others to meet and address those. For those of us, though, who find the process of that ongoing conversation some of the most invigorating and exciting part of this profession, the work of producing intellectual community—its spaces, conversations, structures—is as rewarding as being a part of it. Its payback, for me, comes both in finding the people with whom to engage, and in seeing how the venues one has imagined and shaped to do this succeed in captivating other people too.

While there are no doubt a number of ways to work at producing the space of and for intellectual community, my own focus is always on identifying how I can bring people together to reassess what we do, together, in this profession. What kinds of programming do we offer—and what are the many ways we can package and offer those knowledges? What kinds of curricular possibilities do our current structures and policies constrict and even inhibit—and how can we alter those to increase opportunities for our students? Who are "we"—in my own field and program here or at other universities, in the Faculty of Arts more generally, and in universities today (especially given their massive changes and challenges)—and how can we articulate that in more accessible and exciting ways? And, most importantly, how can we bring all of this back to our classrooms, to our students, to excite them too about "who we are and what we do?"

Educational leadership, then, in its most complete sense, involves constantly asking questions, identifying and even challenging status quo arrangements, and doing the work, with others, to make change that highlights and strengthens the university's core mission—empowering students and colleagues to enhance and enable that unfettered exploration of ideas. I think I've succeeded best as an educational leader—both in and outside the classroom with students (my favorite part of this job), as well as with colleagues from many areas on my own and other campuses—when other people around me get as passionate and enthusiastic and even as loud as I am, when they take nothing for granted but think of their worlds as always open to possibility and change. I could not imagine my work in this profession without this intellectual community I work so hard to create—so I can both be and live as I imagine and desire, for myself and for others, in this profession. To be the change you want to see in the world can make the world one you want to be in—and that's both an exciting motivation and a model of leadership I want to embody.

Author Biographies

Ann Braithwaite, recipient of the AAU Anne Marie MacKinnon Award for Educational Leadership, is a professor in Diversity and Social Justice Studies, University of Prince Edward Island. Her award citation can be found at:
http://www.atlanticuniversities.ca/sites/default/files/documents/AAUTeachingAwards/AAUEducationalLeadershipCitations/Citation%20Braithwaite.pdf

Martin Kutnowski, recipient of the AAU Distinguished Teaching Award, is a professor in the Department of Fine Arts, St. Thomas University. His award citation can be found at:
http://www.atlanticuniversities.ca/sites/default/files/documents/AAUTeachingAwards/AAUDistinguishedTeachingCitations/Citation%20Kutnowski.pdf

Peter MacIntyre, recipient of the AAU Distinguished Teaching Award, is a professor of psychology at Cape Breton University. His award citation can be found at:
http://www.atlanticuniversities.ca/sites/default/files/documents/AAUTeachingAwards/AAUDistinguishedTeachingCitations/Citation%20MacIntyre.pdf

Papers
and
Short Reports

THINKING CREATIVELY ABOUT "RETREAT" TIME IN UNIVERSITY CLASSROOMS

M. Tanya Brann-Barrett, Cape Breton University

Abstract

As a Communication professor and education researcher I spend a significant amount of time studying, practicing and discussing the benefits of collaborative and group learning. Still, when thinking about innovative ways to encourage critical thought and learning I have come to appreciate the value of what might be called *retreat* time—time to be quiet and to have some access to personal space in the classroom. I have also thought about what retreat time can look like when art-making becomes part of the picture. In this article I present a case for building retreat time into classroom experiences in conjunction with collaborative activities. I draw from existing literature, my own teaching practices, and my educational research in which I engage in arts-related methods that integrate both retreat and collaboration. First, I contemplate the value of silence in learning and strategies educators can use to create room for constructive silence. I then consider the need for personal space in which students can listen, process, and critically reflect upon what they are learning. Finally, I describe an adaptation of an art-making activity that allows for retreat *and* collaboration in an effort to help students articulate their ideas, questions, and interpretations of theories and concepts they explore in the classroom. Throughout I share personal observations and reflections regarding the implementation of retreat time in my own practices suggesting possible areas of formal teaching and learning research.

Introduction

As a Communication professor and education researcher I spend a significant amount of time studying, practicing and discussing the benefits of collaborative and group learning. Still, when thinking about innovative ways to encourage critical thought and learning I have come to appreciate the value of what might be called *retreat* time. In this context, retreat time refers to opportunities to be quiet and to have some access to personal space in the classroom. I have also contemplated what retreat time can look like when art-making becomes part of the picture. In this article I present a case for building retreat time into classroom experiences in conjunction with collaborative activities. To do so, I draw from existing literature, my own teaching practices in the field of Communication, and my educational research in which I engage in arts-related methods that integrate both retreat and collaboration. The article proceeds as follows. First, I contemplate the value of silence in critical learning and strategies educators can use to create room for constructive silence. I then consider the need for some degree of personal space in which students can listen, process, and critically reflect upon what they are learning. Finally, I describe an adaptation of an art-making activity that allows for retreat *and* collaboration in an effort to help students articulate their ideas, questions, and interpretations of theories and concepts they explore in the classroom. Throughout I share personal observations and reflections regarding the

implementation of retreat time in my own classrooms and research spaces suggesting possible areas of formal teaching and learning research.

Constructive Silence in the Classroom

Part of my teaching responsibilities includes delivering two courses through which students learn how to design and facilitate communication training programs. When I ask students to share concerns they have about facilitation many indicate that their greatest fear is that "participants will be silent". Such feelings are not unusual. Both professors and students often describe a sense of awkward silence that fills a classroom when there is no verbal response to educators' questions or invitations for group discussion. An uneasy reaction to classroom silences is understandable. "Part of the problem is the fact that most American and European educators are accustomed to thinking of classrooms as discourse communities and tend to devalue the other side of discourse which is silence" (Vassilopoulos & Konstantinidis, 2012, p.91). Others concur. In reference to Western teaching practices, Ollin (2008) writes: "Silence, as an absence of speech, is often problematised in a classroom situation, with the underlying implication that classrooms are for talking—as long as the talking is under the control of the teacher" (p. 267).

The discomfort associated with silence can be related to how it is interpreted (Ollin, 2008). If educators and students assume that silence suggests a lack of knowledge, concern, or interest they may have a negative reaction to the quiet, surmising it signals discord or an absence of learning. If silence is interpreted as a dislike or fear of speaking, there may be attempts to intervene and encourage more talk. Certainly, there are instances when silence is an indication that something is impeding students' learning and it needs to be addressed accordingly. However, Ollin (2008) challenges the broad-sweeping assumption that silence inherently suggests disengagement. In fact, as with verbal language, the meaning of silence is subjective and can have multiple connotations (Alerby & Alerby, 2003). Without asking, educators cannot know for certain why students choose to be quiet. Furthermore, it is possible that students' silences signal quiet participation. Caranfa (2004) describes silence as a foundation of learning. It gives space for listening, reflecting, and being quiet—behaviours that when effectively practiced can help students review and process what they are hearing, reading and observing. In silence students can initiate the process of critical reflection. Silence also affords students the chance to formulate responses.

In some cases, silence itself is a message. Zembylas and Michaelides (2004) emphasize "the important role silence plays in signifying human experience that is inexpressible" (p. 209). They elaborate:

> The most passionate and exhilarating moments of learning have a built-in sense of mystery, of something that is inexpressible. The very fact that a teacher calls attention to silence means the students are deliberately drawn into learning as creators of meaning. There is no way we can express or describe something accurately and completely in words. In fact, the very words we use to describe it often remove us even further from that. (p. 209)

Failure to explicitly acknowledge the expression that potentially occurs in silence may inadvertently stifle students who thrive when given time for quietness. It may veil the meaning embedded in their silence. In turn, the opportunity to help students learn how to engage in constructive and meaningful silence will be missed.

Silence has value in and of itself in our daily lives. Lightman (2005) argues that we live in a wired world and that many of us are connected in some capacity or another to others many hours of the waking day. There are indeed benefits in our capacity to be linked and engaged be it though technology or face-to-face. Still, Lightman notes that we sometimes feel unable to retreat and claim quiet personal space. Yet he believes that retreat is possible when we become aware or mindful of moments from our lives where we have felt stillness and silence. He urges us to reflect on conscious moments of stillness when silence freed us to focus inward. In addition to giving us room to connect with our inner self, in these moments of mindful quiet, learning can happen. Educators can help themselves and their students find that quiet awareness.

Corrigan (2011) claims that silence should be woven into educators' personal and classroom practices. What, then, might such practices look like? First, Corrigan (2011) recommends that in their own learning and professional development educators step back and take quiet time to reflect on the research, materials and other professional development tools that inform how they teach. Points of consideration include: What in their own study makes the most sense to them? What ideas might they challenge? And how can educators' own learning and research be integrated into their classroom teaching? Second, time for silence before and after classes offers important moments for educators to learn through silence. In anticipation of classes educators can contemplate the goals they hope to achieve, the fears they hold, and the confidence they feel as they prepare to teach. Following a class, they can set aside a few minutes of quiet time to reflect on their perceptions of successes and setbacks, and moments that surprised, disappointed, and pleased them. In addition, they can use the time to think about what they would do the same and different in future classes.

Appreciation and time for silences can be embedded in educators' teaching practices. Initially, it is helpful to explicitly state to students that when used constructively, silence is a valuable learning tool. Inform students of the potential benefits and assure them they will have ample time throughout a course to silently engage with the material they are studying. In other words, give them permission to be quiet. A simple way to honour silence is to encourage students to take time to think about their responses when questions are posed (Corrigan, 2011). Let them know it is okay if no one answers immediately.

There are other ways to integrate retreat time into class practices. One of the specific strategies I employ is five minutes of silent time at the beginning of class. Once the day's agenda is announced, students have time to review readings or other materials that will be discussed, check on homework assignments that had to be completed and jot down comments, questions, or discussion topics they wish to raise. Alternatively students can use the time to simply rest and attempt to quiet psychological noise that can impede learning. There is no guarantee that this strategy will entirely prepare them for class and eliminate the distractions that often follow students into their learning spaces. Still it can help.

Since introducing this practice I have noticed that students are more readily prepared to discuss readings and materials covered in class. Their nonverbal behaviour suggests that they are less distracted than they appear when I do not include the five minute silent time. For example, they do not check their mobile phones and search through their personal belongings as frequently. These are observations and not conclusive evidence. Formal research is needed to determine if indeed the option of time to retreat at the beginning of class does have an impact on students' readiness to engage in learning.

Another known tactic that can be helpful prior to small or large group discussions is to use a think-pair-share activity (Goldsmith, 2013). Initially students are given discussion questions that they can think about individually. Then, after a few minutes, they are paired with another student to talk over their thoughts, questions, and ideas about the topics. Others who advocate for the think-pair-share model contend that thinking time is a critical element of the learning process (Hinson, 1990). Having time to think alone in class as topics are being introduced and then try out their ideas with one other student can foster more comfort and confidence when the activity moves on to the small or large group discussions. Anecdotally, and in keeping with existing literature across educational levels and disciplines (Thaman, Dhillon, Saggar, Gupta,& Kaur, 2013; McTighe & Lyman, 1988), I have noticed that there seems to be more input from all members when students have time to work quietly and then with a partner prior to forming groups.

Corrigan (2011) remarks, "All words become noise when there are too many of them in too small a space of time" (p. 9). In my experience, building quiet time into daily classroom practices has proven to be a valuable use of time. However, there is no guarantee quiet time will always be used constructively or that it will be equally effective for all students. Research can examine both benefits and potential limitations of the kinds of strategies presented here. Such work will help educators determine the best ways to make room for silence that unclutters teaching space so deeper learning can occur.

Honouring Personal Space in the Classroom

Upitis (2010) contends that the architecture of schools deeply influences our interactions, growth and learning. Beyond the physical structure of buildings, educators committed to innovative and effective teaching typically acknowledge that a classroom's physical set up has an impact on learning (Neill & Etheridge, 2008). For example, various types of furniture and arrangements may influence the kinds of interaction that will occur in classrooms (Wannarka & Ruhl, 2008). Therefore, if educators want to facilitate positive retreat they need to consider proxemics which is the use of space (Hall, 1966). Harrop and Turpin (2013) might refer to such consideration as attention to placemaking which they say "is about people and their experiences while occupying a given space" (p. 60).

Harrop and Turpin (2013) studied the use of informal learning spaces and found that some students look for places to retreat when engaged in learning. In some instances, this refers to private, quiet spaces. However, this is not always the case. They write: "retreat can, but does not necessarily refer to sound levels and individual study" (p.69). For example, some students like to work alone in a place with other people (consider individuals who frequent bustling coffee shops to engage alone in

their work). In other instances, Harrop and Turpin (2013) found that when working in small groups or dyads some students want the option to find private places to meet and engage in their work.

Although they studied informal learning spaces, the needs for retreat identified by Harrop and Turpin (2013) can be accommodated in classrooms as well without compromising space designs that encourage collaboration. Classroom space needs to be flexible enough to suit learning activities that involve large groups, small groups and individuals (Hunter, 2005; Haskin, 2010). Flexible seating arrangements are challenging when furniture is secured in place and this can negatively impact students' class experiences and learning (Lei, 2010). I have found it is helpful to acknowledge with students the constraints of fixed seating arrangements and to brainstorm with them creative ways to use the space so that needs for both collaboration and retreat time can be met. For instance, I have given groups of students permission to move outside of the classroom when they wanted to work together in a private space. I have also used extra chairs in the classroom to set up places where students could find some personal space during reflection activities if that is their preference. We then move closer together again when engaging in group conversations.

It is somewhat easier to be flexible in classrooms that have moveable furniture. Depending on the activity, educators can arrange desks in clusters when engaged in small group work, pairs when working in dyads, and circles when facilitating large group discussions. Arranging seats in rows for silent reading, writing, listening and contemplation may be appreciated by students who seek retreat time during which they do not have to interact verbally and nonverbally to a great extent with others. Changing the seating arrangement multiple times during a session allows for collaborative activities and alone time activities as well as large group discussions. And there may be benefits when students help with the rearrangement. Neill & Etheridge (2008) reference a teacher who suggests that when students assist with the classroom seating arrangements it facilitates their active involvement in their learning.

Humans have unique needs when it comes to personal space (Hall, 1966) and it can vary across cultures, gender, age, and other factors that influence individual comfort levels (Kaya & Burgess, 2007; Gibson, Harris, & Werner, 1993). While it may be a challenge to address all students' space needs as part of their retreat time in a single classroom, how space can be constructed to respect learners and encourage various kinds of learning is worth examination.

Art-Making Activity

The case for retreat time exists. This does not, however, diminish the value of collaboration. A goal for educators is to find ways to intermix both. Arts-related researchers including those in the education field, recognize that art-making is a process and forum through which to critically examine, self-reflect upon and discuss with others ideas, positions, experiences and perceptions (Casey, 2009; Greenwood, 2012; Brann-Barrett, 2013). In essence, themed art-making in groups allows for both retreat time and collaboration. In my own educational research I worked with young people between the ages of 15 and 27. They came together in small and large groups, and through a process of discussion coupled with individual and collaborative art-making, they contemplated their role in community engagement. Participants critically reflected on and shared their ideas using craft and media tools to create pieces of

art that articulated their own experiences and perceptions of the subject. The research process allowed ample time for quiet reflection and space to spread out and be alone while still connecting with the group. Furthermore there were built-in opportunities for conversation and collaboration with each other. This research technique adapts nicely as a teaching and learning method making it a well-suited activity when the intention is to merge retreat and collaboration in classroom learning.

I use art-making as a way to allow students to critically reflect upon broad foundational concepts being covered in class, such as media, health, family, communication, entrepreneurship, science, economy, sustainability, justice, gender, culture, and education. The exercise encourages students to identify ideological, cultural and personal assumptions embedded in discipline-related constructs and theories. To start, I suggest to students that one element of critical thinking is reflection on how their personal experiences influence how they understand and attach meaning to the topics they learn about in university. I then give them a list of incomplete statements. For example, if they are studying learning styles I present the following statements:

- When I was child I learned best when . . .
- As an adult I learn best when . . .
- Something that makes learning easier for me . . .
- The perfect place to learn is . . .
- For me as a learner/educator, the perfect classroom looks like . . .
- What I like about learning/teaching in groups is . . .
- What makes it difficult for me to learn/teach in groups is . . .
- What I like about retreat time when learning/teaching is . . .
- What about “retreat time” makes it difficult for me to learn/teach is . . .

I encourage students to write responses to any of the statement that are of particular interest to them. After they have had time to reflect on the statements, I invite them to use a wide variety of provided craft supplies to create a visual depiction of what “learning” means to them. The materials include but are not limited to paper, canvasses, fabric, bottles, beads, buttons, pipe cleaners, foam, paint, magazines, stencils, crayons, markers, glue, tape and other utensils. I often bring photographs or actual pieces of art created by former students who have engaged in the activity and who have given permission for their work to be viewed by others. Looking at other students’ projects can help trigger ideas.

I clarify two points prior to the exercise to reassure students who may be reluctant to participate. First, I discuss the pedagogical value of arts-related learning and reassure students who may question the benefits. For example, I explain to students that arts-related activities provide a wide spectrum of communication channels through which people can express themselves. Therefore, engaging in such activities can enhance their multi-media literacy skills (Brann-Barrett, 2013). Second, I assure students—particularly those who worry about their ability to create art—that I do not judge their artistic capabilities. I tell them that throughout the exercise they are free to chat with one another, ask questions, move around the room and think quietly about the concept and what it means to them. I

explicitly state that the focus is the process, not the finished piece. There is no pressure to "hurry up" and I assure them that their creations will not be graded.

Ollin (2008) notes that some teachers see kinesthetic activities such as working with clay and drawing as ways of creating space for silence through which students can think creatively about concepts and ideas. This appears to happen in my classes. During the arts-related activity there are periods of extended silence. Students spread out around the room, some working physically close together while others go off on their own. They periodically say they enjoy the silence as it helps them think. More formal research can examine if students are more comfortable with silence when they are engaged in activity. In the meantime, these observations align with the reactions of research participants taking part in the same kind of exercise. When I use this technique as a research method (described above) participants claim that the quiet time gives them a chance to reflect on the ideas they are exploring and the silence does not feel awkward because they are actually "doing" something (Brann-Barrett, 2013).

Simultaneously, students who engage in art-making in my classes periodically share thoughts and discussions ensue. In these instances the dialogue is initiated by the students. Interestingly, they appear to be invested in contributing to the conversation, perhaps more so than if the professor was leading the conversation. Further inquiry through research is needed to assess if students take more of an ownership role in classroom conversations they initiate.

After a set amount of time, students are invited to share with classmates their art—regardless of its stage of completion. They can discuss the meanings they hoped to convey, some of the factors that influence their interpretations, and how their personal perspective regarding the topics we study has an impact on their own learning. At the end of the session, students take their finished or unfinished work with them so they may continue to critically reflect on their own and with others.

Students' informal responses to this activity tend to be positive. They claim it feels relaxing and allows them to de-stress even though they believe they are still learning. Some have said it allows them to think about the concepts they are studying in new ways that are sometimes hard to express with words alone. While these comments are reassuring it is possible that some students do not like the activity or may have suggestions regarding how it is delivered. Even when educators encourage open feedback regarding classroom practices, students are still part of a hierarchy that places the professor in a position of power. Therefore some students may be reluctant to state their feelings to the person who assigns their grade. Hence, formal research is needed to glean a more in-depth sense of both the potential benefits and limitations of art-making activities as a way to allow for both retreat and collaboration in learning.

A Final Note

My intention in this article was to argue the value of retreat time in the classroom and to suggest some practical ways for educators to incorporate its main components—silences and personal space—into their practices. Next steps require more formal research to assess the place of retreat time in teaching and learning. I contend that such work is important and relevant. Our society offers more opportunity to

interact with others worldwide than ever before and classroom technologies enable students to link into innovative and exciting learning networks. We encourage our students to embrace these opportunities and learn how to voice their place in such relationships—as we should. I suggest, however, that along with encouraging students to take advantage of new and exciting collaborative learning innovations we need to teach them the value of retreat time. As Lightman (2005) notes, "We have grown accustomed to a constant background of machine noise wherever we are: cars, radios, televisions, fax machines, telephones, and cell phones—buzzes, hums, beeps, clatters, and whines" (p. 189). In a noisy world, silence in one's own space can afford students the necessary chance to pause and think deeply about what they are learning. Such reflection may help to better prepare them to engage in knowledge-building with others both inside and outside the classroom.

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INSIDE THE LAB/OUTSIDE THE BOX: INTERPRETING NONVERBAL MESSAGES IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

The Dr. Mary A. Lynch Communication Lab at Cape Breton University is the first lab of its kind and the longest running lab in North America. A mandatory requirement of our introductory Communication classes, the weekly experiential learning lab sessions help students understand concepts, increase their self-awareness and effectiveness as communicators, understand cross-cultural perspectives, retain the theory learned in class, and develop their communication skills cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally, through small-group discussions, experiential learning activities, and critically reflective written journals. This paper provides a history of the Dr. Mary A. Lynch Communication Lab, explains the purpose and methodology of the lab, and how our pedagogical approach demonstrates teaching outside the box. Nonverbal communication accounts for the majority of the messages we send. It's also the primary way we construct and send messages about our identity unique to contexts and cultures. Educators and students are constantly sending and interpreting nonverbal cues. This paper explores the nine forms of nonverbal behaviours as presented as a critical reflection activity to participants at the Atlantic Universities' Teaching Showcase and is representative of an activity delivered in the Communication Lab. Included are the questions posed to participants and a summary of the discussion surrounding each form of nonverbal messages in the context of the teaching and learning environment.

Introduction

The Dr. Mary A. Lynch Communication Lab at Cape Breton University is approaching its 50th year in operation. A requirement in our introductory classes, the weekly lab sessions encourage students to reflect on their communication behaviours and that of those around them. Our mode of delivery helps students increase their confidence, retain information, express ideas clearly, understand different perspectives, and expand their worldview, while participating in experiential learning.

In this paper, we provide background information about the Communication Lab, explain how our purpose and methodology demonstrate teaching outside the box, how the labs are run, why they are effective, and how we maintain the integrity of the lab while striving to adapt to ever-changing communication systems. To demonstrate how we present concepts and theories in the Communication Lab, we discuss the nine forms of nonverbal behaviours as they relate to the teaching and learning environment through a critical reflection activity presented at the Teaching Showcase. The style of this activity is reflective of one we may deliver in our labs—demonstrating the value of experiential learning, while asking participants to critically reflect on their own teaching environments through nonverbal

communication. We met with a group of colleagues from across institutions and disciplines to discuss these messages and what we found was that although there are many differences among our teaching practices, subjects, and environments, we share one thing in common—nonverbal communication influences our teaching and learning.

History

In 1965, Dr. Mary A. Lynch was teaching Speech Communication at Xavier Junior College when her students asked to have a place to practice their speeches without her being present. Dr. Lynch cleared out a broom closet and thus began the Communication Lab, making our lab the longest running and most developed in North America (Rolls, 1998). A new space was provided in 1967, and again in 1972, the first year that Dr. Lynch used student helpers (known today as Communication Lab Peer Facilitators). In 1979, the lab was moved to the College of Cape Breton campus (now known as Cape Breton University), after which time Dr. Lynch persevered to establish the Communication Lab as an adjunct to the basic communication courses in interpersonal and public communication. In September 2001, the lab was moved to its present location at CBU and unveiled as the "Dr. Mary A. Lynch Communication Lab" in honour of its founder. After almost 50 years in operation, we continue to build on the foundation Dr. Lynch created and explore new ways to deliver material and engage in experiential learning with students.

Purpose & Methodology

People learn best by doing (Arnold & McClure, 1996). The pedagogical approach we take in the Communication Lab is learning by doing, or experiential learning. Students respond positively to this approach and different learning styles are accommodated through this type of teaching and learning.

The Communication Lab is a required component of Communication 1103: Interpersonal Communication, Communication 1105: Public Communication, and Communication 2175: Issues in Media Studies. The purpose of the experiential learning lab is to reinforce what the students are learning in class and to help them reach their cognitive, affective and behavioural goals. Through small group discussion, role-playing, and videotaped activities, the lab complements the class, but is a unique experience for the students. The lab is designed to be a comfortable, relaxing environment that is conducive to discussion and participation. Students have stated that attending the lab is a major contributor to their success in the class. Approximately 50 labs are scheduled each semester and are facilitated by a Lab Instructor or a Communication Lab Peer Facilitator. Labs consist of five to seven students, and provide the small group environment that nurtures sharing of experience, critical reflection, and fosters peer-to-peer relationships. Research and personal experience of researchers and ourselves, as students and educators, suggest that students can learn effectively from one another proving the educational value of students helping students (Rolls, 1993; Brann-Barrett & Sulliman, 2001). The underlying concept is that students seek advice from and are influenced by the expectations, attitudes, and behaviors of their peer group. Peer influence in many situations may be stronger than that of adults such as teachers, parents, and other experts (Mellanby, Rees, & Tripp, 2000).

We use different forms of social media, artwork, commercials and print ads, video clips from movies and television series', and other forms of media in the labs to demonstrate concepts, show relevant and timely examples, and support the lessons we are delivering. Students positively respond to this method, and once comfortable, may suggest videos or provide examples we could use in lab. Through these methods, students are better able to increase their awareness of the communication concepts and theories in their daily lives, relationships, and in popular culture. They can then express this awareness in the lab while increasing their cognitive, affective and behavioural development. Through participation in lab and written journals we ask students what they have learned (cognitive), how they may be feeling in various communication situations (affective), and how they assess their own communication skills, and the skills of others (behavioural). Through this critical reflection process students are able to understand and adapt their own communication patterns in various situations.

Communication Lab Peer Facilitators

Students who demonstrate excellence in required courses are encouraged to enroll in a training course followed by a 160-hour practicum in order to become Communication Lab Peer Facilitators. The practicum gives students hands on experience facilitating three labs per week. The systematic training and supervision the students receive in these courses creates skilled, well-equipped facilitators able to lead small groups of students through the weekly lab sessions. After the successful completion of the practicum, a student may be hired as a facilitator for the following academic year.

Peer Facilitators play a vital role in helping students reach their cognitive, affective, and behavioural goals. Through empathetic listening, using focusing, encouraging, and reflecting skills, as well as confirming messages, facilitators are able to build relationships with students and increase their level of involvement in the lab (Cuny, Wilde, & Stevens, 2012). While no one should ever be pressured to speak, small-group discussions usually allow even the most timid to contribute (Arnold & McClure, 1996). Peer Facilitators possess qualities such as emotional intelligence, empathy, credibility, and trustworthiness that encourage students to disclose their thoughts and vulnerabilities more easily. (Ward & Schwartzman,2009).

The Peer Facilitators' role involves facilitating regularly scheduled, 50-minute labs and delivering a prepared lesson plan provided in advance from the Communication Lab Coordinator. Facilitators distribute journals to students throughout the year and are responsible for reviewing, responding to, assessing, and recording these assignments. This is one of the main ways we encourage peer-to-peer learning inside the lab. Facilitators are instrumental in helping students develop their communication skills and the personal rewards are immense: they gain invaluable experience by facilitating in the educational setting. This work is helpful for students planning to continue into teaching, counseling, or other fields where individual responsibility, leadership skills, and initiative are important. Some qualities our Facilitators require are excellent interpersonal and public communication skills, demonstrated leadership and organizational skills, the ability and desire to assess students fairly, excellent time and conflict management skills, and an understanding of small group dynamics (Brann-Barrett & White, 2014).

Student Assessment

The Communication Lab component is worth a total of 20% of the students' final grade for their COMM1103, COMM1105, and COMM2175 courses. The labs are a mandatory component and students are required to attend lab each week for ten weeks in order to take part in regularly scheduled experiential learning activities and discussions. 10% of their ongoing assessment is based on the willingness and quality of participation, general attitude and sensitivity to others, ability to integrate theory with real life communication experiences, and personal growth and development. Final Assessment Guides are completed at the end of each semester for every lab student. The guide is broken down into cognitive, affective, and behavioural sections, and includes critical reflection questions to be answered by the students' facilitator. Facilitators assess their peers' progress and suggest a mark based on this experience. At the end of the semester, facilitators meet with the Lab Coordinator to discuss each assessment. The Coordinator evaluates these assessments and submits the final lab grade.

Lab students complete two question-and-answer critical reflection journals designed to increase their awareness and effectiveness as communicators. Journals are worth 10% of their final grade and are assessed using a Journal Assessment Guide, a checklist based on completeness of descriptions, depth of entries, ability to apply communication principles and concepts, ability to self-disclose, and the overall degree of effort. Student journals and assessment guides are submitted to the Lab Coordinator for evaluation at the end of the semester.

To monitor students' development throughout the term, instructors and facilitators write weekly log reports. A log template is provided to Peer Facilitators that includes a list of critical reflection questions to be considered in their reports. Peer Facilitators are required to regularly submit these documents to the Lab Coordinator for review. The logs are instrumental in the student assessment process, since students' behaviour, participation, progress, and development is tracked regularly.

Critical Reflection Activity

To demonstrate how we teach outside the box in the Communication Lab and share some of the theories we present in our classes, we adapted a lab activity for our session. Mirroring how we facilitate our labs, we first discussed our topic and then asked for input from the group, encouraging the participants to relate theory to personal experience. With provided notebooks, we invited participants to walk around the room and look at the nine forms of nonverbal communication we had posted on the walls, each having corresponding critical reflection questions. Some participants worked on their own, jotting down notes, while others paired up, talking about the questions together. We decided the best way to enhance, but not influence, our participants' contributions to the discussion would be by providing them with the terminology and definitions of the nonverbal forms being discussed. After some time to consider the questions, we explored the nine forms of nonverbal communication through a facilitated group discussion. Bringing the participants back to the larger group gave everyone the ability to share their experiences, discuss what nonverbal cues they may or may not be recognizing, and how this may be affecting their teaching and their students' learning.

All participants were attentive and thoughtful in this process, they were encouraged to be open and speak freely, and the conversation flowed easily. One of the most common topics discussed amongst participants was how commonly nonverbal cues are misunderstood across cultures and how easily influenced we may be based on our own perceptions and those of our students. Having the opportunity to discuss nonverbal communication in this way allowed our participants to critically reflect on their own teaching practices and environments while experiencing how we teach outside the box.

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication accounts for 65 to 93% of the meaning of a message (Birdwhistell, 1970; Mehrabian, 1981). Intentionally or unintentionally, it is the primary way we construct and send messages about our identity unique to contexts, cultures, and the nature of our relationships. Nonverbal communication is continuous and ongoing, therefore our nonverbal messages are the reasons for the principle "we cannot not communicate" (Wood, Sept, & Duncan, 1998, p. 29). Because of the ambiguous nature of nonverbal communication, it is important not to read or interpret only a single cue, but to look at the whole picture. Keeping an open mind and not jumping to conclusions is essential (Adler, Rolls, & Proctor II, 2015). People communicate nonverbally through nine forms, and through posted questions we asked our participants to consider these forms in the context of the teaching and learning environment. Keep in mind they often overlap and many of them are in play at once (Corbin & White, 2009).

1. Kinesics—*Body position, body language, motions, facial features, eye contact*

- What is your perception of students who do not make eye contact?
- How do you feel when a student's facial expressions or body language displays disinterest?
- How do you nonverbally block/encourage students?

Kinesics is the most commonly thought of form of nonverbal communication and the one that can lead to the most misinterpretations. The group spent a good deal of time discussing eye contact in particular, and the cultural differences involved with this nonverbal behaviour. Increasing our awareness of different cultural interpretations of kinesics, including gestures and eye contact, can create a more effective teaching and learning environment. Another aspect we should consider is communicating with those with neurodevelopmental disorders such as Asperger syndrome, as there can be difficulties sending and receiving cues.

In the Communication Lab, we train Peer Facilitators to be keenly aware of students' nonverbal cues and to consider their behaviours critically and within context. We provide them with strategies to encourage positive nonverbal behaviour and ways to decode students' cues. A facilitator's use of kinesics greatly impacts the lab environment. Trainees will tend to pay more attention to trainers who use appropriate gestures (Beebe, Mottet, & Roach, 2004). By maintaining eye contact, an open posture, and positive facial expressions, facilitators can increase the level of comfort and participation with their students (Cuny & Wilde, 2004). It is especially important for trainers to maintain good eye contact with

trainees when they ask questions. This lets trainees know that the trainer is giving them careful and personal attention, and that the trainer values and respects the comments being made (Beebe et al., 2004).

2. Haptics—*Touch*

- When is touch appropriate in the teaching and learning environment?
- Consider culture and gender.

Touch can send messages about power, affection, and intimacy. This can be a difficult form of nonverbal communication to use effectively in the teaching and learning environment. With the level of diversity found within our classrooms, cultural differences are vast. One of our participants shared her experience, explaining that in the Latin American culture the use of touch, is a very common way of communicating. She has learned to explain this to her students from the start of the semester so they can understand her nonverbal behaviour and react appropriately. Another participant added that gender, as well as culture, influences his teaching style. Teaching piano, he is used to taking his students' hands and placing them on the keys. However, he expressed how this touch might be interpreted differently since teaching in Canada, especially with his female students.

In the Communication Lab, haptics can come into play during a few scenarios. When conducting mock interviews, students are expected to shake hands, however, there are cultural differences that can disrupt this process and potentially make students feel uncomfortable. Facilitators are aware of these differences and work to make sure all students feel at ease and respected.

3. Physical appearance—*The body we are born with*

- Do you treat students differently based on physical appearance?
- How does physical appearance impact your students' perception of you as an educator?
- Consider culture, gender, age, height, weight, hair colour, etc.

We can make alterations to our appearance, but in general there is a limited range of ways we can change. Sometimes the age of an educator can affect the level of credibility students' hold. During the conference session, sSome female participants who had a youthful look lamented not being taken seriously by their students because age had influenced their students' perception of their competency. One participant presented her own experience with how age is perceived in different cultures: Having taught in North America and in China, she discovered that age was more revered in the latter.

Similar issues are encountered by Peer Facilitators in the Communication Lab. For example, the Lab Peer Facilitators are typically the same age as the students they are teaching, which can undermine their authority. Female facilitators have also occasionally expressed discomfort working with a group of all male students. Other times, facilitators worry about appearing unknowledgeable or lacking in credibility when working with older students.

4. Artifacts—*Personal objects that we surround ourselves with*

- Consider what you wear on teaching days and non-teaching days. Is it the same or different? Why or why not?
- Do you label students based on their artifacts, clothing, accessories, or technology?
- What do you take with you to the classroom?

Artifacts are intimately tied to our identities. Far more than our appearance, we have a great range of choice about what artifacts we surround ourselves with and what statements we want to make about ourselves (Corbin & White, 2009).

One session participant noted that, because of her youthful appearance, she wears a ring on her left hand so that students would assume she was married, increasing her credibility. Discussion also surrounded glasses and how the appearance and perception of intelligence glasses provide can lead to a higher level of respect from students. We also touched on what a student wears and how it impacts our perceptions. For instance, a student entering class with earphones on may lead us to believe he or she is not interested in the course.

In the Communication Lab, Peer Facilitators are expected to dress appropriately and maintain a business causal style, while maintaining a comfortable, non-intimidating, peer-to-peer environment. The style of dress can impact a students' comfort level, their respect for the facilitator, and the facilitator's credibility.

5. Environmental factors—*Architectural features of a room, as well as ambience, including smells, sounds, temperature, and lighting*

- Consider how a classroom impacts teaching and learning (desk type, size, lighting, heating, wall colour, etc.)
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the traditional classroom set up?
- Have you rearranged a space to complement your teaching style?

Environmental factors can overlap with artifacts and possibly proxemics as well. In our session discussion, we learned that at some universities you are not able to change your assigned classroom, even if it does not work for your pedagogical style. Changing a room may take years at these institutions, making adapting teaching and learning the only option for educators. Most participants preferred teaching in spaces with modular furniture, so that students could work in groups.

In the Communication Lab, environmental factors are very important to the success of the lessons. Students sit in comfortable chairs, facing each other in a circle that aids in student interaction and allows facilitators to monitor nonverbal behaviours easily. The physical environment can critically influence a group's nature of activity and level of performance, therefore we use living room-style seating in the lab. When you want to establish such conditions, set up a casual arrangement with comfortable seating that removes tables and other barriers from the meeting space (Newton & Ender, 2010).

6. Proxemics—*Communicative use of space*

- How do you position yourself while teaching? What do these positions say about you?
- Have you considered using the teaching space differently, e.g., standing, sitting, or moving around the room?
- Does the layout of your office facilitate consultation with students? Is it inviting?

Proxemics can overlap with environmental factors, with territory fitting into this category. We discussed the habits students fall into in the classroom by sitting in the same place each week. In a sense, the students are marking their territory. Sometimes, changing the seating arrangement can turn a positive climate into a negative one, since students are forced out of their comfort zones. Other times, this technique has worked well to introduce students to others in the class to create a stronger bond. We also challenged session participants to think about the ways they use space in their classrooms and how it impacts the teaching and learning experience.

In the Communication Lab, as previously discussed, students are seated in a circle. Unlike the traditional classroom, our lab space includes comfortable furniture arranged in a circle to encourage discussion and participation. Facilitators and instructors integrate students into the space by giving them the opportunity to stand and use the camera, write on the whiteboard, and present where they feel comfortable within the lab. Sharing the learning space and allowing students to move freely in the lab provides them with comfort and reduces apprehension.

7. Chronemics—*The communicative use of time*

- When do you start/end class?
- Are there different rules for different students when it comes to time, e.g., lateness?
- When do you check and/or respond to email? Do you have a policy in place?

Chronemics, like proxemics, can be used to convey status and power. Discussion surrounding chronemics focused on the frustration felt when a colleague's class runs overtime. Most participants felt they have a good handle on the timing of their classes, but can run into challenges when the timing of a lesson can run short or long. Another issue discussed was the proper response time to student and colleague emails. It can be difficult to strike a balance between professional time and personal time, particularly when we are so tied to our devices. If we respond immediately, an unwanted precedent might be set.

In the Communication Lab, we have 50 minutes from the start to the end of each session. Time management is key when delivering lesson plans, engaging in experiential learning activities and discussion, and ensuring that each student has been given individual time and attention. We remind facilitators that some students may require more time than others to gather their thoughts, some may need time to translate their thoughts into English, and all students need time to be able to explain their ideas to the group.

8. Paralanguage—*Vocalics/vocal qualities of our speech*

- Consider your voice. How does it impact students' learning and/or perception of you as an educator?
- Consider culture. Are accents/dialects challenging?
- What is your perception of a student based on his or her voice?

Paralanguage includes all the voice qualities that come naturally to us, as well as the way we accent and stress what we are saying. We discussed the ways we use our voice to gain attention of the class, including reducing and increasing volume and rate. Some challenges surrounding accents and dialects were discussed; participants were more concerned with students understanding their voice, rather than the other way around. Participants disclosed they have often reflected on their voices and how to better use this tool in the classroom.

In the Communication Lab, we want students to do the talking. One of the major worries facilitators have is that they will not understand a student and that this miscommunication will lead to discomfort or embarrassment of the student. We train facilitators in effective listening and provide techniques to ensure they are attentive and focused on each student.

9. Silence—*". . ."*

- How do you feel about silence?
- How do you interpret silence in the teaching and learning environment?
- Do you allow for silence? Fill the silence?

Silence can convey comfort as well as discomfort. Silence can be a powerful tool—it can be used intentionally to disconfirm another person, as well as a form of respect to show we are listening or interested in what the other is saying (Corbin & White, 2009).

Silence, like other forms of nonverbal communication, can often be misunderstood. Silence in the classroom may communicate confusion, misunderstanding, or processing time for retaining knowledge or formulating thought. Have you ever thought about how you interpret silence in the classroom? Are the students unwilling to take part even if they know the answer? Do you allow for silence or do you fill it?

In the Communication Lab, facilitators are trained to accept and deal with silence and understand that it is not necessarily a failing on their part. Although sometimes intimidating, silence can be a natural component of the teaching and learning experience. By understanding more about the reasons for the silence, facilitators can use this knowledge to better deliver the lesson plans.

Conclusion

We must become more aware of our own nonverbal communication in order to understand others. What we are wearing, how we sound, stand, or sit, may directly influence students perceptions of our credibility and skills. The results of our session were fascinating; yet not surprising, as nonverbal communication greatly influences all of our teaching and learning environments.

In exploring these nine types of nonverbal communication, we hope that you've increased your awareness of the importance of these messages. Nonverbal cues cannot be dismissed as irrelevant or accidental, their meanings need to be explored and how others might interpret these cues must be considered. This is especially relevant in the teaching and learning environment. We hope you will think about the nonverbal messages you send and receive more critically.

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DARE TO BE INNOVATIVE: TECHNIQUES FOR BEING MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY ENGAGING WHEN TEACHING LARGER CLASSES

Angela M. Kolen, Department of Human Kinetics, St. Francis Xavier University

Why Engage Students—Physically and Mentally?

Students *cannot* sit and learn for 50, 75 or 150 minutes without some sort of physically and mentally engaging break. In reality, most students cannot focus for more than 10 to 15 minutes before needing to move, and some students may need to move more frequently (Bunce, Flens, & Neiles, 2010). With movement and interaction/interactivity directly connected to class content (versus stand up and stretch) students may learn/remember more, become more engaged with the class material in general and stay awake! In my classes, when I regularly intersperse movement combined with mental engagement in the class content, I create a warmer classroom climate that facilitates teaching and learning partly through enhancing dyadic, small group, and class discussions. Further, physical and mental engagement in the class generally helps with student concentration, student attendance and participation in class, and possibly deeper and more critical reflection of the material covered (Jensen, 2005).

In this short paper, I share seven "methods of engagement" I use in my first and fourth year classes. My first year class ranges from 120 to 150 students, while my fourth year classes have between 50 and 80 students.

Methods of Engagement

ABCs: For this experience, I create a one-page handout with the ABCs listed on it. I ask my students to work with a partner (or in 3s or 4s) to fill in a word related to the identified topic for every letter of the alphabet. This exercise helps students recognize what they already know about a particular topic. For example, identify supports (or barriers) to physical activity or words Shakespeare uses regularly. When done, I ask the students to do their "happy dance" and share their responses with the class. Prizes for the first team done are optional.

Stand up, turn around, sit down: For this experience, I use a PowerPoint slide with four distinct pictures of a person standing, turning, talking and sitting. Above these pictures is text similar to "stand up, turn around, share an example of XXX, sit down." This technique is easy to use and students quickly become accustomed to it and importantly learn 'when' to sit down. I use this idea sometimes more than once in a class to generate ideas, clarify understanding, provide examples, talk about what XXX means, etc. Because they have already shared responses with one another, it can be easier to share their responses with the larger class.

Living Likert scale: For this technique, I pose a question or series of related questions with a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = completely agree and 5 = completely disagree. I give my students a few

moments to determine their response, then ask them to stand to indicate their level of agreement for each question. Sometimes the students are asked to move to a part of the classroom to show their agreement or disagreement. Either way, I encourage discussion about their response choices including the information they considered in making their decision. My questions or statements are intentionally vague to facilitate further discussion. When possible, I ask students to discuss with someone who responded differently.

Individual/pair/share: There are many ways to use this technique as many readers will know. I use those that add movement. I ask students to find a person, not sitting next to them, wearing the same colour, to share with. Next I might ask this pair to find another pair to share their collective responses. Sometimes, I pass out chalk and get one person from each group to write an idea on the board. Other times I ask the person whose birthday is closest (or tallest, most siblings, slept the most, etc.) to provide a response verbally from the group. Either way, the class hears/sees many responses.

Carousel: For this method I use large poster papers or 3M poster-size sticky notes posted around the classroom with pre-established questions and students divided into smaller groups (3 to 6 students). Each group has a different colour pen/marker and starts at a particular question (I usually have 5 or 6 questions) and provides as many responses as they can in the allotted time (3-4 minutes). They then move to the next and each subsequent question for 2-3 minutes to add ideas or a checkmark if they agree with what is already listed. Students finish with their original question, highlight the three (or more) most relevant points and share with class. Given my class sizes, I create two carousels with the same 5-6 questions. The groups with the same question meet to determine what will be shared with the class.

Cue card activity: Each student is given a cue card and asked to write down X number of examples. I then ask the students to find someone wearing the same colour and share their responses. I repeat several times using wearing a different colour, same height, different height, etc. Students add to their own card with each conversation. After 4-6 exchanges, I ask students to share an idea from their card with the class. I suggest students keep these cards for future studying. This method can also be used to review students' understanding of a topic.

Ball toss: Sometimes I bring a soft, squishy, medium-sized ball to class to use when asking students to share ideas about a particular topic. I toss the ball the first time, then after that student responds he/she tosses it to another student, and we repeat. I establish rules of engagement such as keep your eyes up, no dodging, if you do not have a response, pass the ball along quickly like a "hot potato." "Ball toss" is useful for idea generation, example giving, or anything else that involves a quick, couple word response.

These seven techniques interspersed in my classes have helped me in keeping my classes "alive" and engaged. I generally use one method in each class, sometimes two. I use the carousel only once per term, the Living Likert scale once or twice each term and the others more frequently.

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TURN ON YOUR PHONES PLEASE: FROM DISTRACTION TO ENGAGEMENT WITH MOBILE LEARNING

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Abstract

In one month, D2L, the learning management system (LMS) at the University of Manitoba, recorded over 6,000 occurrences of students accessing the LMS from mobile devices: Students were communicating through their actions that it was time to change the way we thought about course design. This article presents results of two separate research projects designed to inform practice at the University of Manitoba with regard to the use of mobile devices in fully online courses: First, the results of a study evaluating the limitations and opportunities for BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) mobile access to courses that have not been designed for mobile devices. Next, the results of a second study examining best practices for course design to facilitate greater opportunities for learning through the LMS and mobile devices are shared. Finally, building upon the results of the previous two studies, the implications for enhancing engagement in face-to-face classes using mobile devices are discussed.

Introduction

According to the International Data Corporation (IDC) (2015), worldwide sales of smartphones and tablets have now overtaken the sales of desktop PCs. They further predicted that by the end of 2017 fixed PCs will only be a small percentage of the devices connected to the Internet. In recognition of this phenomenon, Instructional Designers at the University of Manitoba (UofM) began to explore the strengths and limitations of mobile learning in our context. Our first experiences with mobile learning (m-learning) were based in responses to student demand and use. We tried to determine how we could compensate for the distractions of the limits of these devices. We then moved to an examination of the opportunities for improving student engagement and learning within our courses by capitalizing on the affordances of these devices to improve our course design. This paper is divided into three parts that reflect the different stages of our study. In Part One of the paper, we outline the results of an evaluation of the mobile accessibility of our current online course content. In Part Two, we illustrate our approach to learning design and assessment, in particular how it capitalizes on the affordances of mobile devices through a case study. Finally, in Part Three, we have share some practical considerations for instructors interested in adopting mobile devices for blended or technology enhanced face-to-face instruction, with increasing engagement as the core motivation for adoption.

Part One: Why Worry about Mobile?

Both in observation of student activities and from a review of consumer statistics we determined that mobile devices have become an important part of students' daily lives. Unknown, however, was whether these devices were being used for educational purposes and, if so, and to what extent. That is, was mobile access something we needed to be concerned about in our course design? To begin to answer this question we examined the access records provided to us by our Learning Management System (LMS). During a 30 day period of monitoring, the UofM recorded over 6,000 occurrences of students accessing the LMS with mobile devices (G. Watt, personal communication, February 26, 2013).

Both enrollment patterns and student surveys indicated that UofM students chose online education because of its flexibility and the quality of their learning experiences. Online students and particularly adult continuing education learners who we have focused on in the case study in Part Two of this paper exhibit a low tolerance for course offerings that are not specifically tailored to their career goals an preferred timelines of access and completion (Sloane-Seal, 2011). If mobile was how students were accessing our courses, we needed to respond to their preferences or risk losing their interest. Our first step was to establish a baseline of information on our current courses. To what extent were the courses accessible to mobile devices, and were our design choices favouring one device brand or type over another? During the 2012-2013 academic year, the instructional design team assembled a range of mobile devices using different operating systems (IOS, Android, and Blackberry) in order to determine the compatibility of our LMS with the most commonly purchased devices, as well as to determine if our course design was meeting the needs of students attempting to access courses through mobile devices. Each of the six design team members tested each device independently through trial and error experimentation with randomly selected course offerings found within the department. The results were correlated and four critical considerations that impacted m-learning in our environment emerged:

- Most courses were accessible with mobile devices, but few were designed to take advantage of the assets of mobile devices.
- The Web browsers available for Android-based devices were incompatible with several features of the LMS; for example, the discussion forum was severely restricted using the native browser of some Android devices.
- Not surprising, many of our courses contained Adobe Flash-based exercises that would not work with Apple IOS.
- The full features in Adobe Connect (a synchronous platform for virtual classroom events) were not available using the mobile software application.

These factors allowed us to inform both students and faculty about the limitations of mobile devices in conjunction with the software tools we had available. We were then able to design information packets to assist students to overcome these limitations so that they could access course material from mobile devices. However, overcoming the limitations was not the primary intent of our examination of m-learning. We wanted to use mobile devices to enhance learning.

Part Two: How Could You Redesign a Course to Enhance Learning with a Mobile Device?

Following our device testing project, we began to proactively design course stuctures for mobile access, as opposed to simply reacting to student demand with course modifications. In recent years, many innovative applications of mobile technology have been proposed and implemented within educational offerings (Ally, 2009; Kozuma & Anderson, 2002; Stanton & Ophoff, 2013; Ting, 2013). However, like our project, these projects have been limited in scale to pilots and standalone courses rather than programmatic approaches. Previous research in the area of m-learning indicated the advantage of mobile devices is more complex than "anywhere anytime" access to course content but served to provide learners with a social connection to the course cohort that was beneficial to learning (Clothier, 2013; Koole, 2009; Ting, 2013). Koole (2009) proposed the FRAME model for not only describing the interactions that occurred within m-learning design, but also as a means to evaluate m-learning effectiveness. Within FRAME, three key areas were identified in a Venn diagram of intersections between the device (D), learner (L) and social(S) aspects of a learning experience. When these intersections were balanced, idealized m-learning could occur (Koole, 2009). Stated in terms of practical application rather than theoretical modelling, the opportunity for mobile enhanced learning design lies in its ability to be a ubiquitous, social, context sensitive, personalizable, and collaborative experience (Ozdamli & Cavus, 2011). In addition to Koole's (2009) model, various other frameworks for evaluating mobile learning have been developed (Sha, Looi, Chen, Seow, & Wong, 2010; Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012; Williams, 2009), however the question of how best to implement mobile learning in formal education remains unanswered. What does good m-learning design look like in practice? After a review of current literature, we selected the work of Paul Clothier, an instructional designer in the corporate sector, as a starting point for our design. Clothier's work was selected because he has set out a series of simple mobile design principles that could be applied without significant investment in technology specialists. In other words, he outlined design features that anyone teaching online could apply within a course, regardless of budget. Clothier's (2013) design principles included the following:

1. **Reduce clutter:** Present learners with a simple interface to facilitate reading on the small screen.
2. **Present information bites:** Typically, students access their mobile devices for small chunks of learning and it is important to organize the material so that it accords with this usage pattern.
3. **Keep it social:** Engagement in social media is self-evident; build on the strength of this type of software for activities and assessments.
4. **Think differently about learning**: Most mobile devices are equipped with excellent video and audio recording features and one should take advantage of these and other "Apps" to enhance learning.
5. **Reduce typing:** Mobile devices are not particularly good for entering large amounts of text so don't ask the students to do this.

Using the above principles and recognising that both instructors and institutions were hesitant to move away from paper-based assignments, we decided to design a mobile-enhanced course, rather than a course that expected 100% participation through a mobile device. Although most of the course could be

completed using a mobile device, it was not mandatory. Some aspects of the course remained easier to complete with a more traditional desktop or laptop computer, and students were encouraged to complete tasks using the device that made the most sense. We selected a Continuing Education Department course, Managing the Human Resource Function (MHRF), as the pilot for our new design approach because it offered opportunities for experimentation with mobile fieldwork, the instructor of the course had a keen interest in m-learning, and it was predominantly subscribed to by mature students—our most critical audience. A design team was assembled and consisted of the key stakeholders impacted by the proposed new course: instructional designers, an educational technologist, an information technology manager, the LMS manager, an administrator from the continuing education program, and the course instructor. We refined our research question to examine learner acceptance. If a course was designed to take advantage of m-learning opportunities, would the students find it more effective for their learning? With more and more distance and continuing education programs available for students, adult learners have more choice in course selection. Would an m-learning enhanced course be a more enticing offering for students? In other words, did it make sense to invest in m-learning design from a learner's perspective?

As this was a fully online course, the base structure of a unit of work was designed according to Clothier's (2013) first and second principles, as well as cognitivist theory, which reiterates the importance of reducing the cognitive load of new information for students by providing them with a simple interface and data in manageable bites. An HTML based "hide and show" format chunked information into small segments arranged around key concepts and also reduced display clutter (Figure 1).

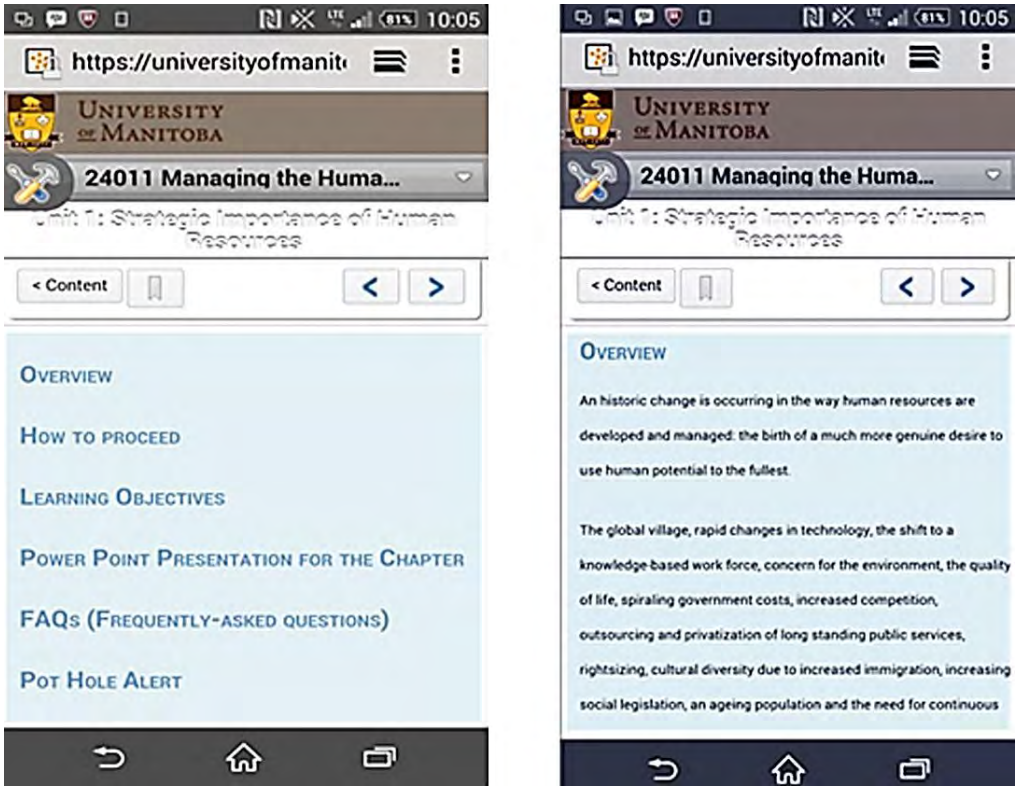

Figure 1. Sample unit of content as it appears to students upon initial access and after the "Hide and Show" feature has been opened.

Using Clothier's principles 3-5, we also made substantial changes to the design of assessment tasks. We adopted social media by developing a Twitter hashtag for the course (#CEHRM), which was designed to facilitate student connections within the course and help learners to establish links with human resource managers in the broader professional community. The purpose of the Twitter community was to create space for students to share current literature and information related to the course while allowing them to establish a personal learning network that could potentially assist them in the future with the rapidly changing field of human resource management. Tweeting replaced typical face-to-face classroom discussion or online discussion forums, which would have required significantly more keyboard entry.

The two other major assignments attempted to simulate HR field experiences. Building on the strengths of mobile devices for easy video creation, students were required to record themselves as they conducted tasks typical for human resource managers: interviews and training sessions. Students were asked to turn the camera on themselves and post it to a forum where they could receive feedback on the relevancy and quality of their simulated events. The design of these video-based assignments was guided not only by the technical strengths and limitations of the mobile devices, but were also a reflection of Clothier's (2013) third principle: the use of social media to share and make connections with others on a similar path. In this case, those connections were limited to class members as all video data were held in a semi-private YouTube channel. The goal of the Youtube platform choice was to respect the privacy of the students by allowing them control over what they choose to share publically, while still giving access to class members for peer review purposes.

The course was launched in 2014 with a cohort of six students. Of the six, only two participated in the research interview. Their interviews were transcribed and analyzed for themes alongside the written reflections of the design team and instructor. Four interrelated themes were identified in relation to factors impacting acceptance of m-learning for continuing education courses in our case:

- **Technical and administrative glitches impacted acceptance**: As the course design impacted several departments within one faculty, as well as involved the use of uncommon technology support, new interdepartmental relationships needed to be developed. The process of building these internal processes involved challenges that were recognized as factors impacting the acceptance of the course. For example, who was responsible for technical support for social media? Was it the instructor or the course technical support team, or the educational technologist assigned to the course?
- **Instructions for new technology need to be presented in a "just-in-time" format:** We placed course specific instructional sheets and videos in a central location to facilitate future maintenance of the course, but this lead to frustration as participants searched for items and became frustrated when they were not located immediately next to the assigned task.
- **The time needed to use and learn the technology must equal the task demands:** Learners demonstrated a low tolerance for tasks that appeared too onerous because of technology and

were willing to ignore the task and potentially lose the associated marks if the technology was deemed to detract or make the task more difficult to complete than necessary.

- **Instructor-student relationship was critical to acceptance**: Learners used technology and developed more confidence with technology when the instructor demonstrated skillful use of the technology or was available for immediate feedback when problems arose.

Though the participant numbers were small, and the results may not be applicable outside of the context of our case, the findings were useful for the departments in question and have been used in subsequent course revision and design. The findings revealed that m-learning added greater depth to the assessment activities by allowing participants to personalize the tasks to their own needs and contexts, making the experience more experiential and interdisciplinary; however, the limitations of the devices, or rather participants knowledge of their devices, the LMS, and the supports offered by the university staff required considerable time investment, which potentially explains why much of the work in this area remains at the pilot scale rather than institutional adoption. When analyzed against the aforementioned FRAME model (Koole, 2009), we determined in this case the Device Usability Intersection (D-L) disrupted participants comfort and satisfaction with course materials and assignments to a greater degree than the advantages of portability and the ubiquitous nature of information access. Supporting students in this space required extensive resources and time and when successful lead to increased satisfaction, but the reverse was also true.

Part Three: How Does This Translate to Engagement in Face to Face Activities?

There are a number of points to consider from this online course that have relevance and applicability to the face-to-face, hybrid, and blended courses with regard to scalability and engagement. Following Clothier's design framework for m-learning, we developed a number of suggestions for fostering engagement. These suggestions are supported by analysis of Engeström's (1987) Activity Theory, which defines engagement as a result of competing forces within an activity system consisting of a subject (the individual), the object (the thing that is acted upon), as well as the components (instrument, community, rules, and division of labour).

Reduce clutter and create information bites. Many faculty members use an LMS-based resource to support both in and out of classroom activities. However, in order to increase engagement or use, the LMS needs to be more than a simple repository for lecture notes. We found that PowerPoint presentations displayed well on most mobile devices, although animations were lost. Using simple tools like Camtasia, the slides could easily be converted into interactive lesson reviews through the incorporation of multiple choice questions interspersed throughout the presentation. This same principle could be applied through the addition of Flash Card sets using free online tools such as Quizlet or the quiz tool found within the LMS itself. Doing so would facilitate the drill and practice of common vocabulary and change the passive reading of a PP into an active task. From the perspective of Activity Theory, using the tool in this way shifted the students (subject) contact with the material (object), thereby prolonging engagement beyond the boundaries of the standard contact time through an instrument, which is not atypical for other strategies for homework and review. However, the mobile device can also work to increase engagement by impacting community, rules, and division of labour, and

therefore increase engagement in a less behaviouristic manner. In other words, by capitalising on the ease with which you can create and share content using the mobile device and the level of familiarity most students have with their mobile device educators can apply the principles of social constructivism for content acquisition.

Keep it social and think differently. Allowing students to create content for the course changes the rules and the division of labour found in typical face-to-face classrooms. In the online course previously discussed, the student generated content from the interview and training lessons assignment became important learning material for other students. Much like thecoorperative learning approach known as jigsaw where students alternatively take the roles of leaders and learners, the mobile device allowed for course content creation by students in a way that could be saved for future use and reflection.

Alternatively, allowing for more communication through the mobile device could also increase activity. For example, students engage with Twitter in a different way than with discussion forums and encouraging the use of a Twitter feed within contact time could add another dimension of communication to the class. For example, the feed can be displayed on a split screen during a lecture, so students can comment and ask questions as well as share ideas. Alternatively, a theme can be carried beyond the classroom time through prolonged discussions on Twitter. Using free polling tools such as Study Boost or Poll Everywhere can create a similar effect with more scaffolded feedback. You can share the link with students via a QR code (a matrix based bar code) which you have generated using one of the many free sites available on the Internet, or encourage them to access it directly from the LMS and create an interactive quiz on pre-conceptions of a topic. They can also use it to express opinions with real time feedback, again by displaying the results of the poll as you conduct your lesson. The reality show Canadian Idol's popularity demonstrates how much we like to be asked our opinion on content or take control of our own experiences.

Conclusion

In exploring the role of mobile devices in our course design we moved from simply acknowledging and accommodating for the use of these devices to embracing them. Recognising that mobile devices have limitations for some course content is important to consider when evaluating the application of m-learning adoption on a course by course basis. Since many students demand mobile access to content we needed to consider the choice of artifacts carefully: will they work on all devices? How will we advise students who want to use their mobile device? How will we conduct a virtual classroom even if we know some students cannot access all the features? But facilitating mobile access was only the first step. Moving towards course design that not only compensated for the limitations of smaller devices but also capitalized on its advantages was important for us to keep courses relevant to our student population. Designing for m-learning involved careful consideration of the affordances mobile devices bring to the classroom in relation to students, instructor and institutional capabilities. Finally, beyond improving distance courses the next step was to consider the use of mobile devices to hybridize face–to-face classes. Rather than asking students to tune out, or check out at the end of a standard lesson we could develop learning approaches that accord with the way in which students are already working,

perpetually connected. We have shared with you some of our discoveries on our mobile learning journey, and we would welcome your stories from the field as well.

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CREATING TEACHING CHAMPIONS: TAKING THE GRADUATE TEACHING EXPERIENCE OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Jill M. McSweeney, Nayha Acharya, Giovana B. Celli, Colin Jackson, Marissa Ley, and Raghav V. Sampangi, Dalhousie University

Introduction

Teaching and learning (T&L) is considered an essential skill for graduate students (Rose, 2012). University T&L centres offer a range of workshops, seminars, and certificates, which allow students to engage with peers who are interested and enthusiastic about T&L and gain support for and confidence in their own teaching (Hughes, 2006). Still, there can be little opportunity for students to engage in more informal T&L dialogue within or outside of their department (Leger & Young, 2014). Through informal student feedback, the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) at Dalhousie University identified this gap in graduate student T&L development, and created the Dalhousie CLT Champions in 2013.

The Champions Program

The Champions have two goals: to increase awareness of Dalhousie's Certificate in University Teaching and Learning (CUTL) and to enable graduate students to engage in a community of practice outside their CUTL experience (on "communities of practice," see: Wenger, 1998). The CLT wanted to encourage CUTL students and graduates to engage their department in T&L development and spread information about CLT activities. To date, the Champions have delivered departmental presentations on the CUTL to incoming and existing students during fall orientations; integrated CLT information booths into graduate student society events and in-house conferences; and have worked together to develop a short video on the CUTL that highlights the certificate components, benefits of the CUTL, and their own experiences with the program. The Champions act as an interface between various communities at Dalhousie and the CLT, and contribute to the dissemination of information about the CLT and its events. The second goal of the group is to allow the Champions to extend their own engagement with T&L through ongoing study of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) and to create a community of peer mentorship and support for graduate student teachers.

The Champions have attracted a group of passionate graduate students from various disciplines (e.g., psychology, engineering) who meet monthly to discuss and plan CLT activities and ways to leverage the CUTL program in order to serve the larger Dalhousie community. The group also includes a "journal club" that provides a venue for the Champions to engage in critical and reflective dialogue around SoTL and its application in contemporary academic climates.

Individual Assessment

Students in the Champions program have shared how they have developed and grown through the group. Champions reported that the group allowed for continual teaching education and a renewed commitment to developing and practicing their T&L knowledge and skills. Many graduate students find that their time and energy is dominated by degree-related research activities**,** and this group is a way for students to meet and discuss teaching with their peers. Marcel says of his experience:

> The group has been a reminder of the commitment to continue to be mindful about how I am teaching, and receive support from other graduate students. . . . It's nice to actually talk about becoming better teachers instead of always becoming just better researchers.

The group consists of students who have a range of experience in university teaching, which has allowed members to become a source of mentorship for those who are teaching for the first time. Giovana shares:

> The Champions are great for professional development. As an international student, I did not have practice being a TA. . . . I share my expectations and frustrations with students from different fields, and get insights on activities I want to develop in my course.

Similarly, Marissa described the group as a source of support in the process of developing her identity as a teacher:

> I am new to teaching, and at first I couldn't imagine feeling prepared enough to be educating students who are a few years younger than me. This group has allowed me to speak freely about my concerns and thoughts around teaching, and I feel more prepared. . . . I know that what I have learned in this group about teaching across disciplines will follow me throughout my career.

The Champions have provided strong social support for students to share their experiences. Raghav discusses how the group has provided continual professional development for his teaching:

> My first experience with the CLT was at a Sessional Instructor Development workshop. . . . I had no university teaching prior to that. What struck me was how the workshop was aimed at learning through practice; an aspect I have grown to respect. I think this is what binds the Champions together. Each meeting makes me more aware of the present needs of instructors and students, and available solutions. As an aspiring academic, I owe it to my future students to think from their perspective about how they want to be taught.

Lastly, a variety of students are currently applying what they have learned from the Champions within their own department. Nayha and Colin have worked to develop teaching support and opportunities for students within their faculty, as Nayha reports:

> The group has been a means to maintaining an ongoing dialogue about teaching. . . . I have become more aware and interested in teaching scholarship, and committed to helping students. . . . The Champions provided an avenue for discussion about graduate student teaching, and we are currently in the process of formalizing new initiatives and the Champions have been instrumental to that.

Conclusions

Graduate students can be both contributors to, and beneficiaries of, improvements to T&L. Being involved in T&L at universities helps students appreciate their responsibilities as educators. The CLT Champions is a way for a group of interdisciplinary graduate students to improve their T&L knowledge and skills by engaging with peers and with SoTL. The group has increased the Champions' confidence in teaching, has been a source of peer mentorship, and has helped graduate students to develop as teachers. Moreover, the Champions have become a student voice for the CLT and have been leaders in their departments for promoting T&L initiatives and encouraging graduate students to participate in professional development opportunities associated with teaching. Other T&L centres may wish to consider integrating similar graduate-led communities of practice for students as a means of generating discourse and engagement around T&L with graduate students, and providing support beyond centre-based events, programs, and courses.

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LEARNING TO LEARN: CREATING COMMUNITY BEFORE CRAMMING IN CONTENT

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Abstract

Innovation in the classroom flourishes when learners become part of a collaborative and creative community. All too often, content heavy curriculum supersedes the equally important "process" component of learning in higher education. From our experience across a variety of disciplines, learning can be deepened by spending more time and paying greater attention to creating learning communities —a concept that is highlighted as a “high impact practice” in student recruitment and retention literature. Whether the setting is a conventional university classroom or lecture hall, a field or forest on the edge of campus, or a local neighbourhood, educators can facilitate a learning community through a progression of intra- and interpersonal explorations. This workshop engaged participants in a series of experiential activities that aim to foster initiative, leadership, self-awareness, and trust—factors that underlie effective collaborations for innovative learning. Workshop activities were debriefed from both the participant and facilitator perspectives.

Our Story and the Background Literature

Our interest in creating learning communities extends from work that we’ve both undertaken in the outdoors for the past 20 years. As outdoor educators, one of the learning experiences that we have had in common is that we’ve both worked at Outward Bound Canada, Pat as a wilderness instructor on 14 to 30 day summer and winter courses, and Emily as an instructor and later as a teacher at Outward Bound Canada College. Outward Bound, as an international entity, was founded by German educational reformer Kurt Hahn. Foundational to the organization are 4 pillars: self-reliance, physical fitness, craftsmanship, and service and compassion (Outward Bound USA, 2007). These core tenets were originally derived to help young sailors return from war by learning the community-based survival techniques that their older counterparts accrued through life experience. Many other outdoor organizations have since arisen with similar values that focus on resilience and the ability to overcome adversity. While our research and teaching interests have broadened and shifted since our time at Outward Bound, those experiences did pique our interest in continuing to facilitate group processes through themes such as respect, conflict resolution, leadership, trust, communication, feedback, and self-directed learning.

With research and teaching interests in environmental education and Indigenous decolonizing pedagogies (Emily), and outdoor recreation and behaviour change/advocacy of tourism (Pat), we both moved into academic settings in various countries and at several different institutions. In each case, the facilitation skills we learned through our work in the field of outdoor education often seemed to influence our pedagogical praxis. We acted as guides to help students find information, rather than as

all-knowing experts. In two different teacher education programs, Emily invited students to explore the magic of self-directed, experiential, and community-based learning. Whether in a classroom on campus, on a pebbled beach beside a lake, or in a local sustainability or cultural organization, students came together regularly in a circle to make decisions about their learning and their class community. Pat's academic teaching led him back into the outdoors through field schools, which at their heart require students to enact an effective community simply to conduct daily life and stay safe in the field. These field schools varied in length from 5 to 30 days, and covered a variety of geographic locations from rural field stations, to remote rivers, to literally the end of the earth—Antarctica. In all of these instances we saw our students' (and our) learning flourish because of the community relationships and underlying respect for cooperative learning that existed in these situations.

In the summer of 2013, we both moved to Sydney, NS, mainly due to our interest in the Bachelor of Arts Community Studies (BACS), a unique degree program at Cape Breton University (CBU). We are grateful for the opportunity to teach into this program that we feel mirrors our pedagogical values of process oriented, student-directed, community-based experiential learning. BACS has been CBU's well-kept secret since it began in 1975. It was the university's first degree offering and was based on a pedagogical approach developed at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. It is rooted in the philosophies of John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, and Paolo Friere, some of the educational thinkers often aligned with Kurt Hahn and the growth of experiential education (Smith & Knapp, 2011). For a comprehensive history of the BACS degree and its development see Cameron (1995) or Connell and Seville (2007).

In the core courses of the BACS degree we are not entrusted as "single experts" at the front of the lecture theatre, but rather, facilitators who assist small groups of students to create a community of learners. Students are supported to inquire into any community-based topic they choose, and they are encouraged to engage with community members firsthand, learning through conversation, interviews, service, and action. Students have reflected that learning in small groups in a local community compels them to get to know each other more intimately as they need to work together to organize and coordinate learning experiences. This type of "learning community, " as well as community-based projects are recognized as high impact practices within literature on creating life-changing student learning and increasing retention at the undergraduate level (see Kuh, 2008 and NSSE, 2015).

The notion of community has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past decades. Communities may be distinct locales, or groups with a shared sense of belonging, but more so now they can be imagined, virtual, or interconnected, as the manner in which we engage with multiple communities and social networks has become clear (see Blackshaw, 2010). Community Studies might then be described as the "liquid modern stage" (Blackshaw, 2010, p. 14) that we engage with in an open-ended manner. The BACS degree program's experiential process focuses on learning through problem-solving, critical thinking, reflective learning, group work, action research and of course preparing students for the ever-changing job market. Students can imagine getting ready to tackle an assignment on any topic—let's say children's engagement with nature—and even though it may happen in a first year course, the class size is small. Students get to know their classmates and professor as friends and co-learners. Months later they might be working with the local school district to initiate an

island-wide outdoor learning program, or planning to assist their professor with research on the topic. In future years they know they could continue with research or action on this topic in other classes, if they and their group choose, and then they will continue to interact with a diversity of community stakeholders (Maher & Root, 2015).

This type of conscious community building is common in experiential education pedagogies. Frank (2004) has produced an excellent "road map" to community building, complete with educational foundations for collaboration and co-creation, as well as a variety of activities, and thus we would encourage readers to investigate that resource. Frank (2004) connects the conversation to the thinking of Hahn and Dewey amongst others, but also encourages educators to simply go where their own community dictates. Every "caring classroom," whether it is in P-12 or higher education is unique and needs different insights and constructs; however we must also remember that a caring classroom is not an end, it is a journey, and one that requires ongoing support and nurturing.

More recently O'Connell and Cuthbertson (2009) have envisioned the creation of conscious groups within the fields of recreation and leisure. Employing the seminal works on theoretical group constraints of Lewin (1948) and the sequential stages of group development (forming, storming, norming, and performing) developed by Tuckman (1965), O'Connell and Cuthbertson (2009) move the discussion to one of "conscious groups" as a means whereby personal growth of a group member is in line with other aspects of group productivity. Everyone seeks to learn and grow from their experiences, striving to learn about themselves and the whole community. Like Frank's (2004) work, O'Connell and Cuthbertson (2009) offer an excellent overview of experiential education literature and offer a variety of activities.

Within BACS—and the approaches of the individual faculty members in the Department of Community Studies—we believe that we can help create conscious groups and caring classrooms, and also do so in a manner that supports disciplinary boundaries and interests. Every student in a BACS degree is enrolled in a series of core Community Studies (COMS) courses, which are based on the process-oriented pedagogy. Students also take majors and minors in whatever field they are interested in. These could be conventional academic fields (such as history, anthropology, or philosophy), or more applied options such as psychology, communication, or sport and human kinetics. Thus, in each of the core courses we find diversity in students' interests, which further expands once the class learning shifts to include the wider community at CBU or beyond the university. McMillan and Chavis (1986, p. 9) speak to this sense of community in using four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. Within a single COMS course these four elements may play out to varying degrees, but they are certainly present across the suite of courses. Using activities, such as those outlined later in the article, courses encourage membership. Once the first year of COMS is complete students feel as though they belong to a group and value the group (influence). As students move to second year and work on community-based research they see their influence turn to integration as they assist with the needs of other communities (those they produce research for). In turn, they have a shared emotional connection to community when they engage in the third year action project, and fourth year seminar, at which point they are reflecting on their entire program. Further integration of work experience placements creates a sense of community for the students.

Activities

In the workshop at the AAU Teaching Showcase we discussed a number of activity options we use to build community within our COMS 1100 classes. COMS 1100, *Introduction to Community Studies*, is a first-year course with a maximum of 18 students. The course is a full year offering and introduces students to a range of community issues, stakeholders, and decision-making processes, but it also teaches them to be self-directed in their learning and try to better understand their own learning as well as that of their smaller group (usually 9 students). We use a number of initiative activities, examples of which can be found in many outdoor and adventure education activity books (See Project Adventure www.pa.org and their three comprehensive "classic" texts: *Quicksilver, Silver Bullets,* and *Cowstails and Cobras*). There is a wealth of activity literature available, and we encourage facilitators to also create their own activities. In the workshop we showcased two we used in fall 2014 to start the process in COMS 1100: the Silent Opera and the Group Pencil Maze. These two activities stress different concerns we see when building community in our classrooms—they can ladder together as part of a group progression, but can also stand alone as needed.

Silent Opera: This is a well-loved activity in many programs. Emily first learned Silent Opera while working at the Kinark Outdoor centre in central Ontario, and Pat first encountered it at Big Cove YMCA Camp in Pictou County, NS. We've both been implementing it ever since. Variations of it (and specific instructions) can be found easily through a Google search, and because of its wide use, full credit to its origin is difficult to ascertain. The activity requires a group of people to communicate a set of instructions for completing three simple tasks, to a person who is blind folded. For example, the tasks could include locating and picking up a ball, jumping into a hula-hoop, or placing a shoe into a bucket. The catch is that the message must be communicated without speaking (by using actions) to an intermediary who may speak, but who does not know what the tasks are, nor is able to see the blindfolded person. Inevitably the entire group experiences communication frustrations including the lack of a feedback loop, the inability to communicate a consistent message, challenges interpreting/receiving a message, the confusion of non-verbal communication, etc. A debrief of the activity allows participants to review what occurred and share both the frustrations and successes that they experienced through trial and error. Once they have discussed the approaches and strategies that occurred through the activity participants are encouraged to think about how what they learned about communication may be relevant to their group's ability to function and communicate through other real-world tasks.

Group Pencil Maze: Emily first learned a variation of this activity during an adventure facilitation workshop delivered by Adventureworks! Associates (see www.adventureworks.org). In this activity, participants stand shoulder to shoulder in a circle. Participants are each given one standard, unsharpened pencil. To begin they arrange themselves so that they suspend one pencil between each two people in the circle. The pencils must be held by the touch of the fingertip only. The group is then instructed to walk a certain distance (and often around a tree or a bench) and back to their starting position without dropping any pencils. Should a pencil drop, the group is required to begin again. As you can imagine, the task becomes challenging as the circle of participants morphs and spreads out while the participants walk. To be successful the group needs to negotiate dynamics such as communication,

leadership, cohesion, cooperation, problem-solving, and persistence. The activity can be debriefed to discuss those aspects of group process and can easily be tailored to explore whatever specific dynamics may arise for each particular group. One nice aspect of this activity is that is takes very little prep and almost no props—just a box of pencils.

These activities are a starting point—for COMS 1100 and for the entire suite of COMS courses that make up the core of the BACS degree. These activities establish rapport and help to create community, but they must be supported by a degree of continued nurturing. A community in the classroom needs ongoing "care and feeding" to blossom at the end of first semester, the end of first year and throughout a student's university degree. One would hope that such community also encourages life-long learning and a sense of conscious citizenship.

Debrief

As is common in most outdoor education programs, following our classroom activities (and in this instance also following our facilitation of other instructors in those activities) we allowed space for a debrief. We debriefed the activities themselves, the facilitation of such, and the wider challenges of creating classroom community. Debriefing allows participants to reflect on what they've learned and how they plan to apply that learning; reflection and application are two key components to a cycle of experiential learning as noted by Kolb (1984). Within a debrief, there are a wide variety of questions and activities that can be explored to facilitate reflective learning. Many follow the Funnelling approach, derived from Gestalt therapy (see Borton, 1970), and expand on the themes, "What?" to "So What?" and finally, "Now What?" For an excellent overview of types of debriefing, phases used throughout the history of outdoor and adventure education, and possible facilitation activities see Chapters 14 to 17 in Priest and Gass (2005).

In our debrief of the activities themselves we followed the structure noted above and reached the standard conclusions we seek to elicit from our students: Silent Opera has different roles that then lead to a discussion of communication and Group Pencil Maze informs the groups about topics such as cooperation and problem-solving. For the overall workshop we led a small group discussion to explore the following questions:

1. Why bother to create community?
2. How does community enhance learning?
3. What are the challenges/benefits of this approach?
4. What does community in the classroom look like?
5. Is there a continuum for community in the classroom—a range of possibilities?
6. Do you have any useful strategies/activities?
7. What are the institutional constraints?
8. What are the disciplinary constraints?
9. How does community impact student experience?
10. How might you integrate community building with class assessment? And should we?

These questions, and a more informal approach to discussion, allowed for a lively conversation and contributions from participants who were already well experienced in the field of community building in higher education. The type of cooperative learning environment expressed in our COMS 1100 classrooms and elsewhere, as was discovered in the workshop debrief, is exciting. From the field of educational psychology, cooperative learning is a true success story (see Johnson & Johnson, 2010). From preschool to graduate school, and inclusive of adult workplace training, social interdependence creates positive outcomes—over the last 60 years the outcomes that were once dismissed, and only celebrated as a manifestation in practice, are now also validated by theory (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). Cooperative (community-based) learning works, whether in small or large groups, or in formal or in informal settings. Considering some of the questions we posed to our participants will assist in developing such programs.

Conclusion

With this article, and the workshop from which it is based, we hope to have piqued your interest. How can a sense of community influence learning? Where should a focus on group dynamics and cooperation fit when your discipline-specific course already has a lot of content to cover? By showcasing a few activities that we like to use with our classes, and discussing the background for those, their purpose, and an approach to debriefing, we hope we have provided an engaging example as well as some references and resources for future inquiry. Community is critical, how you create it to foster your students' learning is up to you.

We also hope that if pedagogical theory, particularly around experiential learning, is of value to you inside and outside your classroom that the information we've provided may be helpful. Above all, we encourage educators to experiment: try silent opera or group pencil maze, try other activities from organizations such as *Project Adventure* or other resources, or make up activities that suit your own needs. The scholarly literature supports a cooperative manner of learning that creates community in the classroom, but the best result will be seeing your students laughing, connecting with one another and most definitely ready to learn as their own community.

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"TEACHING OUTSIDE THE BOX": A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS?—IN SEARCH FOR A NEW PARADIGM FOR "TEACHING AND LEARNING"

Thomas Mengel, University of New Brunswick

Introduction

Faculty teach and students learn. Higher education starts from the premise that there is a gap "between the teacher's understanding and the student's learning" (Boyer, 1990, p. 23) that needs to be bridged by teaching. However, the context of higher education is changing and thus innovative pedagogy and a potential change of paradigm should reflect this.

Increasingly "non-traditional students" engage in higher education (Steele, 2010). They bring a wealth of life and work experiences to the fore. Further, the complexity of our daily lives is increasing. Hence, in any given learning process all participants experience gaps to be bridged and thus fluidly move from a position of learner to one of helping others to learn. Unfortunately, our educational language and practice do not yet appropriately reflect that.

Critical Reflection on the Existing Paradigm of Teaching (and Learning)

We perceive teaching and learning as knowledge transfer from those who know to those who do not know (King, 1993; Sunnarborg, 2008). The complexity of the context of teaching and learning, however, has outgrown the simple model of the teacher as the (only) knowledge expert that still is so ingrained in our educational institutions and practices.

While various promising innovative teaching styles and approaches have successfully been applied in higher education for many decades, a simple walk through most Canadian universities and colleges suggests that these pedagogical innovations over hundreds of years have not substantially changed the prevailing image (or "box") of teaching and learning. As was the case in many medieval classrooms, many "modern" classrooms still look like "boxes" and the teacher still is clearly separated from the student audience.

Further, in educational institutions, those who know are still called teachers, educators, professors, instructors, lecturers or readers; those who acquire knowledge are called students —or learners at best. While some changes have shifted the focus from understanding students as those who don't know to learners who are actively involved in the process of knowledge acquisition and distribution, the general educational practice of teaching and assessment still reflects the unidirectional or top-down approach to teaching and learning. Even a flipped classroom is still a classroom ("box"), unless we increasingly start expanding the pedagogy of experiential learning (where much of the learning happens outside the "classroom" and is being reflected on, discussed and interpreted interactively "in class," fluidly dissolving the boundaries between teachers and learners).

Indications of a Changing Paradigm of Teaching (and Learning)

The lack of substantial progress in providing more flexible learning spaces is particularly surprising given that even hundreds of years ago other models of learning outside the box were available, as described by the model of Plato's Academy, where members of the Academy learn and teach together without a clear distinction between teaching and learning roles (Dancy, 1991). Further, current concepts of learning commons pick up similar conceptualizations of learning together in dynamic and different set-ups (Holmgren, 2010). However, still only few Canadian institutions of higher education have implemented substantially different teaching concepts that experiment with other terms also, e.g., coaching, integrating, facilitating. Considering the two following examples and underlying innovative models of teaching, it is high time to break free from the dominating paradigm and to move outside the box.

First, at the Center for Innovative Management of Athabasca University, teaching is called "academic coaching"; academic coaches "facilitate active discussion and collaboration among students by guiding conversations and providing new information, insights or tools to help clarify particular points or themes in a course." Rather than lecturing, they "facilitate interactions that lead to a high level of peer-to-peer learning among students who are experienced managers from a broad spectrum of organizations, industries and geographic locations" (Athabasca University, n.d.).

Second, at Renaissance College, UNB's faculty of interdisciplinary leadership studies instructors are called "integrators"; in the context of learning outcomes they facilitate the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes of students (Mengel, forthcoming; see also: Mengel & Zundel, 2007).

Both approaches highlight the concept of facilitation, often introduced in the context of problem-based learning, where "teacher and students co-construct the instructional agenda in a student-centered environment [and where] the teacher's role is to facilitate collaborative knowledge construction" (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2006, p. 21).

Concepts of collaborative distributed learning where a subset of distributed and local learners and communities connect in their learning process or project further push the role of the traditional course instructor towards facilitation of learning processes and integration of various learning experiences (Laferriere, Venkatesh, & Paquelin, 2014). Further, "blended learning" integrating online and face-to-face learning approaches put the "community of inquiry" at the center stage with the premise "that higher education is both a collaborative and individually constructivist learning experience" (Vaughan, Cleveland-Innes, & Garrison, 2013, p. 10) where teachers learn and learners teach. Finally, "in peer learning [the roles of teacher and learner] are either undefined or may shift during the course of the learning experience" (Boud, Cowen, & Sampson, 2001, p. 4).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Considering promising examples of innovative approaches to teaching, it is time to break free from the existing paradigm, without relinquishing the responsibility of facilitators to learn to guide, challenge, and

assess, and without frustrating learners' expectations of—and appreciation for—the expertise and experience of facilitators of learning. We should be more cognizant of how our teaching and learning language might cement the outgrown dichotomy between "teachers" and "learners" rather than support the dynamics of communal, collaborative, or peer learning. However, simply replacing terms may not suffice to change the underlying pedagogy. Innovating pedagogical approaches and teaching outside the box may prove difficult without a change of the mindset and corresponding practice.

In particular, I suggest working on:

- creating an effective dynamic learning environment "outside of the box" that better accommodates the various needs and experiences of learners; and
- more fluidly involving various stakeholders in learning processes and to seamlessly switch roles between the traditional "teaching" and "learning."

More consistently engaging all involved in a learning community certainly is worth the effort.

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NO MORE MASTERPIECES: A CASE OF PEER MODELLING IN *WRITING HISTORY*

Tracy Moniz, Mount Saint Vincent University

We reach the bench and sit. . . .

"You know that all flowers grow differently, and sometimes it is not wise to grow different flowers in the same garden." Dadi stares at a duck in the lake as she speaks. "Sometimes, two flowers are just so beautiful that one garden cannot quite take their combined beauty, and so it is best to separate them."

"But gardens with a lot of different flowers look prettier. Don't they, Dadi?"

"Yes, they do." She smiles at me. "But my story is about flowers that couldn't grow together, that wouldn't grow together. . . . Many, many years ago, Pakistan and India were one big country with an array of different people, but this story is not about that big country. This story is about the day that a line was drawn on that land." Dadi traces her finger on the bench and draws an imaginary line. "This is the story of 1947." (Moniz, 2013, Chapter 15)

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And so ends the first story in a collection of historical narratives about one woman's life during the partition of British India. A former student, Hira Hayee, wrote this collection in the upper-level "History and Writing" course I taught at the University of Toronto. In this piece, Hayee introduces us to her grandmother ("Dadi" in Urdu). Through a series of Dadi's letters, Hayee propels us back to 1947 to witness life during the Partition. Her collection embodies a commitment to good writing, solid research and honest storytelling.

Hayee's project appears in the third edition of the book *Writing History: A Collection by New Writers* alongside other models of research-based historical narratives. Each piece began as an assignment in "History and Writing" where students design a research and writing project and produce a portfolio of six original historical narratives built around a central historical theme of their choice. To research, students relied on primary sources and on methods such as interviews, oral history, observation and archival research. To write, students learned and applied principles of classic rhetoric as well as techniques to blend narrative and exposition.

To compile and edit *Writing History*, I engaged four senior undergraduate students who completed the course. Life Rattle Press, a non-profit, published the book in 2013, and it now serves as a teaching tool in the course. Inside its pages, 21 writers tell 52 stories about topics as diverse as women's golf, Residential Schools in Canada, cod fisheries in Newfoundland and Vincent van Gogh. The writing is focused, engaging, professional and powerful. Together, the stories demonstrate how writing turns information into history and new writers into historians.

And this leads to my teaching tip: *Use student writing to teach students to write.*

Why?

Since peer models are "collections of writing by other writers at their level," students can connect with and see their own potential within these models (Allen, 2008a, p. 91). Students see the theories, methods and techniques discussed in class come alive in the writing of peers who once sat in their same seats. In essence: It seems possible to write like *that*.

Jillian Lim, a former student in the "History and Writing" course (where I used a peer model-based text), notes: "I prefer reading and analyzing peer models because they always infuse my learning experience with more immediate relevance and more motivation than classic texts. The past work of students like myself seems to assure me: 'Here's everything [they] did, and everything [I] can do, too.' That assurance or guidance can feel incredibly comforting" (personal communication, May 7, 2015).

Writing intimidates, especially when we offer as primary models the "masterpieces" of revered classic or contemporary writers—the kind of elegant essays found in a classic nonfiction collection like the *Norton Reader* written by the likes of George Orwell, Mark Twain, Joan Didion and Martin Luther King Jr. (Allen, 2008a, p. 66; Peterson, Brereton, Bizup, Fernald, & Goldthwaite, 2011). For students, the "masterpieces" become the "real writing," which they then view as "unlike" their own writing (Allen, 2008a, p. 66). This results in student writing that "lack(s) authenticity" and a "sense of style that expresse(s) their personalities and experience" (Allen, 2008a, p. 66). As French Playwright, actor and theorist Antonin Artaud wrote:

> Past masterpieces are good for the past. They are not good for us. We have the right to say what has been said and even what has not been said in a style that belongs to us, reacting in a direct, immediate way to present-day feelings everybody can understand. . . . Our adulation of what has already been done, however beautiful and valuable, paralyses us and keeps us from connecting with the underlying power in us. . . . (as in Allen, 2008a, p. 3)

In teaching writing, we need to create an environment that encourages students to uncover their "voice." Peer models demonstrate "originality, craft, a range of different voices and experiences, and freedom," and they enable students to learn within a community of writers (Allen, 2008a, p. 69). Guy Allen (2008a) observed the following about using peer models in his writing classes over time: "The more I put good models in front of my classes, the more quality writing I received" (p. 69).

Lim agrees. "Peer models set a standard for creativity," she says. "They inspire you to think outside the box, and they also challenge you in the best way possible. They are also much more fun and exciting to learn from because they feel closest to my own experience as a student writer, making it almost feel as if you're learning from a friend" (personal communication, May 7, 2015).

Other genres of writing can benefit from peer models. For example, *Make It New: Creative Nonfiction by New Writers for New Writers* gathers 72 short prose pieces by students who did not have substantial experience with prose (Allen, 2008b). Using peer models themselves, these new authors learned in an introductory Expressive Writing course, where they composed their stories, to write with economy, directness, detail and voice. Another text, *Magic Mushrooms, Redback Spiders and Lobotomies: Communicating Science*, collects 43 articles about scientific subjects by 18 new writers in the upper-level "Science and Writing" course where students learn to produce clear and engaging, research-based scientific writing (Allen, 2012). Like *Writing History,* both texts are now teaching tools in the respective writing courses they evolved from, and both serve as examples from past students to future students of what new writers can achieve.

And new writers can achieve a lot. So let's look to students—and not just "masterpieces"—as teachers too.

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THE UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCES OF APPLYING MINDFULNESS TO CRITICAL THINKING

David Sable, Saint Mary's University

Successful innovative strategies for teaching outside the box are often prompted by what instructors have learned from their experiences in the classroom. Initially, we may try something that works for us or was suggested by respected experts, but whatever we start with gets modified through direct experience with our students. We see what helps them engage the content and each other, and we see what is meaningful to them. We look for evidence in their thinking, their writing, and their interaction.

I started applying my own experience with mindfulness practices over several terms. Gradually, I arrived at a particular set of generally reflective practices that engage students with the course content and then each other before I facilitate discussion with the whole class. The turning point for me came when one student, who was in the business school, wrote "I have been in university for four years. This was the first time I had to think." It may have been the first time he was directed to take the time in class to think things through. Clearly, he felt compelled to think deeply and independently, to think for himself rather than parrot back what he read or what he was told. From then on, I wanted to understand the impact mindfulness practices could have on student engagement and learning.

The reflective practices I use apply basic mindfulness principles to individual contemplation, journal writing, listening, inquiry, and dialogue. Mindfulness practices enable us to gently suspend familiar interpretations of our experience long enough to permit "(1) creation of new categories; (2) openness to new information; and (3) awareness of more than one perspective" (Langer, 1989, p. 62). The practices begin introspectively, but extend into interaction. Students reflect on a question, statement, or image, write something brief about it, and then share their responses in pairs. They are instructed to listen and temporarily suspend the tendency most of us have to compare what we are hearing to our own beliefs. They are instructed to inquire, still with suspended judgment and genuine curiosity. (For the full set of instructions see Sable, 2012, Appendix A.). They often discover there is more to what their peers are saying than they initially thought. There is more in the text or the lecture than they initially thought. They grow more confident about being curious. The following quotes are from my own qualitative research with undergraduates who applied these practices in class over 11 weeks (Sable, 2014).

According to one student:

> The language difference in one way helped them [ESL students] phrase things in ways I never would have thought of phrasing it; and saying it in ways I never would have thought of saying it. One girl said that "Compassion was a sadness in everyone's heart." I never would have thought that; it blew my mind. It was really interesting to hear that. So, yes there is a language barrier, but there is also another way of thinking about it that

> is completely different than I was raised. . . . she thought of the question completely differently. I would go, "Oh wow."

In classes with international students, such structured exercises are especially valuable, but there are differences even when students with a common first language think they are in quick agreement. Another student reported:

> That's how you get to more basic stuff behind what they are saying—you ask them what they mean about certain things. . . . I find that is when they give personal examples. . . . I just feel that I can better understand where they are coming from, more personally. . . . it tended to expand my thinking, and think about things I might have missed.

Yet the unexpected consequence of encouraging mindfulness, introspectively and then interactively, was the reported sense of connectedness between students. *That sense of connectedness was stronger between students who disagreed with each other than between students who found easy agreement in their interaction.*

> I've never developed any really good friendships through these interactive exercises . . . but I definitely feel like they make you feel like you're connected to people. . . you just get a sense of your connection to that student and then to all the other students in the class . . . I think it's changed my general view of how I connect with people; even outside the class . . . it's hard to explain . . . I don't really know any better word to use than "connectedness," because that's really what it is.

Students' sense of connectedness was based on taking an uncertain journey together and risking the suspension of beliefs long enough to be challenged—hallmarks of "thinking outside the box." Further, connectedness supports critical thinking that is more focused on deeper and broader understanding than winning an argument. It opens the door to respect, empathy, and creative dialogue.

I elaborated on the qualitative research with quantitative methods to examine the cumulative effects of these contemplative practices over time (n=43). The results showed statistically significant gains in the average number of indicators for critical thinking dispositions appearing in student journals. Results also indicated increased self-confidence and engagement with multiple points of view, confirming expectations based on the qualitative research (Sable, 2012).

The Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education has documented the growing research on a wide variety of contemplative practices in the classroom (www.contemplativemind.org/programs/acmhe). Is it essential to be expert in mindfulness meditation to explore the potential of techniques that apply principles of self-awareness to listening, inquiry, and dialogue? Although I believe it helps immensely, reflective practices in general have long been part of academia in the humanities, as well as the sciences (Barbezat & Pingree, 2012). For example, "close reading" in literary criticism, grounded theory methods in social science research, and critical thinking in general can all involve cultivating awareness of our own habitual thinking, suspending it momentarily,

and seeing with fresh eyes. Such self-awareness ought to be a pre-requisite for independent critical thinking and meaningful communication (Paul, 1990). We can acknowledge "the box" of our disciplines, its strengths and its limitations, as we teach. Students can learn to be more reflective if we model whatever experience we have with reflective practices and develop creative exercises. We each have to learn through a genuine and open iterative process what works. In so doing, students can find their own voices and a fresh awareness of themselves and others. They can come to appreciate each other's perspectives and stories, and explore in and around "the box" of our disciplines, if we—as instructors—can model it by doing it ourselves.

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David Sable, PhD, began teaching at Saint Mary's University in Canada in 2000, bringing with him fifteen years of professional experience in the non-profit sector as a training and education consultant. In 2012, David held a sessional appointment as Assistant Professor in the Religious Studies Department, with an equal focus on teaching and research. In the same year, David completed the Interdisciplinary PhD program at Dalhousie University in Halifax. His thesis, "The Impact of Reflective Practices on the Dispositions for Critical Thinking in Undergraduate Courses," was nominated for Best Thesis in the Social Sciences and his work noted in The National Teaching and Learning Forum 2012 21(4). He continues to teach part-time at Saint Mary's University and Mount Saint Vincent University and is working on a book for educators documenting the diverse impacts of reflective practices on learning. David has been studying and practicing meditation and Buddhism in the Shambhala tradition since 1971. He was trained and authorized as a meditation teacher by the renowned Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Chögyam Trungpa, and his son, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. He also works as an applied mindfulness consultant to educators and training organizations throughout North America. David is a founding member of the Authentic Leadership in Action Institute (ALIA) and a faculty member of the Atlantic Contemplative Centre.

TEACHING LARGE ONLINE CLASSES: HOW CAN PROFESSORS PROMOTE ACTIVE LEARNING WITHOUT EXHAUSTING THEMSELVES?

Heather Schmidt, Cape Breton University

Abstract

This 50-minute session featured a discussion about innovative teaching techniques in large online classes, and the associated challenge of keeping the workload manageable for instructors. What are the alternatives to multiple-choice exams? In large online classes (of 50-100 students), instructors often face students who feel "isolated" but who also ironically rarely take advantage of opportunities to engage with other students unless there is a grade associated. This can result in either a barrage of emails between individual students and the professor, or students who withdraw and refrain from asking questions and engaging. Online teaching also presents the instructor with an ever-evolving selection of unique online tools. While implying exciting possibilities for active learning, teaching pedagogy often follows at a slower pace. For example, how can one use real-time interactive tools in a large online class when it is impossible for all students to be online at the same time? I began this session by showing the session participants my two online-course Moodle websites and describing the assignments I have developed for these larger online classes. I discussed the ongoing dual challenge of incorporating innovative, active learning opportunities for students, while also attempting to keep the amount of marking and formative feedback required of me (the instructor) to a manageable level. Session participants asked questions and inserted their own comments and stories throughout this process. We also discussed additional teaching strategies for large online classes identified in the academic literature.

Why Do Students Take Online Courses? Why Do Instructors Teach Online Courses?

One session participant asked: Why wouldn't students prefer to enrol in courses taught on-campus or in blended-learning courses (that feature a mixture of in-person and online interactions)? And under what circumstances would a professor choose to teach an exclusively online course?

In response to the question about professor motivations, I related my own experience of being a newly-hired professor six years ago in which case (a) I was feeling fortunate to have acquired a tenure-track job, and (b) one of my first teaching assignments was a 50 student online course in Personality Psychology. I began my academic career eager to prove myself, to embrace new modes of teaching (I had been upfront in my job interview about having no online teaching experience), and with online courses as a clear expectation in my new teaching load. In retrospect, I could have resisted the online teaching assignment, but it simply didn't cross my mind. Some initial hurdles were encountered such as a lack of colleagues (at the time) who were engaged in, interested in, or even respectful of online

teaching, thus making my first year of online teaching a somewhat lonely experience of learning through trial-and-error. An "Introduction to Moodle" workshop was provided, but everything after that was left up to me. Fortunately, I made the decision to be upfront with the students about my novice status as an online instructor right from the beginning of the course. In some ways, it worked to my advantage that I was learning about the Moodle system and how to teach online, as my students were learning how to navigate Moodle and to be online students; we were "in it together" and frequently united by shared frustrations, which included power outages, periodic stalling of the Moodle site and/or the internet during online exams, on assignment due dates, etc.

To compensate for my inexperience, I administered a midpoint course evaluation and made adjustments to the remainder of the course based on this feedback. This proved to be a good decision for several reasons, one of which included the unexpected fact (to me) that my institution did not engage in the practice of providing course evaluations for students in online courses at the time. (CBU now administers online course evaluations, but struggles to let students know how to access course evaluations, producing low response rates.) If I hadn't made a practice of collecting course feedback from students on my own, I wouldn't have received any in my first two years of teaching online courses. This posed a problem for my job review, renewal and tenure applications, and contributed to my initial feelings of frustration and isolation as an online instructor. CBU is now transitioning from online courses being the domain of sessional instructors, to online courses being taught by tenured and tenure-track faculty, although it has not always been a smooth process.

After my first year, I walked away with the impression that online teaching can be an immense amount of work—because according to Kupczynski, Gibson, and Challoo (2011), it "requires [developing] pedagogical proficiencies, administrative skills, and technical skills" (para. 8)—but I also appreciated the flexibility it allowed. Rather than being pinned down to a set weekly schedule, I was able to adjust my course preparation time to best fit my own needs and timeline. Also I discovered (to my surprise) that I'd actually been able to form closer relationships with my online students, when compared to my on-campus classes of the same size. An online environment makes it harder for a student to "hide in the back" without saying anything, and it also provides a more welcoming, safer environment in which for shy and socially-anxious students to interact. They are not put on the spot, but can instead take the time to collect their thoughts before sharing with the class. Although hesitant at first, several students' confidence level dramatically increased in terms of their willingness to communicate with me and the rest of the class.

Online courses appeal to a variety of students such as those who like the flexibility of earning a course credit with no weekly meeting times, and students with hectic and changing schedules, e.g., varsity athletes, minor league hockey players, nursing students, parents, mature students, and people with full-time jobs. Kupczynski, Gibson, and Challoo (2011) further suggest that "the economic downturn and the rise in fuel costs" (para. 6) increases the appeal of online-courses for students. Online courses at CBU also attract students who previously lived in Cape Breton but have since moved away. I have had online-students from Australia, Tunisia, Denmark, England, and a ship in the Canadian navy, as well as Canadian locations like Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick, mainland Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland. It is a diverse group of students in each course, which presents both challenges and opportunities. The

students' personal capacity for self-discipline and self-directed learning is a significant deciding factor in determining the outcome of their final grades. Will they acquire the habit of checking the course site on a regular basis each week, so that they keep up with the material? Or will they postpone checking the course site until days before an exam, resulting in missed assignment deadlines?

Balancing Active and Passive Learning Opportunities

One way to encourage students to check the course site on a regular basis and to motivate student engagement with the course material is to update the course site on a weekly basis, rather than posting all content at once. Anand, Hammond, and Narayanan (2015) state that it is useful to keep students "roughly synchronized" because it facilitates "peer conversations and collaboration" (para. 10). I prefer to keep it simple and supplement the weekly textbook readings with a more detailed, "chattier version" of the PowerPoint slides I would show in an on-campus course (incorporating stories and examples). Other instructors post weekly podcasts or videos in which they introduce the weekly topic. (As I explained to the session participants, I am a bit of a technophobe and I dislike the sound of my own voice. As a result, I have yet to embrace this teaching strategy, but likely will in the next few years.)

Another strategy I employ is to provide active/experiential learning opportunities, and to make them account for a significant amount of the students' final grade. I began this session by presenting an overview of the grade breakdown components of my two large online courses: one for a first year course (Introduction to Psychology) and one for a second year course (Personality Psychology):

First Year Course	Second Year Course
60% exams	40% exams
40% Active Learning: (a) Participation Activities (b) Library Research (c) Research Reflection	60% Active Learning: (a) Participation Activities (b) Mini-Study Project (c) Case Study Project

As indicated in the above chart, I employ some conventional passive-learning evaluation techniques such as exams, which are primarily multiple choice, but with some short-answer questions. The Moodle system times exams (closing them when the timer runs out) and marks multiple choice questions automatically, which makes them a useful timesaver in larger classes. Additionally, when there is significant content to cover, multiple choice exams are a standard way of assessing students' understanding (albeit short-term) on a wide range of topics. I personally use a system of proctored online exams and a three day period for each exam. Students may either write the exam in a computer lab on campus at a set time with me as their proctor, or they may submit a Proctor Approval Form to CBU's online course manager, and set a time in the three day period with their proctor. I began to require proctors after discovering that some students were taking online exams as groups and "helping" each other, i.e., cheating. Proctors ensure that exams are an individual effort. I use a three day exam period because it allows students to set times with their proctors that fit with their own schedules and time zones—and it makes my life easier as it eliminates large numbers of students submitting requests for special accommodations. Moodle also allows the instructor to upload large test banks, and can

randomly select a specified number of questions for each student, thus decreasing the problem of students writing the exam early and then sharing the exam questions they remember with their peers.

Although convenient, exams as a method of evaluation are unlikely to result in long-term retention of the course material. I recall being an undergraduate student myself and "mastering" the art of cramming for tests, but also in later years feeling disappointed about how little course material I had actually retained. The memories that stuck with me most involved projects that offered opportunities for creativity and personal choice, as well as experiential learning and/or interactions with other people. They pushed me outside of my comfort zone and challenged me to try things I hadn't done before. In spite of the initial anxiety, they taught me that I was capable of more than I knew. Shouldn't today's online students have these same opportunities?

Anand, Hammond, and Narayanan (2015) argue that online courses need to move from a "lean back" norm (where students are passively entertained) to a "lean forward" mode (in which students are required to engage and interact). I view active learning activities as an opportunity for students to get a small taste of what it is like to be a researcher in psychology. In my first-year course, assignments are simple but still attempt to provide opportunities for students to explore their own interests. For their Library Assignment, I provide a brief tutorial on how to use the CBU library's online tools to locate refereed journal articles, and then instruct students to locate three articles on any topic of personal interest in the textbook and write a short paper about what they learned.

For their second assignment, I provide first year students with links to hundreds of online psychological studies taking place around the world (e.g., databases maintained by the Hanover College Psychology Department, the Social Psychology Network, and Online Psychology Research). Students are directed to pick a study that seems interesting, participate in it, and then write a reflection paper about their experience. (I provide a series of questions for them to answer, as well as a sample paper from a previous student.) It is a useful learning experience and it gives them something concrete to write about in their papers. Some students experience deception (i.e., being misled about the true nature of a study), while others find inadequate debriefing at the end of a study. Others become frustrated by the length of their study and describe in their papers how their quality of responses deteriorates as the study drags on. The questions direct students to critique the study, e.g., "Did the study accurately capture how you feel about the subject matter?" or "What would you do differently if you were the researcher?" They get a direct taste of how psychological research is often conducted, as well as the importance of research ethics, study design, collecting different types of data, informed consent, and treating participants with respect. My hope is also that students will remember this experience if they ever conduct research.

My second-year online course (in Personality Psychology) provides an opportunity for students to carry out their own "mini-study." The textbook contains several short personality tests and students are directed to pick one, create a very simple, testable hypothesis, and submit their proposal to me within the first month of the course. I review the proposals, provide feedback, and intervene if any ethical issues present themselves in the students' plans. Students are then required to "test their hypothesis" by recruiting a small group of their friends and family to complete the personality test they

selected, and write up a short paper about their findings and their experience. Often students say that the project gave them a new appreciation for how psychological research is conducted (rather than only reading about it) and describe the project as "surprisingly enjoyable" and even fun, as they experience the suspense of waiting to find out whether or not their hypothesis will be supported. One session participant inquired how CBU's research ethics board deals with this class project. I explained that I approached the CBU research ethics board (before launching my first online course) and was directed to submit an overview of the class assignment (including all handouts students receive). I subsequently received their approval and continue to resubmit updates each year.

The second term project I employ in this course involves a "Famous Person Case Study." Students are directed to select a famous person who they personally find fascinating, and then analyze that person using the different theories of personality that we cover in class (e.g., Freudian, Big 5, Self, or Determination Theory). To assist the students, the project is broken down into small components: they submit a proposal, four short "assessment" papers, and a final PowerPoint presentation/academic-style "poster," which they post on a class forum to share with their classmates. In the final week of class, students are directed to view the presentations and pick three to evaluate; evaluations are submitted to me privately to encourage honest responses. Students often enjoy this project because it gives them the opportunity to research an individual of personal interest, be it a serial killer or an inspirational hero. Students also report that the project helps them to better understand the concepts discussed in class, thus also preparing them to write exams.

As I disclosed to the session participants, it has taken me five years to whittle down the amount of marking required to a manageable level for this project, and this is still ongoing. Some strategies that I currently employ include: (a) giving students a choice of working on the project individually or in small groups; (b) requiring students to complete only four of the provided theory assessments (this helps to spread out the marking); (c) requiring students to only respond to one of the many posed questions on each assignment; and (d) giving students the option of either skipping all assessments and completing the final PowerPoint presentation for 30% of their final grade or completing the four assessments for 15% of their final grade, plus the PowerPoint for another 15% of their grade. Although it sounds complicated, students appreciate the opportunity to tailor the project based on their own preferences, and it has significantly cut down on the required marking load—thus also speeding up the time that it takes me to grade assignments. I continue to search for additional ways of modifying this project to further reduce the workload required of me. Session participants expressed that they were impressed with the active learning components of the project (and the quality of provided sample student PowerPoint presentations), but also commented that the amount of marking required still seemed quite sizable.

Motivating Students to Engage and Interact on a Weekly Basis

When showing session participants my online course sites, I also spoke about the materials that I post at the top of each website in the first week. One is targeted towards students who are new to Moodle, and provides a site tour: a series of screenshots in which I point out important facets of the site and also explain how different elements of the course will work. Although it may seem obvious, sometimes

overwhelmed first-year (and even second-year) students fail to note the importance of beginning each visit to the course site by checking helpful tools such as the "Calendar" and "Upcoming Events" (which highlight due dates and exams in the month ahead), and the "Recent Events" box (which provides links to all new material the instructor has posted since the student's last visit to the site, as well as notice of student postings to class forums). The tour is entirely optional but useful for students unfamiliar with Moodle and online courses.

I also assign two very simple participation activities for students in Week One. They earn one point for completing each activity and typically a new activity is posted each week. The first activity simply involves introducing themselves to the rest of the class on an online forum. I find this useful because (a) the students learn how to post to a forum, (b) it gets them interacting with each other immediately, (c) it provides me with information about each student's background, and (d) the students get a visual image of just how big the class is. When it takes them a while to scroll through all of the posted course introductions, I hope this gives students a sense of why I (as their instructor) will not be able to grade their exams and papers within a day or two. (Anand, Hammond, and Narayanan (2015) recommend requiring students to introduce themselves to the rest of the class, in order to set the stage for student collaboration and group work.) My other Week One participation activity involves students completing a short multiple choice quiz about the course outline. Students are encouraged to print out a copy of the course outline and informed that they must take the quiz repeatedly until they earn a perfect score, in order to earn their second participation point. This encourages students to read the course outline and ensures that they know information such as how many exams they will take, when the first assignment is due, how often they should plan to check the course site, etc. It also provides a low-pressure introduction to taking a multiple choice quiz in the Moodle format.

At this point, a session participant raised the question of whether the students (young adults who chose to attend university, not children in elementary school) really need to be bribed with easy points to complete obvious tasks, such as reading the course outline and posting to a class discussion. Should we not expect more independence and initiative from students? Should they not want to participate? And if they fail to read course outlines and participate, do they not deserve to risk failing the course? While in principle I agreed that this would be the case, I also explained that when I tried this approach in my first year of teaching online courses, it produced a lot of headaches for me as the instructor. Many students did not read the course outline and instead repeatedly emailed me to ask "obvious questions." I grew tired of repeatedly replying, "Read the course outline." When I created discussion forums with no participation points attached, two or three eager and high-achieving students would respond right away. When nobody else joined in, they would get nervous and email me to check if they'd correctly understood the activity. The less motivated students were not participating at all. By assigning participation points on a weekly basis, most students grow accustomed to checking the course site each week, and it can help them to stay on top of the material and assignments, even if they are lured in with the promise of "easy points." Assigning points also makes my life easier by reducing unnecessary student emails. Anand, Hammond, and Narayanan (2015) agree that incentives must be tied to participation and collaboration, or less than 10% of students will engage.

I currently do not assign grades that assess the quality of postings on the discussion forums, in part due to the larger size of the classes and the time that it takes me read each response. It's simply: you complete the activity and you earn the one point. You don't complete the activity, and you receive a zero. (The majority of participation activities in the courses involve watching online videos and then posting comments, reading short articles and posting impressions, completing short psychological tests, etc.) The session participants discussed the pros and cons of this non-evaluative approach. Admittedly, it reflects a compromise between what I would ideally like to do as the instructor—which is to provide each student with personalized formative feedback—and what I am physically able to do in terms of workload. Unfortunately, as students aren't pushed to truly "discuss" with other students in the week-long timeframe allotted, or to improve the quality of their contributions over time, this approach also permits some students to post low-quality, hurried responses right at the final deadline, without any negative consequence to their grades.

I believe that positive aspects of this approach outweigh the negative, however: when teaching nervous first-year and second-year students, it is useful to put them at ease about participating in university-level discussions. Rather than worrying about trying to produce "the right answer" or "sounding smart," I hope that students feel a safe space is created in which to share honest answers. It also demonstrates that there is not always one right answer, but often multiple perspectives that are relevant to a thorough discussion. Students will not pass the course based on participation points alone (at most they count for 10% of a student's final grade), but they provide the students (who choose to complete them—and not all students do) with some sense of security when going into higher-stress exams and assignments.

Future Ideas for Promoting Active Learning While Minimizing Instructor Workload

One session participant shared that he relies heavily on the aid of teaching assistants to stay on top of his online marking. (He worked at a larger university, with graduate students available to hire as teaching assistants.) CBU, however, is a smaller institution at which upper-level undergraduates serve as teaching assistants, and have been restricted to "objective marking" only. As a result, I do not currently hire teaching assistants for online marking. On the other hand, it served as a useful reminder to me that I shouldn't forget about this option and can seek out more opportunities for teaching assistants.

We also discussed possibilities for decreasing the instructor's workload that encourage students to help each other. Group work, for example, can decrease marking, while encouraging students to learn collaboratively. It needs to be set up with a great deal of care, however, or students become unhappy. (I currently shy away from requiring group projects, although it is something I should revisit.) Peer marking is a concept that I have contemplated but have yet to put into action. There would need to be guidelines and I would need to oversee the process, but in such a way that my workload does not increase as a result. I currently provide a "Question and Answer Forum" on my course sites where students are encouraged to post questions—rather than contacting me privately—and also to help each other if they can. Student usage of this forum, however, tends to be limited and infrequent: although I respond quickly, only a small subset of students uses it. Most students prefer to contact me privately.

I briefly described a paper by Messner (2012) in which he talks about encountering the same situation, and how he finally got his online students to interact by creating a Facebook group. Messner (2012) found that 97% of his students had Facebook accounts and that 49% check their social media several times each day, i.e., more often than they check email or course sites. Clements (2015) similarly found that students are more likely to communicate with each other on social media, while they reserve email and course sites for communication with the professor. Anand, Hammond, and Narayanan (2015) recommend that instructors resist the urge to jump in and answer student questions, and instead allow peers time to do so. While noting that "'Trust the students' . . . [is] one of the hardest axioms to follow," they found that "letting [a question] simmer, can aid learner discovery" (para. 17). This is a valuable piece of advice that is also supported by my personal experience: finding the courage to relinquish control as the one-and-only "expert" in one's online courses is vital both to promoting active student learning and creating a manageable instructor workload.

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PEER-LED TEACHING AND SUPPORT TO REDUCE EATING DISORDERS ON CAMPUS

Kathryn Weaver, University of New Brunswick

Abstract

Increasingly, university students seek help for eating issues, and along with the eating issues, they often present with multiple underlying problems that require intensive support and challenge university resources. In this paper, I share highlights of my ongoing practice-research program, "It's Not about Food" (INAF), designed to identify and address knowledge and social support needs of university women with self-identified eating issues, and the specific support rendered by upper level nursing students who served as peer facilitators. These highlights are contextualized through a short film depicting the peer learning process. Mixed-method evaluation of the project conveyed the meaning, effectiveness, and value of the INAF group. For women living with eating issues, the group became a safe zone enabling contemplation of personal and health changes, including the need for seeking outside support and guidance for nutritional and mental health concerns. From the perspectives of the nursing students as peer facilitators, the most salient finding was their learning how to preserve rapport, a strategy which helped them get to know the participants as persons beyond the eating issues, and to feel as though they are developing greater competency, professional satisfaction, and leadership capacity. The facilitators pondered the practicality of this type of therapeutic practice within their traditionally time-pressed, task-focused clinical placements. In the final analysis, INAF provided participants and peer facilitators with a transformed view of self and global concerns, such as the need for prevention interventions targeting younger persons and support for men and older persons living with eating issues.

Introduction

Universities are "perfect incubators" for emotional distress: students are away from families and face financial worries, relationship problems, enormous expectations about grades, and increased opportunities for drug and alcohol experimentation (Deziel, 2011). During this transition period, students may not feel equipped to cope with the demands placed upon them. Their high levels of stress are triggers for depression, eating issues, and other illnesses, all of which normally surface between adolescence and young adulthood. Indeed, the number of students presenting to university counselling for eating disturbances and concurrent issues such as depression, anxiety, substance use, and suicide ideation has been rising (Baker et al., 2006; Gallagher et al., 2000).

According to the American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment (ACHA-NHA, 2013), Canadian post-secondary students are lonely, overwhelmed, and exhausted.

Specifically, the 34,000 Canadian students surveyed in the ACHA-NHA reported acute loneliness (63.9%), "drowning in responsibilities" (89%), depression with inability to function (37.5%), feeling exhausted (86.9%), and having seriously considered suicide (9.5%). The majority reported overwhelming anxiety (56.5%) and stress ranging from "more than average" (45.5%) to "tremendous" (12.1%), and 39% reporting stress as "affecting my performance at school."

When asked, "Have you ever received information on the following topics from your college or university?" (ACHA-NHA, 2013), Canadian post-secondary students reported "no" to topics of eating disorders (75.3%) and how to help others in distress (75.2%). They reported "yes" to depression/anxiety (52.6%) and nutrition (45.9%). While the students expressed interest in receiving information from their college or university on depression/anxiety (62.9%), nutrition (67%), and how to help others in distress (62.7%), they reported not being interested in receiving information on eating disorders (64.2%). This is unfortunate because next to depression, eating concerns are the most commonly self-reported psychiatric diagnoses among college students (Soet & Sevig, 2006). In fact, the median age of diagnosing an eating disorder is between 18 and 21 years (Hudson, Hiripi, Pope,& Kessler, 2007), the age when individuals usually first enroll in post-secondary education. Eating disorders affect 10-20% of female students (Anstine & Grinenko, 2000; Sira & Pawlak, 2010; Thome, 2004 ; Wonderlich-Tierney & Vander Wal, 2010) and 4-10% of male university students (Hoerr, Lugo, Bivins, & Keast, 2002; Sira & Pawlak, 2010).

Students experiencing eating pathology typically do not seek professional help because they doubt their symptoms warrant treatment (Meyer, 2005) or they perceive they will be negatively judged (Shaffer et al., 2006; Vogel et al., 2006). Additionally, available mental health resources on university campuses are often unable to respond to the demand (Uffelman & Hardin, 2002). Universities must often limit the number of available sessions leaving students to (a) not attain recovery, (b) seek out alternative help, or (c) not seek help at all. The need for a support intervention within university populations provides a rationale for my outside-the-box, cost efficient clinical-research initiative called "It's Not about Food" (INAF), established in 2008 at the University of New Brunswick.

Background of It's Not About Food

"It's Not about Food" (INAF) was developed by UNB-based health professionals as a six-week, psycho-educational support intervention for small groups of approximately 6-8 university students struggling with eating issues. Its student-to-student design enabled non-stigmatizing support to those desiring help, as well as a clinical practice setting for interested upper level nursing students who trained as peer facilitators. Following the intense training, peer facilitators implemented the weekly education and support sessions. A different topic related to eating issues was introduced each week. The topic was decided by the group and looked into by a peer facilitator. Although the topics varied to accommodate the needs of participants, the topics usually involved are shown below.

Week One: Eating Issues/Self Care
Week Two: Body Image/Self Esteem

Week Three: Anxiety/Impulsivity
Week Four: Anger/Assertiveness/Perfectionism
Week Five: Healthy Eating
Week Six Recovery/Self forgiveness

Through a series of closed group psycho-educational peer-facilitated sessions, we targeted university women with self-identified eating issues, not necessarily medically diagnosed eating disorders. We chose the term "eating issues" to refer to disturbances in eating habits and food intake with or without any compensatory actions. As an all-encompassing designation, eating issues included clinical eating disorders (anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder, and other feeding and eating disorders not elsewhere clarified) as defined in the DSM 5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and also those not formally diagnosed. We accepted into INAF women who were troubled by their eating habits or by related conditions such as obsessive thinking about food/calories.

A research component was established from the inception of INAF to explore the meaning of the psycho-education support intervention to participants and facilitators, elicit and analyze their experiences, make recommendations, and build a stronger research-based intervention. Funding was received from the Harrison-McCain Young Scholar Foundation (2008, 2010). The INAF project was reviewed by the UNB Research Ethics Board, and received ethics approval for 2008-2011 and 2011-2014. Participants were invited to complete quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with a graduate research assistant (RA) not involved in any teaching or coercive relationship with participants. All personal information was removed by the RA prior to analysis.

It's Not About Food Program: Training and Practice Highlights

As director and PI of INAF, I organized the training sessions and provided clinical supervision to nursing students who requested the INAF program for their clinical placement in third and fourth year community health courses. These nursing students assumed responsibility for developing knowledge around the INAF group topics and attending peer facilitation training by UNB interdisciplinary allied healthcare professionals. The training included information sessions, role play, performance feedback and repeat opportunities to refine facilitation skills. In addition to the nursing students, graduate students in Counselling Education and Interdisciplinary Health Studies under my supervision also participated in the training and served as INAF group supervisors, overseeing the weekly INAF sessions, and gaining clinical practicum hours in their respective programs. Trainers and university administrators were invited to end of term presentations about the INAF program.

From 2008 to 2011, INAF was open to pre-selected general university students recruited through word of mouth from university counsellors and the student health clinic, and by unique peer facilitator-designed fliers located strategically on campus. Figure 1 shows one group of facilitators' efforts to convey an inviting, inclusive group atmosphere. Noteworthy are the dialogue pop-outs (e.g.,

"wing night tonight") that facilitators formulated from searching popular literature and personal encounters with friends and family members known to have experienced eating issues.

Figure 1. Sample INAF peer facilitator-designed recruitment flier.

Since 2011, we opened INAF to members of the surrounding community who were screened for admission and, when eligible, admitted to the INAF groups. First sessions developed group rules and boundaries. Values of confidentiality, respect, and voluntariness were negotiated. Group dynamics began to form at the first session. The setting was comfortably arranged with a small, personal atmosphere and quiet environment. The arrangement allowed for face to face contact.

Prior to each INAF group, peer facilitators and co-facilitators met to review the content for the session and negotiate leadership roles for check-in (greeting and following up on previous week's issues), group discussion period, and check-out (eliciting reactions to the session, planning for the upcoming week). On the last week, participants, facilitators, group supervisors, and trainers were invited to complete confidential evaluations of the INAF program. Changes in INAF delivery were made in response to feedback received. For example, more accessible rooms for the meetings were chosen; a co-ed INAF group was advertised in winter, 2013, with male facilitators trained (but, as of December 2014, no men had contacted INAF).

It's Not About Food Program: Illustrative Film

Highlights of the INAF program were contextualized through an eight minute film (https://youtu.be/0t3FcduacMs or http://edcnb.weebly.com/) introducing the peer learning process. The film depicts the role of peer facilitation in engaging INAF participants in the topic of self-care. From the responses of the INAF participants, it is obvious that self-care required awareness and conscientious effort. The setting for the film was the group room of the UNB Women Centre. Sponsored by an Izaak Walton Killam Community Development Fund grant in 2012, the film was taped as a voluntary group session for interested participants and facilitators. Lines were spontaneous rather than pre-scripted and rehearsed. As such, the film realistically portrays the nature and process of an initial INAF session. The voice over components captured participant and facilitator reflections illuminating individual struggles.

It's Not About Food Program: Research Results

Mixed-method description by INAF participants (2010-2012) conveyed the meaning, effectiveness, and value of the INAF group. A total of 28 completed quantitative evaluations were returned for a response rate of 70%, age range of 17-40 (mean of 24 years), and reported age of onset of the eating issue between 5 and 30 (mean 15 years); 50% of the participants had been medically diagnosed with an eating disorder.

Quantitative evaluation. Of the 28 women, 50% had received therapeutic support apart from INAF. The assistance was derived from counsellors/psychotherapists (78.6%), dieticians (7.1%), physicians (7.1%), psychologists (7.1%), or dietician/physician/psychologist combination (7.1%).

Helpfulness of INAF compared to other services
Moderately – Very helpful 84.6%
Somewhat unhelpful 3.8%
Not applicable 11.6% (did not use other services)
Most helpful components of INAF
Information: Excellent/Good 85.7% Neutral/Poor (14.3%)
Support: : Excellent/Good 92.6 Neutral/Poor (7.4%)
Student peer facilitation: Excellent/Good 100%
Change in eating habits since INAF
Somewhat changed 42.86%
Very little – no change 57.14%
More comfortable/able to seek professional help?
Completely – somewhat changed 78.6*
Very little – no change 21.4

As shown above, the majority of INAF participants found INAF helpful, especially in terms of information, support, and peer facilitation. Participants reported their eating habits did not significantly change over the course of the six weekly groups. Attending INAF facilitated professional help seeking.

Qualitative evaluation. Analysis of 13 qualitative responses (response rate = 46.4%) from INAF participants and 12 (response rate = 36%) from peer facilitators revealed that INAF served as a "safe zone" for enabling understanding and contemplation of personal and health changes including self care. The meaning of INAF to participants and peer facilitators is illustrated in Fig. 2. Outward from the centre are INAF participant strategies arising from the safe zone and peer facilitator strategies for contributing to the safe zone through preserving rapport.

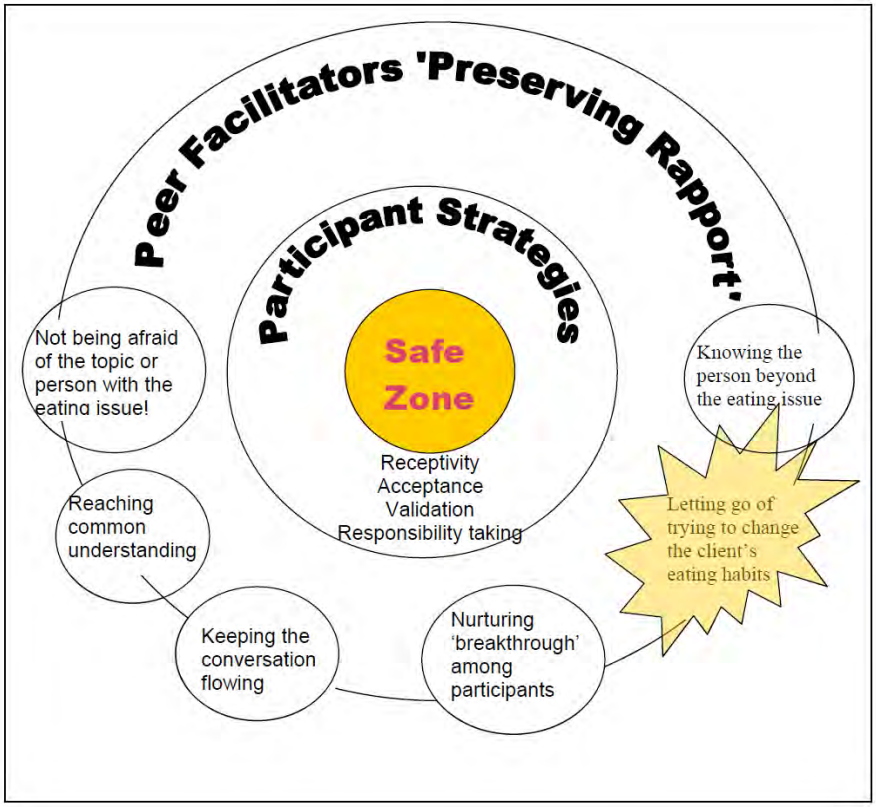

Figure 2. Safe Zone of INAF.

Safe Zone: Participant Perspectives

INAF offered safety through non-intimidating small group sizes and emotional comfort. In one participant's words:

> Help from peers is much easier than going to a nutritionist or psychologist or someone you perceive at a higher level of education or power, and not experiencing the issue themselves . . . You see that other people are experiencing the very same thing and that it is okay to reach out to them and there is no consequence. You are in a safe environment: there is no labeling; there are none of those things that would put someone off wanting to participate.

Participants contributed to the safe zone via their receptivity to ideas exchanged, acceptance of each other's unique situation without judgment or criticism, validation of shared experiences, and personal accountability for attending and voicing individual perspectives at the meetings. For some, participating in the group was the first time to say the things they worried about, did not like about themselves, or did not want other people to know. One of a participant's biggest fears in leaving INAF was no longer having a "*safe* [emphasis hers] place to talk and unload."

In tandem with the intra and interpersonal safety, INAF contributed to physical safety as participants were able to access the UNB "Safe Ride" program to and from meetings. The campus locations for INAF were preferred (e.g., "I wouldn't really go to services off campus because they're so out of the way").

Participant receptivity. Participants commented on being open to and learning from the other INAF members. They appraised everyone in the group as "there to help themselves but [also] always there to help everyone else." One participant who had children and a spouse found the other participants "all very receptive to hear what I had to say" despite not having had "the same life issues or experiences that I have." In turn, she described being "very open and receptive to what they had to say. I don't feel that anybody judged me for being in the situation that I am, at the age I am. I was welcomed."

For the majority of participants, group process rather than the content itself provided the most benefit. According to one participant, "I don't find the information overly helpful, but talking in itself helps. I feel it starts a good conversation." Most participants regarded the support they received as good to excellent, further explaining that "every one is very welcoming and understanding," "we formed great friendships," and "the group makes me feel not alone, [and] that I am not a freak." The support was perceived as positive and "there is never any criticism."

Participant validation. INAF helped women with eating issues validate their feelings and gain new perspectives. Participants found it "comforting" to know that what was individually perceived as a personal issue was "the same as everybody else's" and that "when you help others, especially with the same issue that you have, you help yourself so much." Participants described having developed a high level of trust in every member of the group and feeling connected to, rather than different from, other group members. For example:

> They all seemed to have a genuine concern for everyone else. I think the opportunity for group is very important for females. Females are such social creatures that having the group is really fortifying for you as opposed to facing a person one on one, especially if you are feeling a lot of shame or guilt or whatever. (INAF participant)

Shared experiences normalized issues and validated feelings. Participants expressed that even if information about opening up and expressing self had been given, receiving such information would not have been the same as actually sharing with the group. This was summarized by a participant as not only "need[ing] that sort of debriefing with peers . . . [but also] yearning for that sort of communication."

Participant acceptance. Participants acknowledged the importance of hearing and relating to the accounts of others. One participant who indicated she was not used to sharing her ideas and not often in touch with her feelings identified that talking about her feelings allowed her to bond with others because "everyone's got feelings." As well, the diversity of body sizes and experiences within the groups brought in different perspectives particularly helpful to women isolated within their eating issue.

Those who restricted their intakes expressed surprise in recognizing commonalities with those who engaged in binge eating (e.g., "They just do it pretty much for all the same reasons that I don't eat and I feel like it's the same in terms of the causes and a lot of the effects are similar"; "I never thought of overweight or obesity as compulsion, like the same as bulimia . . . I just didn't realize that it was at the same level as my restricting"). The acceptance of each other's body sizes and similar experiences crystallized as a "common thread that we're women and there are external forces that are making us feel inadequate."

Participant responsibility taking. Participants acknowledged feeling better for having talked about their issues in the group. They expressed feeling a personal investment, a certain commitment to INAF in knowing they were getting something from it.

> There was this collective energy that I knew being part of it was valuable and so what that meant to me was that I had an obligation to go. If I had a bad week of eating I would still go and feel grumpy and feel bad about myself but be honest about it in the group. (INAF Participant)

The INAF group helped participants realize the need to take time for self. Some disclosed going to a counsellor for the eating issue since starting the group. Most participants did not experience lessening of their eating issues. According to one participant, "I felt very supported and listened to, but not enough to change."

Summary of outcomes for participants. As a safe zone, INAF provided a turning point, a pathway to recovery that fostered the development of empowering relationships. INAF "sparked the start of feeling" but did not provide enough time for women to heal completely. INAF did, however, help the women learn to prioritize caring for self. One participant explained, "It was the group [that] got me through. It took me, sat me down, shook me, and turned me around and sent me in the right direction."

Building the Safe Zone through Preserving Rapport: Facilitator Perspective

From the perspectives of the peer facilitators, the most salient finding was learning to preserve rapport, a strategy which helped them develop greater relational competency, professional satisfaction, and leadership capacity. Socialized to routine task-oriented care, nursing students entered into INAF peer facilitation training with a desire to change participants' eating habits. The prospect of spending time sitting down with, listening to and learning from persons living with eating issues was initially less appealing than acquiring skills relevant to other clinical placements, such as providing influenza immunizations or working at the community methadone clinic. Still, the peer facilitators were open to taking away all they could from the INAF practicum, eventually telling peers at the other placements

about being “happy with the INAF training and experiences” and suggesting “all nursing students could benefit from learning peer facilitation skills.” Figure 1 shows the interrelated aspects of preserving rapport as keeping conversations flowing, reaching common understanding, nurturing “breakthrough” among participants, and knowing the person beyond the eating issue.

Keeping conversations flowing. From the start of the INAF placement, the peer facilitators worried they would say “something that would stop the conversation” or “something that was the wrong thing to say and caused the vulnerable person to suffer.” The facilitators wanted a detailed script for their facilitating role, and were initially dismayed to learn they could not prepare their responses in advance. Some anticipated being uncomfortable with silences and not knowing how to fill them. As they practised mirroring (reflecting what they apprehended back to the person peaking) and asking open questions to better understand each other’s perspectives, the facilitators ascertained they were successful in keeping up conversations. They rated the role play training experiences as the best preparation for the actual INAF sessions. In critiquing their efforts via post session debriefing with group supervisors, the peer facilitators identified many examples of their ability to keep conversations flowing.

Reaching common understandings. Facilitators varied in their capacity to empathize with participants. Factors that influenced the level of facilitator engagement with participants included prior communication courses, length of the INAF clinical placement (e.g., third year basic program and second year double degree students had a 12-week INAF fall placement; fourth year basic students had an eight-week winter placement), and proximity of the INAF placement to acute care placements and graduation. For instance, the second and third year students entering INAF had one prior communication course and minimal acute care experience while fourth year students had two prior communication courses and extensive acute care experiences in medical, surgical, and pediatric settings. The longer placement for second and third year students provided more training and practice in skill development. For the fourth year BN students, INAF was their last clinical placement before perceptorship (working fairly independently alongside an experienced nurse), followed by graduation. They appreciated the value of learning to facilitate INAF groups on campus; however, they were eager to return to familiar task-focused, time-pressed settings characterized by rapid assessment, advice dispensing, and professional façade because these settings offered employment. Despite differences in pre-INAF skill sets and loyalties to acute care settings, the peer facilitators from all years successfully explored eating struggles with participants, reached mutual understanding of events and meanings, and created connections within the groups.

Nurturing breakthrough among participants. Facilitators reported working to establish an atmosphere of trust, engagement, disclosure, and hope. Aware that participants often held maladaptive thought patterns that could not easily be let go, facilitators learned to honour participants’ emotional experiences while coaching participants to identify themes and patterns that no longer worked for them. Facilitators strived to maintain a balance between meeting participants where they were at (e.g., repeating unhealthy patterns) and guiding them toward positive change. To nurture participant breakthrough (“a-ha” moments of sudden progress as a result of new insight), facilitators carefully provided empathy, compassion, insight, and instruction on how to improve self-talk and coping skills. A

participant identified that “the breakthrough information comes from the other participants and when facilitators are completely non-judgmental and have good current information.”

Knowing the person beyond the eating issue. Facilitators used their training to engage in dialogues to elicit deeper participant accounts and better understand the perspectives of participants. Without this engagement, Foucault (1973) has pointed out that the client is seen from the perspective of a "clinical gaze" which reveals disease rather than the suffering or unique person. Nursing philosopher Patricia Benner (2004) similarly calls for nurses to see "another person and not just a scientific examination” (p. 77). As the facilitators’ responses began to mirror the strength and ingenuity of the INAF participants, facilitators saw beyond the eating issues to the persons within—human beings with particular concerns and life experiences.

Summary of outcomes for peer facilitators. The outcomes of preserving rapport through keeping conversations flowing, reaching common understandings, nurturing breakthrough among participants, and knowing the person beyond the eating issue included (a) participants identifying facilitators as “not afraid of the topics or us!” and (b) facilitators letting go of trying to change the participants’ eating habits. To these outcomes, the facilitators voiced feeling they made a difference. Such feelings further helped the peer facilitators develop confidence, professional satisfaction, and leaderships qualities. As a consequence of the challenging interactional work of peer facilitation, facilitators identified a need to practice healthy detachment (the ability to distance from the immediacy of the participants’ concerns, while accepting participants as being exactly where they should be in their life journeys and able to make positive changes only when ready). Debriefing with group supervisors after each INAF session helped peer facilitators release negative tensions and prepare for future sessions.

Discussion

Based on the research results, the introduction of the INAF project to nursing students and persons living with eating issues yielded several benefits. It also warranted some opportunities for further improvement. Benefits to INAF participants included information and support. The establishment of the INAF program in NB (a province without a designated eating disorder treatment facility), and on the campus of the largest university in NB, was an opportunity to support those affected in meaningful ways. Indeed, word of the INAF success spread until, in 2013, one participant (with her parents’ full support) acknowledged having transferred from a university five provinces away to attend the UNB INAF group.

Even though the majority of INAF participants found INAF helpful, especially in terms of information, support, and peer facilitation, they reported their eating issues did not significantly change over the course of the six weekly INAF groups. This is understandable given research and professional opinion that it takes over two months of daily repetitions before behaviour becomes a habit (Dean, 2013; Lally, van Jaarsveld, Potts, & Wardle, 2010).

The key finding that attending INAF facilitated professional help seeking is significant because persons experiencing eating issues often do not seek help. Instead, they minimize or hide symptoms from health professionals (Marks, Beumont, & Birmingham, 2003). Such reticence to seek help has been linked to past experiences wherein providers did not pick up on the eating issues or were dismissive, and to concerns that the eating issue would be ignored, be deemed the person's own fault, or result in stigma and discrimination (Bristow et al., 2011). Willingness to seek professional help conveys the power of INAF in assisting participants to break away from the secrecy and containment of their eating issues. This is a significant first step in behaviour change. Thus, INAF is valuable as a supplementary venue for accessing traditional services of dietary and psychotherapeutic counselling and follow-up medical care

Positive outcomes for peer facilitators included developing greater competency, professional satisfaction, and leadership capacity while learning how to preserve rapport with a highly stigmatized group. To accomplish these ends, facilitators were provided opportunities to build their knowledge of eating issues and available resources and to participate in interdisciplinary training and post-session debriefing with co-facilitators. Receiving timely feedback for their responses in the INAF groups helped peer facilitators reformulate learning goals for subsequent INAF sessions and clinical practice. Post-session debriefing with the co-facilitators added safety as peer facilitators could use the debriefing feedback from co-facilitators without the presence of the evaluating course professor.

As course professor and INAF director, I gave the students ample freedom to set and work toward personal/professional learning goals. Getting started with the INAF program required intense commitment from the peer facilitators even before they knew what it was all about. For example, facilitators were responsible during the first week of clinical for designing and distributing fliers to attract participants to the INAF groups (See Image 1 for a sample flier). The flier needed to appeal to university students and the general public while accurately conveying the message of INAF. Posting the fliers became a group bonding exercise as the peer facilitators worked together to place the fliers on the inside stall doors of every accessible washroom on campus. For this and other INAF activities, peer facilitators and course professor deconstructed and learned from successes and set-backs during regular supervision meetings.

Overall, participating in INAF helped peer facilitators become more authentic practitioners. Interacting naturally with participants and each other enabled them to begin to overcome the limitations of being professionally socialized to not reveal personal opinions to clients. Even though pleased to adopt a more natural style of interacting, facilitators questioned the practicality of sitting down with clients and engaging them in mutual problem solving. They pondered the difficulties of such communication therapeutics within traditional practice settings that were often times task-structured and time pressed. They also believed they would be negatively evaluated by colleagues as slow and less efficient (e.g., engaging in deeper conversations with clients would result in not having all beds made before coffee breaks). Yet, swayed by their enhanced understanding of social determinants and the perceived advantage of seeing the person beyond the disease, the facilitators expressed their strong desire to include the INAF communication style into other clinical practices.

Peer facilitators valued building supportive environments where group norms such as check in, debriefing, listening, and validation of feeling helped to not only "break the ice" but also develop and "protect the rapport" with clients. These aspects of INAF were portrayed in the film in hopes of informing practice in other settings. The peer facilitators who trained after 2013 were able to also learn through viewing the film. As a result of INAF training, peer facilitators recommended the inclusion and expansion of interdisciplinary training and dialogue in their nursing programs.

Further Directions for INAF

The participants of the INAF groups have been mainly students living with eating issues. It is striking that the age of onset for at least one participant was five years—long before entering university and earlier than most commonly reported statistics. This suggests a need for further inquiry with younger populations to gain more comprehensive knowledge of eating issue development and recovery. In addition, the fact that 40-year-old participants sought the offerings of INAF indicates a need for targeted intervention to this age, perhaps through workplace programs.

Expanding INAF to include men was attempted but was successful. It is possible that men do not come forward as INAF participants out of fear of discrimination. The issue of men seeking help for eating issues could be further investigated as recent statistics reveal that 25% of Canadians living with eating disorders are men (Collier, 2013). Few affected men have been identified in treatment settings because men tend to dismiss symptoms or attribute them to other causes such as poor eating habits (Woodside, 2004). Men and boys may suffer in silence or be insufficiently treated when eating disorders continue to be viewed as “female” problems (Soran, 2006).

In the final analysis, INAF provided participants and peer facilitators with a transformed view of self and an understanding of global concerns such as the need for prevention interventions targeting girls, boys, and adolescents. Participants and peer facilitators strongly recommended long-term inclusion of the INAF program at UNB and expansion to other universities.

Conclusion

INAF was designed to address the complexity of eating issues on campus while offering a valuable interdisciplinary practice placement for upper level nursing undergraduate students and graduate students in health programs. The broad based training and student-to-student approach provided non-stigmatizing support and education. With safety the core concern, both participants and facilitators gained comfort exploring challenges of eating and related issues. They grew in their capacity to evaluate information, relate personal perspectives, listen to others’ experiences, provide empathetic understanding, and form social networks. These efforts have informed an important student-to-student service at UNB that attracted and potentially helped retain students.

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I wish to thank the INAF participants and peer facilitators who shared their experiences and insight; Kathleen Pye, UNB doctoral student, INAF program coordinator; UNB health professionals Dr. Nancy Buzzell, Dr. Jo Ann Majerovich, and Ellen MacIntosh; Daphne Curtis and Ian Miller of Atlantic Mediaworks, Fredericton, NB; and Elizabeth Fry-Rahmanian, Administrative Assistant, School of Graduate Studies and Research and Faculty Development, Faculty of Nursing, UNB. I also thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback. The research was supported by grants from the Harrison McCain Young Scholars foundation to PI Kathryn Weaver (HMYS#2008, HYMS#2010). The film was supported by an IWK Community Development Grant to Kathryn Weaver (2012).

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Session Abstracts

Note: Conference abstracts corresponding to a paper or short communication elsewhere in the Proceedings are indicated with a double asterisk (**).

Thinking Creatively About "Alone Time" in University Classrooms**

M. Tanya Brann-Barrett, Cape Breton University

As a Communication professor and educational researcher, I spend a significant amount of time studying, practicing, and discussing the benefits of collaborative and group learning. Still, when thinking about innovative ways to encourage critical thought and learning, I have come to "re-appreciate" the value of what might be called "alone time." I have also "re-thought" what alone time can look like when multi-media and art-making are part of the picture. In this presentation, I make a case for building alone time into classroom experiences in conjunction with collaborative activities. To do so, I draw from my own teaching practices and most recent multi-media ethnographic research. I also invite participants to share their experiences and ideas of alone time and its value in the learning process. First, we contemplate the value of silence in critical learning and strategies educators can use to create room for constructive silence. We then consider the need for some degree of personal space in which students can listen, process, and critically reflect upon what they are learning. Finally, we "try out" an adaptation of an art-making activity that allows for alone time and collaboration in an effort to help students articulate their ideas, questions, and interpretations of theories and concepts they explore in the classroom. These methods will have limitations. Still, when space is made for alone time students may be better prepared to make sense of what they are learning and to engage in knowledge-building with others both inside and outside the classroom. Participants will be given contemplative statements to help them critically reflect on their relationships with alone time and collaborative activities in teaching and learning. Then, using a wide range of crafting materials supplied, they will be invited to create artistic pieces that illustrate their ideas about learning processes that are meaningful to them as both educators and lifelong learners. Throughout this activity there will be opportunities for both silence and discussions. Our focus is the process, not the finished piece. Therefore, there will be no pressure to "hurry up" and participants will take their finished or unfinished work with them so they may continue to critically reflect on their own and with others.

Organizing Curriculum: Introducing "Clusters" in the Faculty of Arts at UPEI

Ann Braithwaite, University of Prince Edward Island

This Furious Five presentation will talk about a new initiative in UPEI's Faculty of Arts—"clusters"—that are applicable to any Faculty. Clusters are an innovative way to organize and present curricular offerings, by stepping outside of existing department and program structures and, in the process, also challenging

"disciplines" as the primary/privileged way universities—and faculty—think about organizing knowledge. Clusters offer faculty, and thus also students, new ways to imagine curriculum by finding other points of intersection and crossover between knowledges, questions, approaches, and theoretical languages than those more usually assumed to exist within a "discipline"/department. This short presentation will quickly describe what a cluster is and the rationale behind clusters, and give a few examples from our Faculty. It will also address the primary challenge to clustering courses that we've run across—a challenge that, I believe, highlights why clusters are such an important idea to consider, and how much they ask us to think more deeply (and outside the box) about our pedagogy and our curriculum, or about what we're doing in that classroom.

Embracing Creativity to Enhance Reflection, Critical Thinking, and Deep Learning in Nursing Students

Dawn Burke, University of New Brunswick

Objectives of the Presentation: 1. To share my experience in embracing creative assignments to enhance reflection, critical thinking and deep learning in students, and 2. to challenge and encourage other educators to embrace creative teaching methods to enhance learning. Registered nurses are expected to reflect on their nursing practice on an ongoing basis. This reflection encourages critical thinking. Recognizing that learners have varying educational needs and styles, I have sought to combine the creative with the reflective. Several assignments have engaged students by requiring them to interview someone they know that has a chronic illness; following this, the learners are encouraged to critically think about what are important elements of chronic illness to them personally, and to decide on how they might represent these elements in a creative piece. Students have been creative in presenting their thoughts, and used medium such as creating videos, writing and singing songs, scrap-booking, taking photographs, shadow boxes, and art work to name just a few. I was motivated to embrace the creative not just because I am a creative being, but the idea was also drawn from my thesis research where I had participants take photographs (photo novella) to capture what spirituality meant to them. The photographs were then used to guide interviews. Participants articulated how the process of taking photographs was beneficial in assisting their critical thinking, insight, and reflection. By combining the use of photography and the creative arts with personal reflection and clinical experiences, students are often afforded the opportunity to reflect in such an in-depth manner that encourages deep learning, along with both personal and professional growth. Encouraging this type of reflection early in their careers may provide nurses with a powerful ability to have insight and strength to assist others, and better enable them to experience long last satisfaction and fulfillment as nurses.

Creating Teaching Champions: Taking the Graduate Teaching Experience Outside the Classroom**

Giovana Celli, Marissa Ley, Jill McSweeney, Colin Jackson, and Nayha Acharya, Dalhousie University

Teaching and learning is a critical component of professional development in graduate school. However, it is often overlooked and undervalued by students, who focus on developing research skills and projects in their disciplinary fields. While many universities offer teaching development opportunities (e.g., workshops or certificates), there is often an absence of student community and networking focused on teaching. To facilitate deeper engagement with teaching and learning and more thoughtful teaching practices, the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) at Dalhousie University created the CLT Champions Program in 2013. The Champions are a group of graduate students from different faculties who meet monthly to discuss peer-reviewed literature and research on teaching theory and practice, and develop student-led initiatives to promote teaching and learning efforts across the campus. The program has attracted a group of passionate students who share their challenges and successes with teaching, and provide peer support and mentorship for each other. This session will first discuss building an interdisciplinary community around teaching and learning, and empowering graduate students through their development as teachers. Then, the Champions will share their own experiences from their disciplinary lenses (e.g., Law, Health Promotion) and how the program has had benefits beyond teaching. To conclude, participants will be asked to reflect on the involvement of graduate students in teaching and learning at their own institutions and how student-led programs can help create further professional development and growth.

Being Authentic

Martha Cheney, Acadia University

Students comment that one of the most important attributes of effective teaching is being authentic. If students feel we appreciate them, they are more likely to engage. This may mean a journey of self-reflection if we are open to doing so. My approach is to use humor, acknowledge that I also learn from them, to be inclusive, set clear expectations, and use weekly quizzes to improve engagement. Student feedback is positive, stating quizzes “helped with understanding all the material,” “we covered a lot of chapters and that was useful when it came to midterms,” and “frequent quizzes forced me to stay up to date on material and keep topics fresh.”

In Class Games in Business Education to Facilitate Learning

Emin Civi, University of New Brunswick

One of the few places students don't regularly play games is in their classrooms. Even though all instructors know it, they do not fully utilize games as a pedagogical tool. Although some teachers use them as a part of their instructional repertoire, most teachers do not (Marzano, 2010). Research has shown that educational games can have positive impacts on student learning and motivation. An effective game will help students understand concepts more quickly and remember them better than from a lecture (Klassen & Willoughby, 2003). Previous literature indicates that games motivate students to actively participate in the learning process and encourages teamwork. Students reported that the use of games was an appropriate method of instruction that facilitated their learning. Students also indicated an overall preference for a participatory course and viewed other students as actively participating when games were used in a course (Azriel, Erthall, & Starr, 2010). The games used are adaptations of popular game shows, such as Jeopardy, Family Feud, Who Wants to be Millionaire, and competitions for a prize. All these games helped me increase student engagement and reach larger number students. In this presentation, I'll mention the use of in class games as a means of facilitating and assessing learning. This presentation will outline how I used this tools and how it helped my students to learn the material. Results of an evaluation that were conducted after the class will also be discussed.

What Do Engineers Do, Anyway? Mentoring First-Year Students

Frank Comeau, St. Francis Xavier University

Although engineering curriculum is generally slow to change, mentoring is an approach that is gaining attention lately. Mentoring in this context means pairing students with practicing engineers who act as mentors. Mentoring is normally limited to the last years of the engineering program. Mentoring contrasts with the more common co-op work terms where students are paid to work in an engineering company. Another relatively new idea is teaching engineering design in the first year. The traditional approach is to give students a base in engineering theory before tackling design. The drawback is that practically all first-year engineering students are eager to try things out, and many chose engineering specifically because it involves creativity. This presentation reports on our experience of combining mentoring with a design project in a first year engineering course. This innovative approach to mentoring students provides them with invaluable access to professional engineers early in their academic path, but it also presents substantial challenges. We discuss the implementation of the course in the winter term of 2014, as well as the reflections of the students and the mentors.

Going Beyond the Typical Undergraduate Thesis Process

Maryanne Fisher, Saint Mary's University

A thesis is a formidable, yet exciting way to end one's undergraduate career. For undergraduates hoping to pursue graduate training, a thesis project represents a valuable stepping-stone in learning how to perform independent work. In addition to many other features, it provides a way to learn about professionalism, communication, and teamwork. Pivotal to these characteristics is the relationship between the student and the supervisor, which is key to the success of the project, as well as the feeling of self-efficacy and accomplishment by the student. We will reflect on our own experiences working with supervisors to pinpoint the characteristics that relate to positive, negative, and "bland" experiences. My ultimate aim is to generate discussion on new ways of viewing thesis supervision, with the goal being to create a community of practice. Given the importance of thesis work, thinking of novel research is critical, but so is having a flexible supervisory style that remains authentic yet inspiring. We will discuss various strategies that may be (in)effective, and brainstorm on novel ways to shape the supervisory relationship for the maximum positive impact for both the student(s) and supervisor. I will present one approach that I have implemented, which is to supplement independent work with group projects, and, if time allows, I will present some ideas about performing synchronous thesis projects.

The Innovative Death Fair: Or, the Appropriation of Pedagogical Tools for Fun and Profit in the Large Enrollment Humanities Classroom

Mary Hale, Saint Mary's University

Poster presentations (like those seen in science fairs), while quite popular in Sciences and Social Sciences, are less so in the Humanities. The conventional wisdom is that they are too visual to showcase the kinds of skills honed in Humanities courses. However, Cain and Jarvis note that effective posters present key arguments, evidence, themes, and/or conclusions distilled from a greater body of research that a student or group has done on a subject or topic. The acts of prioritizing and distilling have the potential to encourage clearer thinking and tighter arguments. Some researchers also argue that the learning achieved in posters can be akin to that achieved in a research essay. Participants in this session will engage in a storyboard exercise as an example of the layered pedagogy I have been using in conjunction with poster presentations in my "Death" courses. The benefits of storyboarding will be made manifest in conjunction with a broader discussion of the ways in which poster presentations can be successfully incorporated into the Humanities classroom. Examples of student presentations will be on display. Poster presentations showcase a variety of skills—oral and visual presentation, for example—which Gipps links to an overall impression of evaluative fairness, and, which in my experience, also enhances student engagement and depth of comprehension.

Dare to be Innovative and Mentally and Physically Engaging When Teaching Larger Classes**

Angie Kolen, St. Francis Xavier University

Come to this highly energetic, highly engaging session to learn several tried, tested, and proven-to-be successful innovative teaching and learning techniques , which not only physically engage students in your class, but mentally hook them in as well. In addition to the benefits of engaging your students physically and mentally in each of your classes, the risks and challenges of daring to be innovative in larger classes (50 to 150 students) will be discussed. You will have the opportunity to share your perspectives on these techniques as you physically and mentally engage in each of them in this brief session. When you leave this session, you should be challenged to find reasons why NOT to engage in at least one of these techniques in your classes (or presentations) in the future.

The Art of Surrender: Notes on Practicing Pedagogy of Play

Kate Krug, Cape Breton University

The literature on student engagement is littered with texts on critical and/or transgressive pedagogies that provide a wide variety of classroom practices and processes, exercises, assessment strategies and a host of other tools designed to facilitate and sustain students' attention and connection in the classroom context. My own contribution to this discourse has been to develop and implement a transgressive pedagogy that I call a “pedagogy of play.” This paper outlines the foundational principles in the pedagogy of play and provides some concrete examples of the classroom practices that this pedagogy has inspired. In addition to discussing both the successes and failures I have encountered in practicing a pedagogy of play, this paper argues that in order to truly be successful, a radical pedagogue must also learn to practice the art of surrender.

Employing Industry Standard Tools to Drive Successful Student Projects

David Leblanc, University of Prince Edward Island

Many courses and programs have a requirement for significant, long-term, group development projects. Over the past 16 years, I have supervised many such projects (multiple per year) and, as such, have seen the potentially serious problems that can arise in such endeavours. Projects have encountered many different specific issues, but almost all come down to two basic issues: 1. Individual students can mischaracterize their contribution to the group effort (either through an unrealistic understanding of what is expected of them—or through outright deception), and 2. a group's plan may well exceed the resources (including time) that they have available to them over the life of the project. For the past

several years, I have employed project management techniques commonly used by small to medium sized technology-oriented companies to guide students in self-managing their group efforts and to greatly improve their chances of project success. Within the past 10-15 years, the dominant project management tool within small to medium sized technology-oriented companies has been what are called "Agile models." These models eschew the management-heavy traditional models of product development in favour of highly interactive, self-governing group approaches. Presently, the most popular of these models is Scrum and this is the model I have been using to drive successful group projects for the past 8 years. Under the Scrum approach, groups work in short (1-2 week) development "sprints" with defined individual goals that directly contribute to the final product. As such, at the end of each sprint the actual contribution of each team member (defined as meeting their defined goals or not) can be directly measured by other group members. Furthermore, as goals must be achieved within these short sprints, the overall project can be conceived of, and driven by, a series of short term goals leading to a successful project. In this talk, I will discuss the tools that are provided to a student team to allow them to organize and schedule a project around a Scrum-inspired structure, to track individual progress within the group, and to provide feedback to the project supervisor about both individual contributions and overall project progress. These tools are simple to both adopt and employ—a simple feature-based timeline schedule, a spreadsheet on a common server such as Google Drive and an evaluation form to be submitted via email. Although developed for technology-oriented projects, these techniques are easily adaptable to any type of project involving group development, as long as the project can be divided into a series of features (i.e., parts that can be delivered separately). Using this approach I have been able to assign much more complicated projects to student groups and have seen the project (and individual) failure rate diminish to almost zero.

From the Classroom to A MOOC: Experiences and Insights from a TA

Jill McSweeney, Dalhousie University

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have become a non-traditional avenue for higher education to open services to students inside and outside institutions. MOOCs are online courses with unlimited participation that offer the opportunity to participate for non-credit and/or credit, in courses from a range of topics and disciplines. The open and often free nature of MOOCs has garnered international awareness, and is now attracting professionals and non-professionals from around the world. The massive, open, and online nature of MOOCs presents a variety of challenges that are less prevalent or non-existent in traditional classrooms, such as managing thousands of students and their engagement with course content. While discussions are now being held on the topic of MOOC development and delivery, little emphasis is being placed on understanding how these issues impact and transform the role of teaching assistants (TAs). TAs are often on the frontlines of MOOC participation and student engagement. However, unlike traditional classes, a MOOC TA must manage large enrolment numbers,

24/7 student engagement, and constant monitoring of student-led course content. This session will focus on sharing experiences and insights on key issues of teaching and facilitating MOOCs from a TA's perspective. Topics to be discussed are: Creating a collaborative and engaging environment for students; respecting student diversities (e.g., age, professions, languages); creating and maintaining an online presence; and how to manage hundreds (at times thousands) of students without feeling overwhelmed. Practitioners and students are invited to discuss these issues and their own experiences participating and/or facilitating MOOCs.

Teaching Outside the Box Using Social Media and Smartphone Technology

Allan MacKenzie and Kyle Simon, Cape Breton University

In.Business: A Business Network for Indigenous Youth, was established in 2011 to facilitate the transition of Aboriginal high school students to post-secondary business education. It employs smartphone technology and social media to link Aboriginal high school students with Aboriginal business mentors who facilitate a series of activities, and current BBA students who serve as junior mentors and provide feedback on challenges. The program exposes participants to business concepts and models, while providing advice and support to students. The strategies for employing smartphones and social media in this mentorship program can be easily transferred to classroom learning. With the assistance of an In.Business graduate, in this presentation I will review the structure of the program and explain how social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) have allowed us to create a virtual business network and shaped our programming. In addition, based on the feedback via exit surveys, along with an assessment of the number of graduates moving on to study business at university, we will discuss the success of the program. To close this presentation, we will explain the implications this program has on Aboriginal youth and their communities—namely, In.Business connects students with peers and mentors who can support them through the transition to post-secondary business studies. Participants in this presentation will leave understanding the value of integrating social media and smartphone technology into business education and possess new strategies for incorporating them into post-secondary classrooms.

The Curiosity Project: The Benefits and Challenges of Creating Transformational Learning Experiences through Intrinsic Motivation and Writing in Arts and Business Faculties

Stacey MacKinnon, Marina Silva-Opps, & UPEI Senior Undergraduate Curiosity Project Learning Facilitators, University of Prince Edward Island

For six semesters, The Curiosity Project has encouraged over 350 students in a 2nd year social psychology class to explore intrinsically-motivated learning, investigating topics that interest them and following them down long and oftentimes winding roads, where U-turns, hidden side roads, and venturing off the map are a cause for excitement, not a distraction from the destination. This project incorporates proximal goals of weekly learning logs and peer group meetings (Bandura & Schunk, 1981) and in-depth feedback from peers and senior undergraduate facilitators (Brown & Campione, 1994). There are no page/word limits or minimum/maximum number of resources, just students' burgeoning sense of what constitutes "high quality work." Community-oriented projects round out this experience. In this session, originating professor, Dr. MacKinnon, and her undergraduate learning facilitators (also former Curiosity Project students) will debate the benefits/challenges of developing and maintaining this large scale undertaking, including our recent research examining the transformational properties of student participation in this project. Dr. Silva-Opps will share her experiences in adapting The Curiosity Project to smaller mid to upper-level biology courses without learning facilitator support. Samples of student projects from both social psychology and biology and plans for continued refinement and expansion of The Curiosity Project across the curriculum will round out the session.

Using Empathy as a Tool to Learn about Atypical Human Sexual Behavior

Peter MacIntyre, Cape Breton University

Information comes in many types of metaphorical boxes, including beliefs about what is appropriate behavior. This presentation will demonstrate the process of developing an empathetic report in the context of a human sexuality course. This type of report combines traditional research tools with the active ingredient of student empathy. This approach can be applied to many types of "controversial" behaviours. Students choose an innovative style in which to present their emerging understanding, such as a newspaper article, letter, blog, case files, resume, etc. The empathetic report assignment asks students to describe atypical human sexual activity, what it means, and its psychological, social and health-related effects on the people involved from their perspective. Students choose a behavior they do not practice and find difficult to comprehend. The assignment requires students to present practitioners' interpretation of what they do and why they do it. Students gather information from various sources to build their understanding. Examples of topics undertaken include celibacy, various paraphilia, and sex for sale. Attendees are asked to bring a device with wireless capability as we walk through the assignment, dealing with its challenges first hand and from a student's perspective. We will discuss ground rules used for the empathetic report, the need to differentiate empathy from sympathy, and good practices for teaching controversial topics.

Teaching Outside the Box: A Contradiction in Terms? In Search of a New Paradigm for Teaching and Learning**

Thomas Mengel, University of New Brunswick

In essence, we perceive "teaching" and "learning" as knowledge transfer from those who know and as knowledge acquisition and consumption by those who do not know, respectively. Pedagogical innovations (e.g., new teaching styles, learner centred approaches) over hundreds of years of higher education have not substantially changed that image (or "box") of teaching and learning. In educational institutions, those who know are still called teachers, educators, professors, instructors, lecturers, or readers; those who acquire knowledge are called students—or learners at best. While some changes have shifted the focus from understanding "students" as those who don't know to "learners" who are actively involved in the process of knowledge acquisition and distribution, the general educational practice still reflects the unidirectional or top-down approach to teaching and learning (as exemplified by many classrooms and lecture halls)—even a "flipped classroom" still is a classroom. Only a few institutions experiment with substantially different "teaching" concepts (e.g., "academic coaching," "integrating," or "facilitating"). Considering promising examples and current trends, it is high time to break free from the existing paradigm of "teaching." In this provocative session, I will invite participants to jointly and actively explore potential elements of a new paradigm for teaching (and learning). I will also discuss and summarize key elements that warrant further exploration.

Spreading the Social and Entrepreneurial Mindset: A Case Study of Innovative Teaching and Learning

Thomas Mengel and Kayley Reed, University of New Brunswick

Thinking critically, dealing with change, and solving complex problems in a creative, socially responsible, innovative, and sustainable way are key competencies of the social and entrepreneurial mindset and of effective citizens. Hence, learning opportunities that help achieve those outcomes should be part of every academic program aiming for the education of effective citizens. In 2007, Renaissance College (RC) at the University of New Brunswick (UNB) introduced a new course: "Change Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship;" engagement with community organizations is a key element of this course. In 2014, community partners, students and the Pond-Deshpande Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at UNB helped take this course to the next level: They engaged in workshops and helped create and fund student-lead social enterprises. The potential lessons learned regarding innovative teaching and learning go beyond this particular case study: Spreading the social and entrepreneurial mindset is of interest to students and faculty in many disciplines and fields. In this interactive presentation, a professor-student team will first share key elements of our experience with encouraging creative and out-of-the box thinking through student-led projects. We will then invite participants to discuss how adding learning

opportunities that help spread the social and entrepreneurial mindset might innovate their teaching and learning in other courses, programs, and fields.

No More Masterpieces: A Case Study of Peer Modelling in "Writing History"**

Tracy Moniz, Mount Saint Vincent University

Here's my handy hint: Use student writing to teach students to write. Why? Because students more readily connect with peer models and see their own potential within these models. In essence: It seems possible to write like "that." Writing intimidates. In teaching writing, we need to move students beyond the anxiety that naturally accompanies the writing process and toward a "psychic space" conducive to exploring and uncovering "voice." Peer models help. In this presentation, I strive to demonstrate the value of using peer models in writing education through a case study of a book I edited in 2013, titled Writing History: A Collection by New Writers. It contains original, research-based, historical narratives by student-writers in History and Writing, an undergraduate writing course I taught for several years. In this book, which serves as a teaching tool in the course, writers tell stories about topics as diverse as the Partition of India, Residential Schools in Canada, women's golf, and Newfoundland cod fisheries. The pieces in the book exemplify the various rhetorical theories, research methodologies, and writing techniques discussed in class. Together, the pieces demonstrate how writing turns information into history and new writers into historians. This collection offers an example of using peer modeling to improve student writing—in this case, history writing, but the concept applies to other genres including creative non-fiction and scientific. The presentation will include a reading from the collection (an excerpt of a story) to engage the audience and propel thoughts on how peer modelling broadens ways of teaching.

Three-Dimensional Representations of Learning

Lawrence Nyika, St. Francis Xavier University

What can be gained by explicitly addressing university students' diverse learning capacities? Drawing on Howard Gardner's (1989) and Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theories of multiple intelligences and learning as a social process, respectively, I structured my Winter 2014 Health Education class synthesis assignment to include two unique parts. First, in groups of four, students were required to create a three dimensional representation of their "dream" health promoting school (HPS) to be showcased at a class HPS fair. In designing their dream school, students could consider context (e.g. history, geography and demographics), health/education outcomes to be addressed, and how their project will be implemented. Secondly, in two weeks' time, each student was required to submit written critiques of at least three projects presented at the class HPS fair. In my presentation, I will describe the successes and

challenges of incorporating three-dimensional representations of learning into my course as an assignment. I will invite the audience to examine some of my students' HPS projects and deliberate on how other fields of study might use the instructional strategy.

Experiential Learning: Service Placement or Servitude?

Chantal Phillips, Cape Breton University

How can Internships, Co-op, Field Schools, Service Learning, and Community Based Learning be integrated into academic life? Let's start with a definition and a continuum to describe the different types of service learning and community based learning to see how these various forms co-exist and relate to each other and curriculum goals.

Exploring the Ipad as a Teaching Tool in Higher Education Contexts

Donovan Plumb, Mount St. Vincent University

Despite their relative recent appearance on the technology scene, tablets are rapidly becoming an integral device in many people's lives. While organizations, including post-secondary institutions, have been slow to add this "additional" technology to their stock of supported devices, there is good reason to attend to the potentials of tablets as tools that can support teaching and learning. In this session, I demonstrate multiple ways that I and other IPad users at my university have been incorporating IPads into our teaching practices. I will demonstrate how IPads can be used to markup student writing, track student grades, develop instructional videos, track and record classroom discussions, and conduct virtual office hours. As much as possible, the session will be a hands-on opportunity to share ideas. Participants who have them are encouraged to bring their IPads (or other tablet devices) so we can explore what we have discovered about the uses of this very flexible and ever-transforming teaching tool. After a brief introduction, the session will alternate between presentation and exploration.

Developing Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity in Nursing Students

Sheila Profit, Cape Breton University

The registered nurse's role is increasingly more complex as a result of globalization and the growing interconnectedness of the world. The client population is becoming more diverse, demanding that nurses respect and are able to care for clients from different cultural backgrounds. Judgements are often made about clients based on assumptions and values of one's own culture. As nurse educators, we have a responsibility to prepare students to be able to perform cultural assessments, develop cultural

competency skills, and act in a culturally safe way for clients. Having a fairly homogenous student population has created challenges in addressing this issue. A student learning activity based on self- and peer-reflection and interaction with students from different cultures has been implemented in the second year introductory community health nursing course. This activity has the following student outcomes: 1. Develop awareness of the student's own cultural practices and how they impact on his/her health; 2. demonstrate a beginning ability to do a cultural assessment with a person from a different culture; and 3. identify what needs to be done in an assessment of any client to ensure that assumptions are not made that the client is from the same or different culture than the student/nurse. This learning activity has changed based on suggestions made by the students. This presentation will discuss the ongoing evolution of this learning activity.

The Chemistry of Business: A Case Study Involving Marketing and Inorganic Chemistry

Joanne Pyke and Matthias Bierenstiel, Cape Breton University

It is not often that 4th year level marketing students and 3rd year level chemistry students work together during their courses, yet neither marketing nor chemistry are standalone subjects in the "real" world. In this presentation, we discuss a marketing-chemistry teaching initiative for a semester long case study. The marketing students are placed in small groups tasked to provide a marketing strategy and business plan for a medium-sized company that produces inorganic compounds. The chemistry students are responsible for production. With little more than the structure of compounds, the different groups must communicate with each other about chemicals, their properties, their production and a plan on how to sell them. The students are required to adapt to different, yet equally important topics, such as estimation of production cost and marketing plan and properties of compounds and scale-up—which are typically not taught within their individual disciplines. Further, during the case study each group is presented with a "real" provincial applied research grant, to which the students have to come up with a plan and 2-page application to obtain funding. This is a study on coordination and communication. This presentation will discuss the aspects of coordination of two diverse courses, setup and adjustment of the case study assignment, and variation with expected course enrollments. It provides a behind-the-scenes look for faculty interaction and the development of intercourse assignments.

Solving Problems in Math Class: Hi-Tech and Low-Tech

Patrick Reynolds, University of New Brunswick

While technological innovations hold some promise for making mathematics seem more dynamic and relevant than often supposed, my recent adventures incorporating technology into the classroom have changed my perspective on what constitutes engaging mathematical content. Perhaps digital content should serve printed material rather than supplant it. Throughout the session, participants will be encouraged to answer survey questions focused on how we learn mathematics, and to discuss the role of printed and digital resources in their courses. In the context of these discussions, I will demonstrate some of the technologies I've used in large lecture classes.

Learning to Learn: Creating Community before Cramming in Content**

Emily Root and Pat Maher, Cape Breton University

Innovation in the classroom flourishes when learners become part of a collaborative and creative community. All too often, content heavy curriculum supersedes the equally important "process" component of learning in higher education. From our experience across a variety of disciplines, learning can be deepened by spending more time and paying greater attention to creating learning communities—a concept that is highlighted as a "high impact practice" in student recruitment and retention literature. Whether the setting is a conventional university classroom or lecture hall, a field or forest on the edge of campus, or a local neighbourhood, educators can facilitate a learning community through a progression of intra- and interpersonal explorations. This workshop engages participants in a series of experiential activities that aim to foster initiative, leadership, self-awareness, and trust—factors that underlie effective collaborations for innovative learning. Workshop activities will be debriefed from both the participant and facilitator perspectives.

The Unexpected Consequences of Applying Mindfulness to Critical Thinking**

David Sable, St. Mary's University

In this highly interactive presentation participants will be introduced to a set of mindfulness-based reflective practices for the classroom that were the subject of mixed methods research with university students. The primary objective of the research was to determine if research-based mindfulness practices enhance the underlying dispositions for critical thinking. The practices apply basic mindfulness principles to individual contemplation, journal writing, listening, inquiry, and dialogue. Taken together, this set of practices becomes reflective interaction. Quantitative results showed statistically significant gains in the average number of indicators for critical thinking dispositions appearing in student journals. Qualitative results showed increased self-confidence and engagement with multiple points of view, confirming expectations based on previous research. However, a distinct and unexpected impact was the reported sense of "connectedness" that was stronger between students who disagreed with each other than between students who found easy agreement in their interaction. Students' sense of

connectedness, engagement with each other, was based on taking an uncertain journey together and risking the suspension of beliefs long enough to be challenged—hallmarks of "thinking outside the box." Connectedness supports critical thinking that is more focused on deeper and broader understanding than winning an argument. It opens the door to respect, empathy, and creative dialogue.

Teaching Large Online Courses: How Can Professors Promote Active Learning without Exhausting Themselves?**

Heather Schmidt, Cape Breton University

This session will feature a productive discussion about innovative teaching techniques in large online classes, and the associated challenge of keeping the workload manageable for instructors. Teaching larger classes, and online teaching, both present their own special challenges. In a large class (with 50-100 students or more), how can one actively engage students with interesting assignments and activities, while also staying on top of the required marking and feedback? What are the alternatives or additions to multiple choice exams? Some science departments solve this problem with labs/lab instructors, but what if this is not the case in your department or academic discipline? For its part, online teaching presents the instructor with its own set of challenges, as well as some unique online tools. CBU, for example, recently acquired a tool called "Collaborate" that allows for real-time discussion including video, collaborative document editing, live small group discussion, etc. In an online class of 50 students, however, how can this tool be used? I will begin this session by briefly sharing some of the assignments I have developed for my online classes of 50 students, but also touch on ongoing challenges that I wrestle with as an instructor. We will then use a think-pair-share exercise for each participant to think about and jot down their own active learning practices and challenges/questions, then discuss in small groups, and then we will conclude with a larger group discussion in which innovative ideas for large online teaching will be shared.

Turn on Your Phones Please! —From Distraction to Engagement With Mobile Learning**

Kathy Snow, Cape Breton University
Robert Lawson, University of Manitoba

In one month, D2L, the learning management system at the University of Manitoba recorded over 6,000 occurrences of students accessing the LMS from mobile devices. Students are telling us through their actions that it's time to change the way we think about course design. In this interactive session, you will learn how faculty at the UofM have responded to this growing trend as well as experiment with simple activities you can use in your own course design. You will need to BYOD and know how to turn it on, but

no further technical skills are necessary. The format of the 50 minute presentation will include a presentation on the approach UofM has taken to incorporate m-learning in course design for online delivery of courses (15 min max) and then move to ways in which m-learning can be incorporated in face-to-face delivery by experimenting with 5 techniques using tools found on all cell phones: camera, video recording, wifi, and/or sms. Participants will try each of these five activities with their phones and discuss how these could be used in their own teaching context.

What the 3M National Teaching Fellows Can Do for You

Elizabeth Wells, Mount Allison University
Shannon Murray, University of Prince Edward Island
Heather Carroll, Memorial University of Newfoundland

Atlantic universities have been successful in nominating 3M Teaching and now Student Fellows, so successful that we have now formed an informal "Chapter" of Atlantic 3Ms, the purpose of which is to be useful to the region in supporting and advocating for good teaching and learning. In this panel, 3M National Teaching and Student Fellows will talk about recent initiatives (including a database of external referees for those going for promotion on the basis of teaching), answer questions about successful nominations for the two 3M programs, and take suggestions about how Atlantic universities might best enlist its 3M Fellows, as well as other Atlantic teaching award-winners, to help strengthen higher education in the region.

Peer-Led Teaching Support to Reduce Eating Disorders on Campus**

Kathryn Weaver, Joshua MacKin, and Nicole Cormier, University of New Brunswick

Canadian post-secondary students are “lonely, overwhelmed, exhausted” (ACHA-NCHA II, 2013). While the majority report not wanting to receive information on eating disorders and related mental health concerns from college or university professionals, these students are increasingly seeking help for eating issues and associated underlying problems that require intensive support and challenge university resources. We will share highlights of an ongoing practice-research program, It’s Not about Food (INAF), designed to address the knowledge and social support needs of university students with self-identified eating issues. These highlights will be contextualized through a short (8 minute) film depicting the peer learning process and the specific support rendered by upper level nursing students who serve as peer facilitators. Mixed-method evaluation of the project conveys the value of the INAF group in creating a safe zone for enabling contemplation of personal and health changes, as well as a transformed view of self and global concerns, including the need for building positive workplace environments and prevention interventions targeting younger students and older persons. From the perspectives of the

students as peer facilitators, the most salient finding has been learning to know the participants as persons beyond the eating issues and to develop competency, professional satisfaction, and leadership capacity within a shared power venue. Current peer facilitators will walk the audience through the INAF program and will co-facilitate a discussion about the benefits and constraints of this type of peer-led therapeutic practice within their usual traditionally structured, time-pressed, and task-focused clinical placements.

Inside the Lab/outside the Box: Interpreting Nonverbal Messages**

Dawn White and Sarah Farrow, Cape Breton University

The Dr. Mary A. Lynch Communication Lab at Cape Breton University is approaching its 50th year in operation. A requirement in our introductory classes, the experiential learning labs help students understand concepts, increase their self-awareness, and develop their communication skills cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally, through small-group discussions, experiential learning activities, and critically reflective written journals. The weekly lab sessions encourage students to reflect on their communication behaviours and those around them. Our mode of delivery helps students increase their confidence, retain information, express ideas clearly, understand different perspectives, and expand their world. In this session, we will provide background information about the Communication Lab, explain how our experiential learning labs demonstrate teaching outside the box, why it is effective, and how we maintain the integrity of the lab while striving to adapt to new communication systems while embracing diversity. Nonverbal communication accounts for the majority of the messages we send. It's also the primary way we construct and send messages about our identity unique to contexts and cultures. Educators and students are constantly sending and interpreting each other's nonverbal cues. Have you thought about the messages you send in the classroom? How do you interpret students' messages? How are they interpreting yours? Through facilitated small-group discussions and a highly interactive experiential learning activity, we will cover the nine forms of nonverbal behaviours as related to the teaching and learning environment.

Embracing Uncertainty: Facilitating Students' Pathways through Learning Thresholds

Brad Wuetherick, Dalhousie University

"Intellectual uncertainty is not necessarily or simply a negative experience . . . It is just as well an experience of something open, generative, exhilarating . . . I wish to suggest that 'intellectual uncertainty' is . . . a crucial dimension of any teaching worthy of the name" (Royle, 2003, p. 52). Over the past decade there has been a robust exploration of what has been called threshold concepts in and

across the disciplines (Meyer & Land, 2003). These learning thresholds, which are characterized by (among other things) both troublesomeness and transformed understandings, have proven to be a useful analytic frame for exploring innovation in teaching and curriculum development across the disciplines (Cousins, 2014). Research has shown that students must overcome their uncertainty, experienced as a result of the troublesome nature of these learning thresholds, if they are to "pass through the threshold" to a transformed understanding (of the material, of the discipline, of themselves as learners) (Wuetherick, 2014). This interactive workshop will introduce participants to threshold concepts, engage participants in exploring possible threshold concepts in their disciplines, and explore one particular innovative teaching strategy—termed an expectation failure (Bain, 2004)—that has been shown to help facilitate students learning to overcome the uncertainty faced when encountering these threshold concepts.
